GARDENS, PRISONS, AND ASYLUMS:
METAPHORS FOR SCHOOL

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This project is rooted in the premises that truth is apprehended through human experience, that humans understand the world through metaphor, and that metaphors humans use to conceptualize their world are worthy of explication. By identifying and explicating high school teachers’ and students’ metaphorical conceptions of school and comparing these with a school district mission statement, this study explores the significance of metaphor in education and how metaphors for school can affect thinking about the purposes and processes of education. In the study, metaphor is the tool used to elicit descriptive narratives of the everyday school experiences of those involved in the educational process; metaphor theory is the lens used to analyze the data. The study finds much continuity between students’ metaphorical conceptions of school and those invoked and critiqued by key social foundations scholars. The findings also suggest a paradox: the teachers’ images convey views of the school experience that indicate growth and development, while the students’ views connote conflict and confinement. In contrast to students’ metaphors for the current school experience, when describing the utopian school in metaphor, the students’ images emphasize activity and comfort. From this study it is evident that many aspects of the lived experiences of those involved in the educational process are incongruous with the ideal.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

As schools across the nation continue to grapple with educational change, what can be learned from studying schools deemed excellent? What can the student voices that emerge from such schools contribute to the discussion of education and schooling? What can students’ ideas add to the ongoing debate about the best ways to educate students? The purpose of this study is to investigate how high school students and faculty conceptualize their school metaphorically. Specifically, it aims to uncover their dominant metaphors for school and the experiences that create them. It asks: What can these narratives about their educational experiences reveal? In essence, the study shows that their autobiographical writing about their metaphorical conceptions of school divulges dominant, undergirding experiential metaphysical themes. It also reveals paradoxes in professed beliefs, gaps in understanding, and incongruities between the literal and ideal present in the values and ideas of students in an excellent district on a mission to involve the community; hold students to high standards; provide a quality, complete education in a supportive and safe environment which ensures that all students achieve their maximum potential; and prepare students to create their individual places in a constantly changing society.

This study poses an overarching question: does the metaphorical mission proclaimed by a district with goals of “creating a supportive and safe environment” and “preparing students to create their individual places in a constantly changing society” align with the metaphorical experiences of the students and faculty themselves? A
secondary question guiding this study is: What are the experiences that compel students and faculty to choose to figuratively describe schooling in terms of another particular thing? To answer this requires a narrative illustration of the metaphor—a richly described experience to illuminate the student’s chosen vehicle for the tenor (school) of their metaphorical comparison. Lastly, the study asks for visions of the ideal school—the metaphor they feel will create a more effective educational environment for students and educators.

**Purpose, Context and Significance of the Study**

The study of metaphorical comparison is ancient, but the idea that metaphor is firmly ingrained in our human experience, and that those used are experientially based, is the comparatively recent premise in the field of conceptual metaphor. The study of conceptual metaphor, a mode of thought first proposed by linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) provides the framework for an analysis of the metaphors inherent in views of education and schooling. Accordingly, the main contention in this study holds that if a student or faculty member expresses a metaphor for school, there will be an experiential basis for this figurative comparison; an additional premise, based on the idea that metaphor can be a tool to use to create more effective discussions of issues of significance (Geary, 2011, p. 121), is that understanding the historical evolution of particular metaphors aids in the analysis of metaphors that are used in current educational discourse. In understanding our educational history, we come to understand aspects of current schools, and we can then look forward to more informed discussions about schools.
This dissertation explores an assemblage of individual metaphors for the American public high school, allowing students, in their own voices, to describe their lived metaphorical school experiences and to tell the stories that illustrate them. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose, metaphor both creates and reflects one’s experience in the world; thus, this study reveals the complexity of figurative and lived experiences of those who are involved in education in one district on a daily basis. As an English teacher, I have had the unique opportunity to assemble a montage of the metaphors of students and educators, and then compare these with the metaphorical vision of the district itself. The use of metaphor has always intrigued and perplexed me; my desire to understand how metaphors shape our understandings of our experiences led me to the field of metaphor theory. My bachelor’s degree in English, 18 years of teaching experience, master’s and doctoral study have allowed me much insight into metaphor analysis. This dissertation is the summation of my work in the field: it shows the extent to which, after the students’ and educators’ metaphors and narratives are analyzed, the themes and categories that emerge align with those metaphorical categories described in contemporary literature on educational metaphor and what these correlations may signify.

**Research Questions**

In this study, the guiding research questions are:

1. How do students and faculty conceive of school, metaphorically?

2. What experiences shaped the student and faculty metaphorical conceptions of school?
3. What do the narrative and metaphorical representations of these events and interactions reveal as they are compared with the statement of the metaphorical “mission” of the district?

4. How is this metaphorical portrait different from and similar to the metaphorical conception as it is currently experienced?

5. After analysis, will the metaphorical themes and categories that emerge from the students’ work align with or oppose the educational metaphors noted by historians and current theorists?

6. What are the students’ metaphors for a utopian school, how to these align with or conflict with the metaphors for their experience in school, and what can these connections and gaps offer regarding opportunities for educational reform?

**Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Background**

The significance of metaphor in human thought is the major premise of this research. In their seminal volume on metaphor theory, *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) outline their groundbreaking views concerning the function of metaphor in daily life. According to the authors, metaphor permeates the everyday existence of human beings:

Not just in language but in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature. The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we
get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3)

In fact, they argue that this conceptual system is integral in “defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we perceive, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3), including the way we reckon with such basic human concepts as life, death, conflict, and, accordingly, education.

Not only are human thought processes in large part metaphorical, but the human conceptual system itself is also metaphorically structured and defined (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Therefore, close examination of these linguistic figurative comparisons and the patterns they create can reveal otherwise implicit meaning embedded in everyday language. This basic human tendency toward understanding one thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5) is shown in everyday educational discourse, which uses metaphor as a means of conveying concepts. Studying the underlying meanings of these metaphors reveals much about historical and current educational values. This study is beneficial in the understanding of our current system of education; scholarly analysis of these literary devices is critical in understanding these metaphors because

Our conceptual system is not something we are normally aware of. In most of the little things we do every day, we simply think and act more or less automatically along certain lines. Just what these lines are is by no means obvious. One way to find out is by looking at language. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 1)
The interconnections among language, speech, and action are critical to our making sense of the world. Based on linguistic evidence, they describe the metaphorical nature of “our ordinary conceptual system” and claim that these comparisons “structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). Therefore, by making lived metaphors explicit, much can be understood about human perception and experience. In the context of this study, explicating individual metaphors unearthed not only educational experiences, but their implications. Current metaphor theory upholds the valuable implications of metaphor; metaphors create new ideas and also hold to power to perpetuate them:

A metaphor occurs when someone apprehends previously unapprehended relations between two things. The metaphor perpetuates this fresh apprehension until, through time, core associations form. These associations cling fast to words themselves, eventually becoming so routine that they continue to appear long after the original relation has ceased to be consciously apprehended. (Geary, 2011, p. 115)

These associations have potentially profound effects, because “mental images can have the same effect on the body and the mind as actual physical things . . . Metaphors are experience’s body doubles, standing in for actual objects and events” (Geary, 2011, p. 105).

To fully understand the significance of an educational metaphor, one needs to go on a new mental journey, figuratively. One needs to “recognize the conceptual nature of metaphor” and the idea that “we think metaphorically” as well as the concept that
metaphors “are shaped and constrained by our bodily experiences in the world, experiences in which the two conceptual domains are correlated and consequently establish mappings from one domain to another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 246-247). In other words, “a great deal of everyday, conventional language is metaphorical, and the metaphorical meanings are given by conceptual metaphorical mappings that ultimately arise from correlations to our embodied experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 267). In short, our educational metaphors both stem from and create our reality, because “which metaphors we have and what they mean depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 247) because “reasoning in abstract domains uses the logic of our sensory-motor experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 248). Metaphors are more than just ornamental comparisons; they both reveal and influence our thoughts and experiences. Current metaphor research by James Geary shows that

There is not aspect of our experience not molded in some way by metaphor’s almost imperceptible touch . . . Metaphorical thinking—our instinct not just for describing but for comprehending one thing in terms of another . . . shapes our view of the world, and is essential to how we communicate, learn, discover, and invent. (2011, p. 3)

In fact, humans use about six metaphors per minute, or one metaphor in every 10–25 spoken words (Geary, 2011, p. 5). Metaphor, evidently, permeates our everyday language and has the potential to teach us about larger concepts.
Ultimately, in terms of educational relevance, these notions are significant because looking at students’ metaphors can answer questions of how to create more effective schools. When we look at how people use metaphor:

We can better understand their emotions, attitudes, and conceptualizations, as individuals and as participants in social life. Metaphor thus offers a tool that researchers across applied linguistics, social sciences and the humanities can use to reveal more about how people think and feel. (Cameron, 2010a)

The value that scholars place on the creation and analysis of metaphorical ideas is a recent phenomenon; this has not always been the dominant mode of thinking. On the contrary, metaphor has historically had a complex presence and multifaceted impact on theory and practice in language and education.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework and Historical Context

Metaphor has, throughout history, been vilified as a deceptive tactic, devalued as a figurative device, and, recently, extoled as undergirding much of human conceptual thought. It has appeared in language throughout time and across cultures, from the Anglo-Saxon oral poetry of bards to the American Indian oratory of chiefs, from the political rhetoric of presidents to the jargon of contemporary educational policy. Although a definitive definition is elusive, it is apparent that metaphor is ubiquitous in human communication, while being paradoxical and perplexing to theorists. How to define it and determine its usefulness are matters of extensive debate. The scholarly discussion, which began over 2,000 years ago with the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, has centered on how to recognize metaphor and how significant it is in human language, communication, and thought. Since then, the power and workings of metaphorocity have created discord among theorists. The major schools of metaphor theory: Aristotelian, traditional, cognitive, and systemic, delineate the changing perspectives on the definition, composition and purpose of metaphor and expose the multitude of areas that defy consensus by metaphor theorists. Understanding of these theories builds to an understanding of the significance of metaphor in daily life, the current view espoused by theorists today.
Traditional Theories of Metaphor: Substitution, Comparison, and Interaction

Views

Embrouled in controversy, difficult to define, deemed unworthy of attention, and obsessively analyzed, metaphor remains a rhetorical enigma. The historical dissent over the misunderstood and multifarious metaphor begins with fear; specifically, with Plato’s attack on its use: he was “aware of the power of metaphor and myth to influence conviction” and he feared its potential misuse by the Sophists, itinerant teachers in Athenian society who taught rhetorical strategies to those who desired to create political influence and whose “misuse of language leads others away from the truth” according to Plato (Johnson, 1981, p. 5). Plato’s expressed disdain for Sophists, whom he believed deterred people from the truth or disregarded it in the pursuit of using forceful language—fostered an enduring suspicion of metaphor and an increased awareness “of the power of metaphor and myth to influence conviction” as well as “fear of their potential for misuse” (Johnson, 1981, p. 5). Plato’s suspicions have been a legacy in subsequent metaphor theory. In ancient Greece, poetry and myth were rife with metaphor, that is, until Plato’s dismissal of “uneducated and imitative poets” in Republic; he critiques these poets, whom he claims create imitations of ideal forms but have no true knowledge of them because poetry “feeds and waters the passions, instead of drying them up” (Plato, in Johnson, 1981, p. 5). For Plato, metaphor was an impediment to the discovery of truth.

Conversely, one of the “ironies of history” (Johnson, 1981, p. 5) is that Plato is also considered a master of metaphor, using it skillfully throughout Republic, for
example. This irony reveals how subtle metaphor can be in language—it underlies thinking, lying dormant beneath the surface of thought unless it is pulled out into the open and examined. In fact, human beings often use unacknowledged, implicit metaphor. Plato refers to his metaphors as allegories and myths, yet they perform metaphorical functions in his writing by mapping one concept onto another concept; these include the famous Myth of the Metals, which outlines his hierarchy of social positions in a utopian society, and the Allegory of the Cave, which uses the story of a prisoner who escapes from a cave to represent the experience of a person who attains education and apprehends truth.

Although after its treatment by Plato it was largely ignored in many disciplines, the study of metaphor remained the focus in rhetoric, one area of literary theory. Historically, central to the scholarly research in literature and rhetoric has been the study of figurative language, especially tropology, the study of tropes, “figures of thought and speech” (Gibbs, 1993, p. 252). These devices, which use a word to mean something other than its conventional meaning, include irony, metonymy, oxymoron, understatement, idiom, hyperbole, litotes, antithesis, periphrasis, simile, and of course, metaphor.

**Aristotelian Theory**

Taking Plato’s ideas in a constructive direction, his student Aristotle offers the first extensive philosophical analysis of metaphor, describing Metaphor, under the art of poetry, as a means by which the poet provides knowledge through artistic imitation (mimesis) and again, under the art of
rhetoric, as having a philosophically significant role in the making of persuasive arguments. In both cases, metaphor is a powerful means of achieving insight. (Johnson, 1981, p. 5)

Aristotle’s contemplations on metaphor, expressed in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, form the foundation upon which most metaphor theory since has been built. In Aristotle’s view, metaphor, which he defined as “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else,” (Aristotle, trans. 1967, p. 7) performed a valuable rhetorical function in oratory if it “combined ‘clarity, pleasantness and unfamiliarity,’ and, when used appropriately, could act conceptually to produce new understanding. In addition to its rhetorical function, he also recognized the cognitive function of metaphor that has risen to dominance” in the last few decades (Cameron, 2003, p. 13).

Subsequently, theorists attempting to fill the gaps in his theories have extended his ideas forward in a multitude of directions, and, according to critics, have misinterpreted some of his essential thoughts. Aristotle was the initiator of the debate over metaphor’s usefulness and figuration; he wrote about the thematic thread of similitude, asking whether metaphor and simile were the same, or in fact distinctly different tropes:

Aristotle was interested in the relationship of metaphor to language and the role of metaphor in communication. His discussion of the issues, principally in *Poetics* and *Rhetoric*, have remained influential to this day. He believed metaphors to be implicit comparisons, based on the principles of analogy, a view that translates into what, in modern terms, is generally called the comparison theory of
metaphor. As to their use, he believed that it was primarily ornamental. In the
Topica he argued that is necessary to be wary of the ambiguity and obscurity
inherent in metaphors, which often masquerade as definitions. He urged that a
clear distinction be made between genuine definitions and metaphors. (Ortony,
1993b, p. 3)

Evidently Aristotle, like Plato, believed that using metaphor stood in the way of
understanding truth. Aristotle also downplays the difference between metaphor and
simile, making the influential claim that there is not much difference between metaphor
and simile, and positing that metaphor is an elliptical simile. The idea that a metaphor is
an elliptical simile, that is to say, that metaphor simply omits the “than, like or as”
indicator of a simile, remains in philosophers’ thinking about metaphor to this day. This
perspective is explained by philosopher Mark Johnson: “A metaphor is an elliptical
simile useful for stylistic, rhetorical, and didactic purposes, but which can be translated
into a literal paraphrase without any loss of cognitive content” (Johnson, 1981, p. 4).

Aristotle’s assertion that the figurative construct can be translated literally, and therefore
holds no deeper meaning, created an enduring schism in theory. Based on Aristotle’s
claim, Quintilian later dismisses the significance of metaphor, “on the whole metaphor is
a shorter form of simile” (Lanham, 1991, p. 100). Aristotle’s positing of this idea of
similarity has proved problematic to this day (Johnson, 1981, p. 7) as theorists continue
to debate this issue; this contention is primarily evident in the comparison theory of
metaphor.
There exists a strand of scholarship in 20th century philosophy that eschews Aristotle’s definition of metaphor as an “elliptical simile.” Johnson maintains that this view is time-honored but erroneous, but “still, the basic idea that both function by virtue of shared properties sets the tradition for centuries to come” (1981, p. 6). Linguist Lynne Cameron, however, identifies a gap in contemporary interpretations of this Aristotelian view:

Black (1979) and Gibbs (1994), for example, associate Aristotle with ‘seeing metaphor as a renaming or substitution of one term by another’ when he ‘in fact articulated a much more complicated view of the nature and function of metaphor’ that was wider and more inclusive than many scholars acknowledge. (2003, p. 14)

According to Cameron, in classical Greek thought, metaphor had a much broader reference, and the term included “any type of expression which substituted for another—diminutives, euphemisms, and catachresis (ways of talking about a topic domain that had not previously existed . . . for which there could be no literal equivalent” and the application of Aristotelian theory to this more narrowly defined term has led to misunderstandings (Cameron, 2003, p. 14). Today, a broader definition of metaphor is utilized by theorists.

After Plato and Aristotle, the use of metaphor was subsequently devalued in classical and medieval rhetoric and theology, seen in Cicero’s claim that metaphor is less valuable than simile, and that it is “merely one of several forms of comparison which can play a role both in proof and in the embellishment of language” (Johnson, 1981, p. 6).
Like Aristotle, Cicero sees metaphor as a species of borrowing between words and as “a subordinate form of comparison” (Johnson, 1981, p. 6). Cicero posits that a metaphor is:

A brief similitude contracted into a single word; which word being put in place of another, as if it were in its own place, conveys, if the resemblance is to be acknowledged, delight: if there is no resemblance, it is condemned. (Johnson, 1981, p. 8)

Hence, scholars aligned with Cicero’s disdain turned away from accepting the gravity of metaphor.

Not only has metaphor been disregarded as trivial, furthermore, Aristotle claimed, metaphorical language is an anomaly or aberration of language, a “deviance” from literal usage; this prompted the ongoing thought that there is a divide between the literal and figurative (Johnson, 1981, p. 6). Latin rhetoricians “valued [metaphor] chiefly as ornamentation that gives force, clarity, and charm to language” and gave warnings against its improper use. Aristotle had said that metaphor can fail or mislead by being too lowly, exalted, or crude for the subject; it may be farfetched (where dissimilarity overcomes resemblances) or it may be overused. Medieval rhetoricians, according to Johnson, “continued reduction of the philosophical importance of metaphor and began a new attack on the embellishment of language in general,” (1981, p. 9) based on their suspicions of pagan art and eloquence.

Although Aristotle arguably limited the study of metaphor in some respects, he also planted the seeds of contemporary interactive and cognitive metaphor theory. He delved into the cognitive aspect of metaphor, an aspect focused on by modern theorists.
In *Poetics*, he describes the cognitive power of metaphor: “A striking metaphor, then, is remarkably like a riddle, the solution of which brings insight and delight. The trick is to stretch the imagination, but always within appropriate bounds, keeping in mind the underlying similarity at work” (Aristotle, trans. 1967, p. 30). He also notes the need for readers to activate endoxa, or shared cultural understandings, in order to interpret metaphorical expressions. Subsequent influential theories, such as those by Lakoff and Johnson, expound upon these shared understandings.

Aristotle’s work held an enduring legacy: it created the major trajectories in metaphor theory. During this period, metaphor began to be seen as just a stylistic device. It also began to be defined as a truncated simile. Today, some theorists resist the literal-figurative binary: some believe in literal paraphrase of metaphor, others do not believe it possible to adequately paraphrase a metaphor. In essence, Plato and Aristotle set the stage for the enduring debates in the field of metaphor theory.

**Traditional Substitution, Comparison, and Interaction Views**

This conflict-ridden narrative of the much-maligned metaphor, the “archetype of tropes” (Ortony, 1993b, p. 3) continues in modern philosophy. Contemporary theorists continue to argue over whether metaphors are simply stylistic (poetic or rhetorical/persuasive) or are more cognitively significant. The attempt to define metaphor and determine the significance of metaphorical discourse runs through 20th century philosophy, and is divided into three major schools of thought, known as the substitution, comparison, and interaction views. These views, while still valuable for
metaphor researchers (Cameron, 2003, p. 14), convey a limited view of metaphor similar to that of the Greek philosophers:

These three theories work with restricted views of metaphor and of language, influenced by the rise of logical positivism in philosophy, which postulated not only the possibility of literal language, but also its primacy. Metaphor was said to exist, in contrast to literal language, as decoration or ornament, and to be constructed deliberately for poetic effect. (Cameron, 2003, p. 15)

The limits of these views have been explored by more contemporary theorists.

The first of these schools is the substitution view of metaphor, which can be traced back to Aristotle. In this view, metaphor is a “renaming” of the tenor by the vehicle. I. A. Richards, in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, coins terms for the components of a metaphor: the tenor is the subject to which the characteristics are assigned, and the vehicle is the object whose characteristics are transferred. For example, in the metaphor *school is an insane asylum*, is a renaming of *school* (the tenor) with *insane asylum* (the vehicle). From this perspective, “a metaphorical expression can be meaningful only if it can be paraphrased in language that is nonmetaphorical” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 120). Cameron claims, “the idea of mapping across conceptual domains is reduced to the linking of concepts or entities, with the relations in the domains left out of the picture” (2003, p. 15). In other words, the scope and significance of the metaphor are greatly reduced in the substitution view. Philosopher Max Black calls this a simplistic view of metaphor, in which the sentence containing insane asylum would be seen as a simple replacement of a number of literal sentences. The inherent assumption of this perspective
is that metaphors can be paraphrased and that there are literal equivalents of metaphors; this implies that metaphors are pure decoration (Cameron, 2003, p. 15). There is considerable contemporary dissent, however, about this perspective on metaphor:

The principle that a literal equivalent of a metaphor can be found and will work as a paraphrase of it, also entails that metaphor is decorative and can be dispensed with, without any loss of meaning. For those who see metaphor as creative and essentially irreducible, this principle and its entailments lie at the heart of the weakness of the substitution theory. It is further weakened if metaphor is characterized as renaming. (Cameron, 2003, p. 16)

In sum, modern theorists see the substitution view as missing the true meaning of a metaphor, which cannot necessarily be restated in the form of a paraphrase; these theorists ask: if a metaphor is more significant than that which can be paraphrased, what is the true nature of metaphor?

This question is further explored in the comparison view, a variance of the substitution view, and one that involves an implicit comparison as a specific type of metaphor as substitution (Cameron, 2003, p. 16). This theory, like the substitution view, is focused on language, disregarding conceptual aspects of metaphor. In this view, the “literal equivalent to the metaphor is held to be a comparison, or a statement of similarity” (Black, in Cameron, 2003, p. 16). The gist of the view is that

All ordinary, conventional language (called ‘literal language’) is semantically autonomous, that it forms the basis for metaphor, and that metaphor stands outside of it . . . and it is capable of making reference to objective reality . . .
which is taken to have an existence independent of any human understanding; that is, it is taken to be ‘mind free.’ Consequently, statements made in literal language are capable of being objectively true or false. (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 114)

From this perspective, conventional language is not metaphorical; “all concepts expressed by conventional language must be semantically autonomous and hence not metaphorical. This is in accord with the common philosophical view that all concepts are reflections of objective reality, and hence cannot be metaphorical” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 115). Further, this emphasis on similarity leads to the view that noticing a metaphoric connection between two nonmetaphoric concepts is no more than noticing that the two concepts share some ‘literal,’ nonmetaphoric properties. Metaphor, on this view, is merely a spotlight, bringing to our attention the details of the similarity between two nonmetaphoric concepts but having no effect on the structure of these concepts or on the understanding of them. (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 123)

This disputes the argument that similitude is the foundation of metaphorical comparison; they extend the consequence of such comparison in their theory.

The comparison view also maintains that metaphor can be seen as a compressed simile, and the metaphorical school is an insane asylum can be expanded into school is like an insane asylum. The discovery of similarities between school and an insane asylum would then explain the metaphor's meaning. This theory “suggests that there should be a literal equivalent to every metaphor, since the similarities generated by the metaphorical comparison are held to be accessible to full literal explication” (Cameron,
A major shortcoming of this theory is explored by Cameron: “The theory suggests that there should be a literal equivalent to every metaphor, since the similarities generated by the metaphorical comparison are held to be accessible to full literal explication” (Cameron, 2003, p. 16). At this point in the history of metaphor, theorists were still divided on whether an extension of the comparison inherent in a metaphor is truly equivalent to the metaphorical utterance itself, and a third primary theory, the interaction view, was developed to address this schism.

The study of this conundrum remained relatively stagnant until I. A. Richards picked up this trajectory of metaphor scholarship, adding a relational dimension to the metaphorical process. The publication of Richards’ foundational work, The Philosophy of Rhetoric, sparked the intense period of debate. This work included a set of terms for use in the discussion of metaphor including the “topic” or “tenor,” the “vehicle,” and the “ground” of the metaphor; it included Richards’ ideas about the function of metaphor—this theory, called the tensive view, “emphasized the conceptual incompatibility, the ‘tension,’ between the terms (the topic and the vehicle) in a metaphor” (Ortony, 1993b, p. 3). This tension became the focus for subsequent theoretical exploration.

Building on the trajectory of thought first penned by Richards, in 1955 Max Black published his revolutionary essay “Metaphor,” which “brought the cognitive role of metaphor back to center stage after a long time reduced to mere linguistic decoration” (Cameron, 2003, p. 17), addressing the concerns in metaphor theory and countering the dominant view of metaphor at the time, the substitution view. Black’s theory accounts for “the creation of new understandings through metaphor” and describes metaphor as a
Process of the imagination . . . [which] could ignite or fuse images and perspectives into a creative new whole” so that a “mental process linking topic and vehicle generates new and irreducible meanings, rather than activating pre-existing similarities (as in the substitution and comparison views). (Cameron, 2003, p. 17)

Suddenly, metaphor was no longer a simple renaming; it begot new meaning beyond the literal and the similar.

The substitution view, Black asserts, holds that a metaphor replaces some “equivalent” literal expression and, as Black explains:

Treats a metaphorical expression (M) as a substitute for some other literal expression (L) which would have expressed the same meaning, had it been used instead . . . the meaning of M, in its metaphorical occurrence, is just the literal meaning of L. The metaphorical use of an expression consists, on this view, of the use of that expression in other than its proper or normal sense, in some context that allows the improper or abnormal sense to be detected and approximately transformed . . . the focus of the metaphor, the word or expression having a distinctively metaphorical use within a literal frame, is used to communicate a meaning that might have been expressed literally. The author substitutes M for L; it is the reader’s task to invert the substitution, by using the literal meaning of M as a clue to the intended literal meaning of L. Understanding metaphor is like deciphering a code or unraveling a riddle. (Black, 1981, pp. 68-69)
The substitution view (the traditional perspective held by writers, literary critics, and rhetoricians until Black proposed his alternative theory) “tells us that something is being indirectly said about” the two parts of the metaphorical expression (Black, 1981, p. 73), and is seen in Whatley’s definition of metaphor: “a word substituted for another on account of the resemblance or analogy between their significations” (Whatley, in Black, 1981, p. 68); this substitution view is also embedded in the words of poet X. J. Kennedy: These are figurative “comparisons between two things whose similarity we’ve never noticed before” (Kennedy, 2007, p.110). This is not literal truth; it provides pleasure (Kennedy, 2007). There is a sudden recognition of likeness when “a speaker or writer departs from the usual denotations of words . . . connotations come to mind, and we see ways in which [the two items begin compared] are alike” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 110). Kennedy’s emphasis on likeness shows the substitution view.

Black problematizes this “strongly entrenched” (1981, p. 68) “decorative” (p. 71) definition of metaphor, and asks: Why would the writer want the reader to decipher such a code or solve such a riddle? Black’s answer is that there may “be no literal equivalent” (p. 69) because the metaphorical expression may “plug the gaps in the literal vocabulary,” and therefore be considered a form of catachresis.

But if a catachresis serves a genuine need, the new sense will quickly become part of the literal sense, as in the use of the word orange for a color . . . It is the fate of catachresis to disappear when it is successful. (1981, p. 69)
Black notes these metaphorical statements become so frequently used that they no longer pack a rhetorical punch. Moreover, Black states, the use of metaphor may also be attributed to stylistic preference:

We are told that the metaphorical expression may (in its literal use) refer to a more concrete object than would its literal equivalent; and this is supposed to give pleasure to the reader . . . the principle behind these ‘explanations’ seems to be: When in doubt about some peculiarity of language, attribute its existence to the pleasure it gives a reader. A principle that has the merit of working well in default of any evidence [and holds that] any figure of speech involving semantic change (and not merely syntactic change . . .) consists in some transformation of a literal meaning. (1981, p. 70)

This type of transformation is the impetus for more contemporary thought on metaphor.

A particular form of the substitution view, Black (1981) claims, is the comparison view, which offers more detailed paraphrases of the metaphorical expression. This view holds that metaphorical expressions present some comparison between the two parts of the metaphor (p. 73), and that “M is either similar or analogous in meaning to its literal equivalent L” (p. 71). For example, if one were to say that the boy is like a gazelle, in this view the “original statement is interpreted as being about” the boy as well as the gazelle. Black’s issue with this perspective is that it “suffers from a vagueness that borders upon vacuity” (p. 71) and he concludes that

Metaphorical statement is not a substitute for a formal comparison or any other kind of literal statement but has its own distinctive capacities and achievements.
. . . It would be more illuminating to say that the metaphor creates the similarity than to say it formulates some similarity antecedently existing. (Black, 1981, p. 72)

In this view, the “transformative function” of the metaphor is analogy or similarity, and the reader must “detect the ground” of the intended analogy or simile (with the help of the frame, or clues drawn from the wider context)” and “retrace the author’s path and so reach the original literal meaning (L)” (Black, 1981, p. 71). Black sees that there is a process or exchange element missing from these views. Hence, he describes his interaction theory, which effectively filled this void. This theory contains the idea that in a metaphor, “the two complexes interact through mental processes of selection, mapping, and organization to produce a new understanding that can’t be paraphrased with literal equivalents” (Cameron, 2003, p. 17). This critical claim establishes that metaphor creates meaning, rather than simply renaming an idea: “in the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is a resultant of their interaction” (Black, 1981, p. 72). In other words, the focal word

Obtains a new meaning, which is not quite its meaning in literal uses, nor quite the meaning which any literal substitute would have. The new context [or frame of the metaphor] imposes extension of meaning upon the focal word . . . for the metaphor to work the reader must remain aware of the extension of meaning—must attend to both the old and new meanings together. (Black, 1981, p. 73)

This is the interactive metaphorical effect.
Analysis of this interaction is yet another trajectory of metaphor theory. Richards (in Black, 1981, p. 73) claims that, upon noticing a metaphor,

The reader is forced to ‘connect’ the two ideas. In this ‘connexion’ resides the secret and the mystery of metaphor. To speak of the ‘interaction’ of two thought ‘active together’ (or again of their ‘interillumination’ or ‘cooperation’) is to use a metaphor emphasizing the dynamic aspects of a good reader’s response to a non-trivial metaphor. (Black, 1981, p. 73)

The two ideas, Black calls the principal subject and the subsidiary subject, and he expresses his interaction view as seeing a metaphor as a filter or screen through which the principal subject is seen, “the principal subject is ‘seen through the metaphorical expression—or . . . that the principal subject is ‘projected upon’ the field of the subsidiary subject” (Black, 1981, p. 75) which evokes a system of commonplaces, and “each of these implied assertions is now to be made to fit the principal subject either in normal or abnormal senses . . . the metaphor suppresses some details, emphasizes others—in short, organizes our view” (Black, 1981, p. 75).

Drawing on Aristotle’s concept of endoxa, Black claims that in metaphor interpretation, the listener or reader “would bring to the metaphor an interpretation, or a ‘system of associated commonplaces’” (Cameron, 2003, p. 17). He would later reword this to call it the “implicative complex” in 1993.

Reference to ‘associated commonplaces’ will fit the commonest cases where the author simply plays upon the stock of common knowledge (and common misinformation) presumably shared by the reader and himself. But in a poem, or
a piece of sustained prose, the writer can establish a novel pattern or implications for the literal uses of the key expressions, prior to using them as vehicles for his metaphors . . . Metaphors can be supported by specially constructed systems of implications, as well as by accepted commonplaces; they can be made to measure. (Black, 1981, p. 77)

Whereas literal statements can replace substitution and comparison metaphors, interaction metaphors:

Mode of operation requires the reader to use a system of implications as a means for selecting, emphasizing, and organizing relations in a different field. The use of the ‘subsidiary subject’ to foster insight about a ‘principal subject’ is a distinctive intellectual operation, demanding simultaneous awareness of both subjects but not reducible to any comparison between the two . . . But the set of literal statements . . . will not have the same power to inform and enlighten as the original. The literal paraphrase inevitably says too much—with the wrong emphasis . . . it fails to be a translation because it fails to give the insight that the metaphor did. (Black, 1981, p. 77)

In this passage, Black explains that the metaphor cannot be literally translated; both aspects must be considered simultaneously in order to comprehend the interactive process. Black’s proposal had profound implications for future metaphor theory: it created a new thread of metaphor study, one that was further explored by Michael Reddy in his theory of the conduit metaphor of communication; by Lakoff, Turner and Johnson, who, rejecting the simplicity of the comparison and substitution views and the
bidirectionality of the interaction view, developed the theory of conceptual metaphor, in which metaphor is redefined as “a species of conceptual mapping” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989, p. 137); and by Lynne Cameron (2003), known for her work in linguistics and metaphor, as an overlapping of ideas.

Extending these ideas, linguist Michael Reddy’s radical piece, “The Conduit Metaphor,” built on interaction theory, offers a startling revelation: there exists an unacknowledged, guiding metaphor for communication in our society. The communicator is, in this subtly ingrained metaphor laid bare by Reddy, giving the receiver a piece of communication via a conduit. Until Reddy’s work became known, communication was commonly referred to as a metaphorical conduit, but this practice remained unacknowledged and unexamined. The identification of the implicit, systemic conduit metaphor for communication was a revelation.

In *Metaphor and Thought*, George Lakoff (1993), who was heavily influenced by Reddy, describes the profound impact of Reddy’s uncovering of the implicit conceptual metaphor for communication:

> The contemporary theory that metaphor is primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language can be traced to Michael Reddy’s now classic essay . . . With a single, thoroughly analyzed example, he allowed us to see, albeit in a restricted domain, that ordinary everyday English is largely metaphorical, dispelling once and for all the traditional view that metaphor is primarily in the realm of poetic or “figurative” language. Reddy showed, for a single, very significant case, that the locus of metaphor is thought, not language,
that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience. Though other theorists had noticed some of these characteristics of metaphor, Reddy was the first to demonstrate them by rigorous linguistic analysis, stating generalizations over voluminous examples. Reddy’s chapter on how we conceptualize the concept of communication by metaphor gives us a tiny glimpse of an enormous system of conceptual metaphor. (1993, p. 204)

Since Reddy’s publication of “The Conduit Metaphor,” Lakoff notes, a new trajectory of cognitive science and linguistics has been extended to help understand the metaphorical thought complexes that undergird much of linguistic structure (Lakoff, 1993, p. 204).

**Lakoff and Johnson’s Metaphor Theory**

The next breakthrough in metaphor theory occurred in 1980, when linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson published their seminal text, *Metaphors We Live By*, which outlines the authors’ innovative views about the function of metaphor in daily life. After centuries of dissent, these theorists put forth a branch of metaphor theory that addresses the past contentions and synthesizes aspects of previous theory to create a solid, comprehensive theory of metaphor. According Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor is ubiquitous in everyday human existence (1980, p. 3). Extending the work of previous theorists, the theory delves deep into the connection between metaphor and the human conceptual system: “Not only are human thought processes in large part metaphorical, but the human conceptual system itself is metaphorically structured and
defined. Metaphors as linguistic expressions are possible precisely because there are metaphors in a person’s conceptual system” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 6). This acknowledgment of the entrenchment of metaphor in the human conceptual system forever changed the way scholars see metaphor. The assertion that metaphors exist in our human conceptual systems gave new life to metaphor study—this gave metaphor the significance that had historically evaded it.

Further, Lakoff and Johnson posit, there are “many possible physical and social bases for metaphor” and these metaphors are “rooted in cultural experience” (1980, p. 18). In order to show this experiential influence, they categorize types of metaphors, including orientational metaphors, for example, those that “organize a whole system of concepts with respect to one another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980 p. 14) and

Have to do with spatial orientation: up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, deep-shallow, central-peripheral. These spatial orientations arise from the fact that we have bodies of the sort and that they function as they do in our physical environment . . . Such metaphorical orientations are not arbitrary. They have a basis in our cultural experience. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 14)

Physical human experiences, they argue, help shape humans’ metaphors. This idea that biological or physiological experience shapes humans’ thinking processes, this theory of embodied cognition, was revolutionary.

One notable example of an orientational metaphor given by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) is “having control or force is up; being subject to control or force is down” and the metaphors in its subcategories include
I have control over her. I am on top of the situation. He’s in a superior position. He’s at the height of power. He’s in the high command. He’s in the upper echelon. His power rose. He ranks above me in strength. He is under my control. He fell from power. His power is on the decline. He is my social inferior. He is the low man on the totem pole. (p. 15)

Lakoff and Johnson then speculate that the “possible” (1980, p. 19) physical basis for these metaphors is that physical size is equated with physical strength, and the person who wins the fight is physically on top of the loser. A second illustrative example is: “high status is up; low status is down.” The metaphors in this category are “He has a lofty position. She’ll rise to the top. He’s at the peak of his career. He’s climbing the ladder. He has little upward mobility. He’s at the bottom of the social hierarchy. She fell in status” and the authors claimed that these metaphors have both a social and physical basis—that “status is correlated with (social) power and (physical) power is up” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 16). Having control is viewed as “up,” having his status is correlated with “up,” “up” connotes social power, and these conceptions are shaped by human experience.

A third subset of this metaphor is “virtue is up; depravity is down” and the examples provided are

He is high-minded. She has high standards. She is upright. She is an upstanding citizen. That was a low trick. Don’t be underhanded. I wouldn’t stoop to that. That would be beneath me. He fell into the abyss of depravity. That was a low-down thing to do. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, pp. 16-17)
Again, experience provides the grounding for the figurative comparison. These metaphors stem from experiences in the world. An illustrative example explored by Lakoff and Johnson is the argument is war metaphor. In this metaphor, we “don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and defend our own” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4).

The connections also extend to cultural values. The roots of metaphor are both experiential and contextual. “The most fundamental values in a culture will be coherent with the metaphorical structure of the most fundamental concepts in the culture,” claim Lakoff and Johnson: “These values are deeply embedded in our culture . . . So it seems that our values are not independent but must form a coherent system with the metaphorical concepts we live by” (1980, p. 22). Presenting the roots of metaphor as cultural and physical, Lakoff and Johnson’s work revolutionized thinking about metaphor.

There was a striking “shift in metaphor studies that occurred from 1980 onwards as a result of Lakoff and Johnson’s Metaphors We Live By—the ‘cognitive turn’” (Gibbs, in Cameron, 2010, p. 5). These “conceptual metaphors” studied by Lakoff, are “figurative phrases that describe fundamental abstract concepts using the language of physiology and physical experience” and without them, “Lakoff and other advocates of embodied cognition believe, we would have no way of talking about—or even thinking about—abstractions like love, beauty, suffering, and joy” (Geary, 2011, pp. 90-91). This work shifted the dominant mode of thinking about metaphor. “This shift introduced the
idea of ‘conceptual metaphor’ as a mapping between two domains in the conceptual system, which may give rise to metaphorical language” (Cameron, 2010, p. 5). The innovative view that metaphor is conceptual as well as linguistic is one that has remained dominant in the field to the current day.

In 2003, Lakoff and Johnson further refined the ideas posited in their initial work. This revision extends the claim that metaphors undergird the most important aspects of human existence, asserting that:

Metaphorical thought is normal and ubiquitous in our mental life, both conscious and unconscious. The same mechanisms of metaphorical thought used throughout poetry are present in our most common concepts: time, causation, emotion, ethics, and business, to name a few. Conceptual metaphors even lie behind the building of computer interfaces (e.g., the desktop metaphor) and the structuring of the Internet into “information highways,” “department stores,” “chat rooms,” . . . and so on. It is the systematicity of metaphorical thought that permits such applications. (p. 244)

Countering contemporary claims that curtail the significance of metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson bring to bear a blend of linguistic and philosophical perspectives on the metaphor debate, putting to rest many of the questions and ambiguities that had dominated the discussion of metaphor, asserting the importance of metaphor in thought, not only language: “metaphor is a natural phenomenon” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 247) they claim, and “how we think metaphorically matters” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 243); illustrating this with the example of the multifaceted conceptualization of marriage:
Is your marriage a partnership, a journey through life together, a haven from the outside world, a means for growth, or a union of two people into a third entity? The choice among such common ways of conceptualizing marriage can determine what your marriage becomes. Drastic metaphorical differences can result in marital conflict. Take for example the case where one spouse views marriage as a partnership, and the other spouse views it as a haven. The responsibilities of a partnership may well be at odds with the relief from responsibilities characteristic of a haven. (2003, p. 244)

These examples are posed in opposition to philosopher Donald Davidson’s dismissal of metaphor’s significance: “metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more” (Davidson, 2001, p. 201). Lakoff and Johnson counter this type of view, which they see as stemming from “common assumptions held in both analytic philosophy and throughout the Western tradition, namely, that concepts are all conscious, literal, and disembodied, that is, not crucially shaped by the body and the brain” (2003, p. 271). Further, they note that our sensory-motor experiences in the world around us influence our perceptions of other domains:

The heart of metaphor is inference. Conceptual metaphor allows inferences in sensory-motor domains (e.g., domains of space and objects) to be used to draw inferences about other domains (e.g., domains of subjective judgment, with concepts like intimacy, emotions, justice, and so on.) Because we reason in terms of metaphor, the metaphors we use determine a great deal about how we live our lives. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 244)
In metaphorical thinking,

One concept is understood in terms of the other. The abstract is understood in terms of the concrete, the metaphysical in the context of the physical, the emotional in the context of the biological. Through metaphor, body and mind are inextricably intertwined. (Geary, 2011, p. 93)

Citing an immense body of empirical evidence that supports “the central role of metaphor in abstract thought,” Lakoff and Johnson (2003) note that many choose to refute or ignore this data; going back to Aristotle, the authors describe four historical obstacles to accepting the significance of metaphorical thought. These include the idea that metaphor is not about concepts, but is instead simply a matter of words, which they counter by claiming “the locus of metaphor is in concepts, not words.” The problem with this view arises, they posit, when seeing metaphors as simple verbal utterances, instead of as concerned with “conceptualization and reasoning” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 245).

This traditional mode of thinking, they argue, prevents many readers from considering the possibility that humans actually think metaphorically. The second is that metaphor is rooted in similarity—the pervasive view that began with Aristotle. Lakoff and Johnson dispute the validity of this idea, arguing instead that metaphorical thinking is

Typically based on cross-domain correlations in our experience, which give rise to the perceived similarities between the two domains within the metaphor. For example, the persistent use of a metaphor may create perceived similarities, as when a love relationship, conceived of as a partnership, goes awry. (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 245)
In other words, in a mapping, a semblance of similarity is imposed upon two unlike entities. The third obstacle is the belief that “all concepts are literal and none can be metaphorical,” which these authors claim is erroneous:

Even our deepest and most abiding concepts—time, events, causation, morality, and mind itself—are understood and reasoned about via multiple metaphors. In each case, one conceptual domain (say, time) is reasoned about, as well as talked about, in terms of the conceptual structure of another domain (say, space). (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 245)

They elucidate the “phenomenon” of conventional metaphor as metaphorical language that generally remains unnoticed and undiscussed. They point out that typically, philosophy focuses on literal language, which is presumed to be “mutually exclusive with metaphor.” On the contrary, they posit, “much of our ordinary conceptual system and the bulk of our everyday conventional language are structured and understood primarily in metaphorical terms” (Johnson, 1981, p. 286). The fourth alleged fallacy is that rational thought is “in no way shaped by the nature of our brains and bodies” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 244), which they combat by asserting that our system of conceptual metaphors is created by “the common nature of our bodies and the shared ways that we all function in the everyday world,” and it is not simply “arbitrary” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 245).

In essence, the impetus for metaphor is dual: bodily experience and context. Recent neurological research supports the theory of conceptual metaphor: “gnostic neurons may be crucial in forming long-term memories as well as enduring concepts, which may arise
from the repeated associations of specific physical stimuli with specific abstract representations” (Geary, 2011, p. 92).

Finally, they emphasize the point that “if conceptual metaphors are real, we can no longer pretend to build an account of concepts and knowledge based on objective, literal foundations” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 273); they also acknowledge, however, the fact that continual tension in the field of metaphor theory is likely to remain, as the notion of conceptual metaphor is “inconsistent with the assumptions that many people in the academic world and elsewhere first learned and that shaped the research agendas they still pursue” (2003, p. 273). Moreover, they recognize that their theory is in some respects seemingly incompatible with many postmodern theories that “claim that meaning is ungrounded and simply an arbitrary cultural construction” (2003, p. 273). These authors emphasize that universal and cultural qualities are both present in metaphor. As a result, modern theorists have attempted to broaden the application of metaphor theory to other academic fields. As Cameron notes,

One of the key contributions of conceptual metaphor theory has been to highlight the systemic nature of conventionalized metaphors in language usage across discourse communities. The use of health metaphors to talk about finances in English, for example, can cover both healthy and sick financial conditions, ailing and recovering economies, and even emergency measures to save banks. (2010b, p. 5)

This systematicity is the basis for many subsequent explorations into the implications of metaphor use. The vehicle terms of metaphors, which often “carry evaluations, attitudes,
values, perspectives, or beliefs” (Cameron, 2010b, p.6), have proven to be keys that can unlock perspectives on critical issues.

**Metaphor Theory and its Implications for Educational Research**

There is much more to metaphor than simple words, contemporary theorists argue. Claiming that the true nature of metaphor is “not a matter of definition; it is a question of the nature of cognition” (2003, p. 246), Lakoff and Johnson dismiss the importance of the ongoing struggle to define metaphor, which had been the locus of so much debate during the 20th century. They call for an end to simple a priori philosophizing as well as a cessation of the reduction of the phenomenon of metaphorocity to simply linguistic terms. They assert that humans “systematically use inference patterns from one conceptual domain to another conceptual domain” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 246), the process of which they call conceptual metaphor. This calls for an acceptance of a premise that has been dismissed historically. Accepting the critical role of metaphor requires a shift in thinking, because, in fact, “The system of conceptual metaphors is not arbitrary or just historically contingent; rather, it is shaped to a significant extent by the common nature of our bodies and the shared ways that we all function in the everyday world” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 245). Analysis of these systems has the potential to impact:

- all aspects of our lives, including war and peace, the environment health, and other political and social issues. It bears directly on how we understand our own personal lives, and it bears directly on intellectual disciplines like philosophy,
mathematics, and literary studies, all of which have important cultural effects.

(Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 246)

As they assessed the development and new implications of metaphor theory in the two previous decades, they wrote that the impact was seen in “field after field—not just linguistics, cognitive science, and philosophy but also literary studies, politics, law, clinical psychology, religion, and even mathematics and philosophy of science” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 243). This extends, arguably, to education as well, because metaphor, according to Cameron, can offer information far beyond the literal:

Metaphor is thus a multi-faceted phenomenon, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the idea of metaphor encompasses multiple phenomena. The attraction of metaphor as a research tool lies in what it can tell us about the people who use it . . . linguistic metaphors in discourse can tell us something about how people are thinking, can indicate socio-cultural conventions that people are tied into or what they may be rejecting, and can reveal something of speakers’ emotions, attitudes, and beliefs. To use metaphor as a research tool we need to first identify metaphors in relevant discourse; we need to consider why these metaphors were used at their particular points in the discourse activity, i.e., the discourse function of the metaphors; we need to find patterns in metaphor use and function; from patterns in the data, we can make inferences about the people using the metaphors. (Cameron, 2010b, p. 7)

An opportunity is apparent in the study of metaphor: its use in analyzing aspects of education, specifically, individuals’ personal metaphors for school within one
educational space and what these reveal: whether they clash with one another or contribute to a functioning whole. There are a number of aspects of education that can be studied based on the claim that experiential metaphors can help us ascertain how we live. Looking at the specialized case of educational metaphors and the underlying meanings of these metaphors has the potential to reveal much about historical and current educational values. Therefore, investigating how humans “think metaphorically” and how these metaphors stem from embodied experience (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 246-247) in education has been the core of my research. The study of metaphors for school, their experiential bases, individual variances, inherent conflicts, and impact on students, therefore, are the focus of this project. Through the study of narratives that illustrate metaphors, this dissertation also documents how educational metaphors both stem from one’s context and create one’s reality, how they both reveal and influence thoughts and experiences.

Looking at students’ metaphors reveals interesting and significant patterns. In the study, lines of inquiry that were followed, relating Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory to educational metaphors, included: What can be learned through the study of a large pool of educational metaphors? What are the metaphors of those who live the school experience (experientially) every day—students and teachers? What are the metaphors used for school and what are their entailments? What are the experiential bases for these metaphors? Can they be categorized? What themes emerge? Do these themes point at larger conceptual metaphors at work? Emerging from Aristotle’s concept of endoxa and Black’s interaction theory, questions included: If metaphors add to our
understanding of the world and the writer’s idea on a level different from literal language, what can we learn about others’ experiences from the creation, explication, and deliberation of educational metaphors? Within one school culture, how are different metaphors based on one’s past experiences? Where there is agreement, “can we specify the properties which give rise to this agreement, and if so, are these properties . . . part of the belief system of the language users?” (Ortony, 1993a, p. 330). Which particular families of metaphor emerge as one studies metaphors for school within one context? Further, what are the bases for the major educational metaphors in American culture and specific school cultures? Are there any correlations among these metaphors? The questions that were asked in the analysis of the data included: What if there are conflicting metaphors at work (consciously or unconsciously) in one school context or building? Can studying metaphor help uncover tensions we may be otherwise unaware of in buildings and communities? What insights can be gained from explicating and examining them? What can we learn from asking about the experiences that created them? Examining the plethora of metaphors at work within one school has the potential to yield profound results.

Beyond the walls of the school, studying related metaphorical language in other educational discourse has proven enlightening as well. Educational metaphors also emerge from a social and historical discourse context. Human beings conceive of ideas metaphorically, and therefore think metaphorically—our metaphors may also result in part from action in the educational process and from discourse as well, including policies that stem from historical metaphorical conception of education. Because metaphor is
experientially based, tracing metaphorical ideas to their bases in historical educational texts and their contexts, and then linking them with their current educational ideas and their contexts may show that they are “not just abstract and arbitrary mappings,” because we “use inference patterns from one conceptual domain to reason about another conceptual domain” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 246). Because the implications of dominant societal educational metaphors are significant, understanding their background is as well. Studying our historical metaphors helps us understand our current ones. According to Geary, “metaphor is so essential that it is impossible to describe emotions, abstract concepts, complex ideas, or practically anything else without it” (2011, p. 11).

This research focused on finding evidence of the connections between students’ metaphorical conceptions of school and the experiences from which they emerge; asking students to write about their metaphorical conceptions of school and about the experiences that contributed to the students’ metaphorical conceptions was the method of obtaining this data, which I then analyzed using deep analysis, looking for systems of metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 249). Throughout the study it became apparent that, analogous to Lakoff and Johnson’s marriage example, students and teachers possess vastly different and conflicting metaphors for school, and these metaphorical differences both reveal and reinforce mismatched experiences (often unacknowledged) within schools, districts, or larger contexts. Unpacking these metaphors aids in understanding the metaphorical differences that give rise to these conflicts. This discovery of multiple metaphors for school at work in one school space, and the study of conflicting metaphors, provides possible grounds for better understanding of issues within schools.
This study began with questions about students’ figurative conceptions of school. They are, after all, immersed in the experience of schooling daily. According to Aristotle, “a good metaphor places things in new light, so that we can see them in a way we have never seen them before” (Aristotle, in Johnson, 1981, p. 7). Thus, it ought to “set the scene before our eyes” with a vividness that induces an altered perspective, allowing us to “get a hold of new ideas” (Aristotle, in Johnson, 1981, p. 7). And there is much to be learned from these enigmatic apparitions of imaginative minds.
CHAPTER III

DOMINANT HISTORICAL EDUCATIONAL METAPHORS

If an educator wants to prompt a heated class discussion, she needs only to show RSA Animate’s “Changing Educational Paradigms,” an animated short film which features a factory conveyor belt producing educated students, sorting them, and stamping them with a date of manufacture. If a teacher wants to evoke an intense emotional reaction, the 2011 documentary Waiting for Superman includes an animated segment that depicts the “dropout factory”—the urban high school that purportedly perpetuates the cycle of poverty in a particular community. This cartoon metaphor resonates strongly with viewers because it stems from the root metaphor that has become so ingrained in discourse about education that is no longer seems figurative: the public school as factory. This figuration still permeates educational discourse; now, most often it is used disparagingly, as something to avoid in educational practice. But its persistent use prompts the questions: Where did this root metaphor originate? And where and why is it still lingering? For the answer, one must turn to the educational thought of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the early 20th century, two critical trajectories in American thinking about education emerged, as noted by historian David Tyack: one that was primarily concerned with issues of efficiency and the alignment of schooling practices with the needs of the economy, and one that focused on how instruction should change to meet the needs of children. Two distinctly different metaphors were used in their seminal works, metaphors that are deeply embedded in educational discourse, even today. These
conflicting metaphors continue to interact in our talk about education: one with economic connotations, those of competition and capitalism, used by John Franklin Bobbitt; and one that emphasizes democracy and community, growth and connectedness, used by John Dewey.

**Bobbitt’s School as Factory**

As the United States became fully immersed in the industrial era and grappled with the consequent changes in schools, a dominant metaphor emerged in the language of educational reform: the school as a figurative factory. This metaphor is arguably still a root metaphor in contemporary discourse about education. This type of metaphor can be directly traced back to Horace Mann’s use of an “oft-cited industrial metaphor,” with which he

> Argues that education could thus serve as the ‘balance wheel’ of society, preventing inequality from leading to destructive conflict and helping all the varied groups in society contribute to social and economic progress. This reasoning became the cornerstone of the common school tradition. (Curti & Vinovskis, in Rury, 2002, p. 76)

During and after the Industrial Revolution, industrial imagery abounded and as American factories attempted to streamline management and maximize output and their language merged with those of educational reformers.

The root metaphor of the school as an efficient factory is inextricably linked to the social efficiency movement. Early 20th century social-efficiency educators wanted schools to cater to society’s economic needs. They emphasized practicality, arguing that
schools should offer students differentiated training based on their future role in the labor force, and claiming that all courses should be evaluated based on how well they molded the student for their place in the workplace. Based on these criteria, they advocated vocational training in place of traditional, humanistic subjects. Their analysis of different occupations would indicate which courses students should take, thereby eliminating the courses that were superfluous or not needed for that particular occupation (Spring, 1989, p. 75). School administrators at the time spoke about and saw schools as factories:

During the early part of the twentieth century, school administrators developed a mania for bureaucratic efficiency. Viewing the schools as factories, they stressed standardization and uniformity of instruction. Efficiency administrators compared themselves to factory managers, where power flowed from the top of the organization to the bottom. This meant that just as they believed administrators should control and dominate teachers, teachers should control and dominate students. (Spring, 1989, p. 81)

These social efficiency educators believed that the transference of techniques from industry to education would yield productive results:

By applying the standardization techniques of industry to the business of schooling, waste could be eliminated and the curriculum, as seen by such later exponents of social efficiency . . . could be made more directly functional to the adult life-roles that America’s future citizens would occupy. (Kliebard, 1995, p. 24)
Many of these practices, which came from the management of factories themselves, were results of the work of Frederick Winslow Taylor, an engineer. At the turn of the century, Taylor, a proponent of scientific management in industry, had a powerful influence on the concept of “efficiency” as it has been applied to American education, even if he did not focus on education himself. Taylor’s goal in factories was to lower expenditures and maximize production, but “beyond that economic purpose lay a penchant for order and regulation” (Kliebard, 1995, p. 81). With the publication of Principles of Scientific Management in 1911, Taylor became known as a “prophet of a new order in industrial society. The heart of scientific management lay in the careful specification of the task to be performed and the ordering of the elements of that task in the most efficient sequence” (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 82-83). In fact, during the scientific fervor of the social efficiency movement:

    The application of Taylor’s system of managing factories to the management of schools was the most immediate and most natural step. In time, however, the use of scientific management techniques went far beyond the application of Taylor’s ideas to the administration of schools; it ultimately provided the language and hence the conceptual apparatus by which a new and powerful approach to curriculum development would be wrought. The route by which scientific management became the basis for an education doctrine is actually no mystery. Those educational leaders who forged the new doctrine made no secret of the source of their ideas, self-consciously and conspicuously following the principles of Taylorism in an effort to make the curriculum a direct and potent force in the
lives of future citizens and, ultimately, an instrument for creating a stable and smoothly functioning society. (Kliebard, 1995, p. 83)

Through the application of effective scientific management techniques, Taylor’s essential purpose was to reduce societal strife: Taylor’s “watchword was efficiency, but through efficiency he was trying to achieve the higher purpose of a more orderly and less contentious society” (Kliebard, 1995, pp. 82-83). This call for order resonated with many educational reformers of the time.

A supporter of Taylor’s ideas, John Franklin Bobbitt was the quintessential social-efficiency educator. An efficiency-minded education reformer and instructor in curriculum at the University of Chicago, Bobbitt pushed to replace the classics with a curriculum that would suit society’s needs, and, consequently, he became enamored with the industrial factory metaphor for school. In 1912, Bobbitt published an article on curriculum entitled “The Elimination of Waste in Education,” in which he espoused the “platoon system” in use in schools in Gary, Indiana, lauding evidence that “the usual plant, if it is fully equipped is operated during school hours as about 50% efficiency’ but that ‘the educational engineer at Gary was to formulate a plan of operating his plant during school hours at 100% efficiency’” (Bobbitt, in Kliebard, 1995, p. 84). Bobbitt’s factory metaphor is evident in the article; it permeates the entire piece. For example, here Bobbitt conceptualizes the school as a plant and describes the goal of this socially efficient plant:

The other possible method was to create a thoroughly modern school plant, equipped with every modern necessity; then to operate it according to recently
developed principles of scientific management, so as to get a maximum of service from a school plant and teaching staff of minimum size [before he described the management techniques of school administrators in similar terms].

But the new city was being built by engineers, superintendents, and business managers who were familiar with the principles of scientific management in the steel industry; and when the educational engineer appeared and showed how it was possible to introduce similar principles of scientific management into the operation of the school plant, his words fell upon understanding ears; and Gary, contrary to the usual plan, adopted the latter alternative. (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 260)

The need for time management is described, connecting to the overall objectives of social efficiency: “The first principle of scientific management is to use all of the plant all the available time” (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 260) and “although operating his plant six hours per day at the very high percentage of efficiency shown, still the educational engineer is not yet satisfied with the percentage of efficiency attained” (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 260). In this section, the efficiency-attuned “engineer” seeks to maximize the use of the “plant.” The consequence of Bobbitt’s metaphor should not be underestimated. This plant metaphor and its related terms had an astounding impact on subsequent schooling practices and the United States, Kliebard asserts:

Bobbitt’s use of such terms as ‘educational engineer’ to refer to the superintendent of schools and ‘plant’ to refer to the school was no merely decorative use of language; it had implications far broader than the pedestrian
question of space utilization. It provided the emerging curriculum field with the root metaphor on which a new and powerful theory of curriculum could be built. (Kliebard, 1995, p. 84)

Bobbitt espouses the importance of avoiding “idleness” and “loss,” reinforcing the theme of avoidance or elimination of waste. The importance of speed is implied here as well; time is underscored; there is an urgency in Bobbitt’s diction.

That an expensive plant should lie idle during all of Saturday and Sunday while ‘street and alley time’ is undoing the good work of the schools is a further thorn in the flesh of the clear-sighted educational engineer. That the plant should lie idle is one loss. That work already done should be undone is a further loss. Scientific management demands that the school buildings be in use Saturdays and Sundays. (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 263)

In addition, according to Bobbitt:

Naturally this feature of scientific management seemed to be a desirable means of economy at Gary; but unfortunately the antiquated legal machinery of the state forbade. All that is permitted them yet is the ten months of regular school, and the two months of voluntary vacation school. Gary will have the all-year school, however, as soon as the state officials see fit to make it legally possible. A second principle of scientific management is to reduce the number of workers to a minimum by keeping each at the maximum of his working efficiency. (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 264)
The elimination of waste is emphasized; there is also a focus on speed and efficiency.

Speed is valued, therefore, “retardation” and “laggards” are not. Bobbitt asserts:

A third principle of efficient management is to eliminate waste. Ayers has given us the figures that measure the waste of retardation. Gulick and others have shown the waste that results from ill-health and lowered vitality. Social workers are pointing out the waste of undoing the pernicious effects of the vicious street and alley influences. Gary attempts to reduce retardation to a minimum by two of three methods. Teachers during the study periods give individual attention to the laggards, teaching them how to study, helping them to overcome difficulties.

(Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 264)

Kliebard posits that this is a prescription for an education aligned with a preconceived role in society. According to Kliebard:

Individual variation in ability had, of course, been recognized well before Bobbitt’s time, but Bobbitt was now asserting that the curriculum be carefully adapted to each ‘class of individuals’ as part of the drive for the elimination of inefficiency in education. People, after all, should not be taught what they will never use. That was a waste. In order to reduce waste, educators had to institute a process of scientific measurement leading to a prediction as to one’s future role in life. That prediction would then become the basis of a differentiated curriculum. Within the framework of a new theory, ‘education according to need’ was simply another way of saying, education according to predicted social and vocational role.” For example, if males and females were fated to have different
roles in society later in life, it was “inefficient to train them in the same way.

(Kliebard, 1995, p. 85)

Bobbitt then extends his metaphor, likening students to raw materials and stratified curriculum as a means to “finish” the “product:”

The fourth principle of general scientific management is: Work up the raw material into that finished product for which it is best adapted. Applied to education this means: Educate the individual according to his capabilities. This requires that the materials of the curriculum be sufficiently various to meet the needs of every class of individuals in the community; and that the course of training and study be sufficiently flexible that the individual can be given just the things that he needs. (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 264)

However, Kliebard notes the nuance in the metaphor as well:

Bobbitt’s concern for the ‘raw material’ in the context of his theory was not so much as concern for individual well-being as it was part of an effort to eliminate waste in the curriculum and, by extension, in the social order generally. The doctrine of social efficiency held out the then very appealing prospect of scientifically attuning the curriculum to the requirements of the new industrial society. (Kliebard, 1995, p. 85)

The scientifically managed school-as-factory model also governs Bobbitt’s work on curriculum objectives. In 1918’s “Scientific Method in Curriculum-Making,” he uses the scientific method as the framing device for his ideas, and, in this discourse, the scientifically-managed factory metaphor is revealed as well; specifically, an efficient
factory that produces a particular “product,” ready to be useful to society. Here he focuses on the need for exact procedure and particularity in education:

The technique of curriculum-making along scientific lines has been but little developed. The controlling purposes of education have not been sufficiently particularized. We have aimed at a vague culture, and ill-defined discipline, a nebulous harmonious development of the individual, an indefinite moral character-building, an unparticularized social efficiency, or, often enough nothing more than escape from a life of work. Often there are no controlling purposes; the momentum of the educational machine keeps it running. So long as objectives are but vague guesses, or not even that, there can be no demand for anything but vague guesses as to means and procedure. But the era of contentment with large, undefined purposes is rapidly passing. An age of science is demanding exactness and particularity. (Bobbitt, 1918, as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2013, p. 10)

This passage shows again Bobbitt’s fixation on time, haste, and differentiation. Further, he asserts, in the aim of social efficiency:

The curriculum, however, is a primordial factor. If it is wrongly drawn up on the basis merely of guess and personal opinion, all of the science in the world applied to the factors above enumerated will not make the work efficient. The scientific task preceeding all others is the determination of curriculum. For this we need a scientific technique. At present this is being rapidly developed in connection with various fields of training. The central theory is simple. Human life, however varied, consists in the performance of specific activities. Education that prepares
for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for these specific activities. However numerous and diverse they may be for any social class, they can be discovered. This requires only that one go out into the world of affairs and discover the particulars of which these affairs consist. These will show the abilities, attitudes, habits, appreciations, and forms of knowledge that men need. These will be the objectives of the curriculum. They will be numerous, definite, and particularized. The curriculum will then be that series of experiences which children and youth must have by way of attaining those objectives. (Bobbitt, 1918, as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2013, pp. 10-11)

Akin to Taylor’s advocacy of intense training of factory employees (using productive workers as models for those who need to be trained to be more efficient) Bobbitt applies this concept to education, emphasizing training based on perceived shortcomings, and maintains that is it crucial to see the difference between undirected training that comes from the general experience of community life (and that it must be supplemented with directed training) and “the conscious directed training of systemized education” (Bobbitt, 1918, as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2013, p. 11). He asserts that “the curriculum of directed training is to be discovered in the shortcomings of individuals after they have had all that can be given by directed training” (Bobbitt, 1918, as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2013, p. 120). Moreover, he claims that these objectives will emerge from the errors of students. Errors, he posits, “like the symptoms of disease, these point unerringly to those objectives that require the systemized labors of directed training” (Bobbitt, 1918, as cited in Flinders & Thornton, 2013, p. 12).
Unpacking and explicating Bobbitt’s metaphors in his writings on education illuminates the dynamics reflected in the values of the social efficiency paradigm. There is an overt incongruity in the lexical item, school, and its sematic field or conceptual domain and the rest of the statement with which it fits incongruently, the factory. In this metaphor, the focus of the metaphor, or the vehicle item, is the school, and the factory is the frame, or topic of the metaphor. Evidently, the school is compared to the factory or plant, implying that this is a place of production: production of the educated student. The student, viewed as “raw material” or worker who needs to be more efficient, or needs to be molded into an efficient part of society, implying that the student has an intrinsic defect, or at least must be molded or assembled on a conveyor belt: this implies disempowerment of the student. This is a limitation. Further, this metaphor contains the assumption that education is something that must be imprinted upon or forced onto the student. The metaphor does not connote interaction in the learning process; it promotes a view of education as being pushed onto students. This also implies a deferral of purpose: the education these students “receive” is not useful in the present, it is going to be useful at some future point. The school administrators are the figurative “engineers” in this factory, the individuals with power. Bobbitt’s discourse is one of deferment, disempowerment, and differentiation. He presents students as “raw materials” on a conveyor belt of the factory, or as workers in a factory who need to be educated to be more efficient in the economic progress of society. He prescribes a differentiated curriculum, designed for the student’s future role in the economic order of American society. What is emphasized here is perceived efficient, scientific, social progress in
preparing students to fit into the economic system in a productive way—a way determined by someone other than the student.

This language is not only found in the work of Bobbitt; it is pervasive in discourse among other notable educators of the time period. At the time, educational jargon was rife with terms related to science and efficiency, drawing from the root metaphor of the school as a factory. Education reformer Ellwood P. Cubberly often equated a bank’s board of directors with a productive school committee and

The expert business manager as a model for the “scientific” superintendent of schools. He spoke of schools as “factories in which the raw materials (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life.” (Bobbitt, 1912a, p. 264)

Cubberly and his fellow reformers were like “efficiency experts in industry—the time—and-motion folk—they thought it possible for managers to plan tasks while workers (teachers, students) did the work” (Cuban & Tyack, 1995, p. 115). The metaphor also permeates the work of reformer Joseph Mayer Rice, who was focused on the “elimination of waste in the curriculum through the application of the kind of scientific management techniques that presumably had been so successful in industry” (Kliebard, 1995, p. 20). Based on this, the metaphor of school as factory can be said to be systemic, at least during the period of social efficiency. This systemic metaphor continued to dominate throughout the 20th century until it was displaced by the corporate metaphor.

The pervasiveness of the factory metaphor is still evident, however. The dynamics of the factory metaphor are echoed in some current educational discourse as
well: The East Cleveland City Schools’ mission statement, for example, emphasizes the need to “give” students education and instill in them the skills needed for their future roles, akin to the “reception” of education embedded in the factory metaphor: “We will provide the children of East Cleveland with the academic and life skills needed for each and every one to be a success in the 21st Century” (East Cleveland City Schools, 2013). Another example that echoes the “instillation” language of the social efficiency educators is the Obama administration’s goal to “prepare Americans for the jobs of the future and help restore middle-class security, we have to out-educate the world and that starts with a strong school system.” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013) which, like Bobbitt and the social efficiency educators, emphasizes the economy and the need to prepare students for their future roles in the economic order, another example of the delay of purpose. Overall, the factory metaphor and its connotations are institutional and impersonal, and involve inanimate items working together in mechanized precision with an economic, capitalistic goal—a world away from another type of scientific metaphor used during the time period: John Dewey’s organism metaphor.

**Dewey’s Education as Growth**

Juxtaposed to the administrative progressives’ social efficiency movement and its differentiating factory metaphor that overtook American educational discourse by the second decade of the 20th century, John Dewey, during the same time period, used a naturalistic, unifying metaphor that also emerged from science. Dewey, a pragmatist and education reformer, espoused a socially progressive approach to education and became another major voice in educational discourse. In contrast to the administrative
progressives, who were “less about fixing society than about helping students adjust to it,” Dewey and the social progressives “envisioned a larger role for schools” (Education Week, 2000, p.96) and proposed that schools should “assume functions abandoned by the home and community and work to fashion a more egalitarian order” (Education Week, 2000, p.96). In alignment with these democratic and inclusive values, Dewey metaphorically saw education as growth and the school as the metaphorical laboratory to cultivate that growth.

At the onset of Democracy and Education, Dewey presents two distinct images: an inanimate stone and a living organism. This evolving organism, figuratively education, which he proclaimed to be a “necessity of life,” (1916, p. 3) is then described with echoes of Darwinism throughout. Dewey views the educational process as maintaining the continuity of social life, emphasizing that the life of the social group goes on, even though, at different times, individual people die. In the process, adults pass on knowledge to children. In his work, society’s workings are analogous to biological mechanisms, and a process of transmission is detailed; recipients of communication have an “enlarged and changed experience.” Dewey’s philosophical technique is one of synthesis: he addresses a topic, revisits previous topics, dissects binaries, analyzes the subject, and then attempted to create an amalgam of the information—much like the organic, dynamic organism or the scientific method that is his primary metaphorical conception.

Dewey, like all theorists, was in part a product of his times—and his times were those during which Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and the effects of the industrial
revolution manifested themselves in the prevailing thought of various academic disciplines. Dewey’s philosophy is a hybrid of both paradigms. Dewey was undoubtedly influenced by the emerging scientific theories of his day, including the concept of evolution first proposed by Malthus and then expounded upon by Charles Darwin in *On the Origin of the Species*, published in 1859, the legacy of which was still fiercely evident when *Democracy and Education* was published in 1916. In this work, Dewey broke with traditional philosophy and developed a new educational philosophy, progressivism.

“Dewey’s central concept of ‘experience,’ by which he claimed to have avoided dualistic distinctions of perception and objective reality, is essentially one of a social process” (Dworkin, 1959, p. 7) and his contribution is of one of synthesis (Dworkin, 1959, p. 15).

Education is, Dewey claimed, “a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating, a process” (Dewey, 1916, p. 12) and its aim is the progressive “life” of society (Dewey, 1916, p. 27).

In this metaphorical conception, the tenor, the lexical item or focus, the growing organism, is incongruous with the frame, education, and endoxa results. Dewey’s framing conception is a scientific notion that emphasizes unification and growth, as opposed to differentiation or segregation. He emphasizes education as growth, but that, for students, this “growth is not something done to them; it is something they do” (Dewey, 1916, p. 42). Further, he asserts that the need for other humans and plasticity create the power to grow and learn, which then creates active habits, which “involve thought, invention, and initiative in applying capacities to new aims. They are opposed to routine which marks an arrest of growth” (Dewey, 1916, pp. 52-53). He calls growth the “characteristic of life” and claims that, therefore, “education is all one with growing; it
has no end beyond itself. The criterion of the value of school education is the extent in which it creates a desire for continued growth” (Dewey, 1916, p. 53).

Dewey attempts to reconcile, among other things, the great divide between experience and abstract, logical thought. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey’s prevailing metaphor is scientific and natural: that of an organism. He creates an analogy to explain his view: “what nutrition and reproduction are to physiological life, education is to social life” (Dewey, 1916, p. 9). He likens education to a laboratory (Dewey, 1916, p. 321) process and also conceives of education as growing and continually changing:

The process by which social groups maintain their continuous existence . . . a process of renewal of the meanings of experience through a process of transmission . . . to affect social continuity. This process was seen to involve control and growth of both the immature individual and the group in which he lives. (Dewey, 1916, pp. 321-322)

Emphasizing this cyclical aspect, Dewey describes social groups as:

intentionally progressive, and which aim at a greater variety of mutually shared interests in distinction from those which aim simply at the preservation of established customs. Such societies were found to be democratic in quality, because of the greater freedom allowed the constituent members, and the conscious need of securing in individuals a consciously socialized interest, instead of trusting mainly to the forces of customs operating under the control of a superior class. The sort of education appropriate to the development of a democratic community was then explicitly taken as the criterion of the further,
more detailed analysis of education. This analysis, based upon the democratic
criterion, was seen to imply the ideal of a continuous reconstruction or
reorganizing of experience, of such a nature as to increase its recognized meaning
or social content, and as to increase the capacity of individuals to act as directive
guardians of this reorganization. (Dewey 1916, p. 322)

In this text, one of Dewey’s rhetorical purposes is to dissolve preexisting binaries.
His is a diction of involvement and growth, intercourse and development. He begins by
describing the “renewal of life by transmission” in a scientific manner. “Education, in its
broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life,” he claims, and “society
exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life” (Dewey, 1916,
p. 32). This is emphasized further as he asserts: “We employ the word ‘experience’ in
the same pregnant’ sense” (1916, p. 2). This life force implied in the pregnancy idea also
arises when he claims: “Yet the life of the group goes on” (1916, p. 2) and “with the life
of civilization . . .” (1916, p. 5), culminating with his assertion that education’s aim is “to
reproduce the life of the group” (Dewey, 1916, p. 5). The emphasis here is on the life,
process, and growth of the group. This is a focus on the cooperative aspects of
democracy, and a built-in assumption of value in his metaphor. “Dewey’s approach to
educational study favored synthesis across disciples and open communication and
collaboration across roles” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 62). The critical role of the school in the
life of society is described by Dewey: “obvious, indeed is the necessity of teaching and
learning for the continued existence of a society . . . Schools are, indeed, one important
method of the transmission” (Dewey, 1916, p. 4). “By testing the value of scientific
discoveries in the social microcosm of the school, an experimental school, Dewey thus hoped to discover ways to promote harmony and mutuality between and among different disciplines, institutions, and groups of people” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 50). He thought “isolation…between schools and other social institutions should be reduced” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 49). The benefits, he posited, would abound: “This would increase efficiency by allowing children to utilize in school what they learned in other institutions, especially the family, and by enabling the school to enliven its activities through close contact with the business, academic, cultural, and natural worlds” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 49).

Dewey claims to attempt to identify and divide binaries, and this is evident in his figurative language. To further emphasize his biological view of education, he juxtaposes organic imagery with industrial imagery. He claims that “the intellectual and emotional reaction of the forms of human association under which the world’s work is carried out receives little attention as compared with its physical output” (Dewey, 1916, p. 7), pointing out the divide between the social organism and the industrial products of society. Later, regarding social transmission, he laments: “Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks . . . The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a result, but they do not form a community” and a “large number of human relationships in any social group are still upon the machine-like plane” (Dewey, 1916, p. 5). In Dewey’s concept, the energy emitted by the individual combines with that of the community. The limits of the mechanized school concept include the lack of establishment of community—what should be the school’s main focus, according to Dewey and contemporary educational theorist Henri Giroux. These
theorists both, indifferent eras and in different ways, espouse the school’s potential to be a forum for democratic relations, discussions, and deliberations. Dewey, who established a laboratory school at the University of Chicago, viewed the school as a laboratory of education (Lagemann, 2000, p. 69). He thought his laboratory school should have “the same relation to the work in pedagogy that a laboratory bears to biology, physics, or chemistry” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 49).

Dewey, unlike Bobbitt and the administrative progressives, opposed competition and “unreconstructed individualism” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 42), and his ideas “were not aligned with increased specialization,” in fact, he advocated “finding ways to overcome the divisions that had emerged between families and schools, nature and daily life, and, most importantly, different classes of people” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 49). He sought, evidently, to reduce disunity and foster connections. Ultimately, he valued a “democratic system of education” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 42) and saw education as a “means for nurturing new social capacities, especially the skills, orientations, and knowledge necessary to building and sustaining a democratic community” (Lagemann, 2000, p. 50).

Although ascertaining Dewey’s influence on education in the United States is challenging, (Spring, 1989, p. 79) scholars agree that his scientific metaphor has had less direct effect than Bobbitt’s: “Certainly his ideas on learning and curriculum have been widely discussed since the beginning of the century. However, there is little evidence that his ideas caused significant changes in the public schools” (Spring, 1989, p. 79). In fact, Dewey’s “ideas about a science of education failed to thrive…Dewey’s thinking about educational science flowered for ten years and then failed to take root” (Lagemann,
2000, p. 42). While Dewey’s distinctive conception of what a science of education would be failed to take hold in public schools, other aspects of his metaphor are embraced by some private schools.

Dewey’s metaphorical conception is reflected in language published by contemporary private schools, such as Hawken School in Cleveland, Ohio. The school’s mission statement is: “Central to Hawken’s mission is our promise to ‘prepare students to navigate a complex and dynamic world with self-confidence and determination; embrace challenges with disciplined analysis and creativity; and engage others with empathy and integrity.’” The school also states: “The school urges all students to remain engaged in the educational process and to continue learning and contributing to the community throughout their lives” (Hawken School, 2013). This mission statement implies growth, interconnectedness, and cooperation. Akin to Dewey, the emphasis is on connectedness and engagement with community.

Another private school in Cleveland, Ruffing Montessori, also utilizes language that correlates with Dewey:

The mission of Ruffing Montessori School is to employ the philosophy and methods of Dr. Maria Montessori to educate young people to their fullest potential, instilling a deep sense of personal independence and social responsibility. With the knowledge that they are citizens of the world, they will contribute to that world by making decisions based on the highest order of ethics and conscience. Core Values: A Ruffing education emphasizes the development of the whole child. Through the active engagement of each child’s innate
curiosity and love for learning, Montessori-trained teachers guide students through an integrated Montessori curriculum. Ruffing’s Core Values are grounded in the Montessori philosophy and guide our community, programs, initiatives and distinctive culture. At Ruffing, we believe in: Rigorous Academics, Interdisciplinary Curriculum, Mutual Respect, Holistic Diversity, Igniting Each Child’s Curiosity, Guiding Our Children’s Desire to Learn, Peace, Independence, Self-Reliance, Community. (Ruffing Montessori School, 2013).

Explicated, the language here, like Dewey’s, connotes synergy: development, connectedness, mutuality, and interdisciplinary cooperation. The momentum comes from within the student and adds to the community. Neither of these mission statements mentions competition, economics, or a sense of delayed purpose; in this language, the students’ curiosity, independence, and learning is important in the moment as well as in the future.

Although both Dewey and Bobbitt use science as their overarching metaphorical category, the contrast is clear. While both metaphors imply the progress that Americans traditionally value, only Bobbitt’s accentuates speed and efficiency. Dewey’s highlights growth and connectedness.

Within American democracy, thinkers have traditionally placed a spotlight on progress; and, reflecting this, American literature and language has historically emphasized movement toward a goal—from William Bradford’s dream of establishing the utopian city on the hill to F. Scott Fitzgerald’s depiction of Americans believing “tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms farther . . . And one fine morning—So
we beat on, boats against the current” (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 193). An efficient factory reflects these progressive values. As a fit for these societal values, the factory metaphor dominated educational talk until the 1980s (Pinar, 2008, p. 96). Because systemic metaphors are experiential but also shape future thought, it is crucial to examine which ones we use; metaphors have both a history and future.

Supporting the premise that, implicitly, metaphors can have long legacies, dominant contemporary metaphors in educational discourse also align the idea of moving forward competitively. The Obama administration’s educational reform language contains echoes of the values put forth by the social efficiency educators, particularly the focus on the economy and speed. Looking at the entailments of the “race” metaphor, it becomes clear that the Obama administration regarded American students as participants in a “race to the top”—this connotes competition and implies, again, progress on a predetermined path and a sense of urgent momentum. This root metaphor is a good fit for parts of the prevailing American ethos. The students, in this root metaphor, are no longer seen as raw materials on an assembly line, and are instead participants in a race. They are, however, still moving forward, part of figurative progress. They have more power themselves, but their path is still determined by the race’s course. The Race to the Top policy states:

In today’s global economy, a high-quality education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity—it is a prerequisite to success. Because economic progress and educational achievement are inextricably linked, educating every American student to graduate from high school prepared for college and for a career is a
national imperative. The President has articulated a goal for America to once again lead the world in college completion by the year 2020, and all of President Obama’s education efforts aim toward this overarching objective. To create an economy built to last, we need to provide every child with a complete and competitive education that will enable them to succeed in a global economy. (U.S. Department of Education, 2013)

In this metaphor, the emphasis is on competition in the economy: a “competitive education,” a “race,” and “lead the world” illustrate this. There is a “goal” or “aim” and sense of urgency conveyed as well: “a national imperative,” “by 2020,” and “prepared for college,” exemplify this.

Although there are references to progress and “growth” which are reminiscent of Dewey, the objectives stated by the Obama administration echo key components of social efficiency as well: “smarter data systems to measure student growth and success, and help educators improve instruction” and “higher standards and better assessments that will prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace.” The emphasis here is on measurement and evaluation; the implication in this language is that better assessments will improve education.

The basic human need to create metaphors to express complex concepts is also shown in alternative philosophical theories of education, which use metaphor as a means of conveying philosophical ideology. In order to frame one’s understanding of contemporary educational metaphor, one must look to the educational reformers of the
early 20th century; study of the underlying meanings of these metaphors reveals much about historical and current educational values.

Maria Montessori’s School as Home

During the same period as Bobbitt and Dewey but an ocean away, Italian educational philosopher Maria Montessori was studying child development and forming her two core metaphors: the organic metaphor for the child’s construction of self, the “spiritual embryo” (Lillard, 1972, p. 30) and her conceptualization of the school as the “children’s house.” For a full understanding of these ideas, one must first understand her unique view of childhood. Montessori “believed that childhood is not merely a stage to be passed through on the way to adulthood, but is ‘the other pole of humanity’” (Lillard, 1972, p. 30). She wrote about her

Conviction that humanity can hope for a solution of its problems, the most urgent of which are those of peace and unity, only by turning its attention and energies to the discovery of the child and the development of the great potentialities of the human personality in the course of its construction. (Montessori, in Lillard, 1972, p. 30)

For Montessori, this metaphor held great significance. The children will, ideally, look at the teacher “who has made them live, and will hope and desire to receive from her, new life” (Montessori, 1912, p. 116).

Montessori juxtaposed this metaphor with the ethos of confinement that was perpetuated in common schools at the time. She viewed the emphasis on the student’s obedience and inertia as detrimental to the school, child, and society. Society “rests on a
foundation of marvelous obedience, and that civilization goes forward on a road made by obedience. Human organisations are often founded on an abuse of obedience” (Montessori, 1912, p. 363), which she denounced.

Truly our social life is too often only the darkening and the death of the natural life that is in us. These methods tend to guard the spiritual fire within man, to keep his real nature unspoiled and to set it free from the oppressive and degrading yoke of society. (Montessori, 1912, p. 377)

On the contrary, in her words, the correct “aim is to discipline for activity, for work, for good; not for immobility, not for passivity, not for obedience” (Montessori, 1912, p. 93).

Montessori’s educational philosophy was based on her “intuitive” observations of children. In the tradition of Rousseau, she emphasized the “innate potential of the child and his ability to develop in environmental conditions of freedom and love” and she lamented the fact that “educational philosophies of the past, however, did not emphasize the existence of childhood as an entity in itself, essential to the wholeness of human life, nor did they discuss the unusual self-construction of the child” (Lillard, 1972, p. 28). The curriculum, according to Montessori, should be child centered instead of subject centered. This is also shown in Montessori methods as students are not taught subjects in the traditional manner, but rather are observed interacting with instructional materials in their environment. The teacher’s role is that of an observer of the child’s development, not an instructor of subject matter, and the lesson is like an experiment (Montessori, 1912, p. 107).
Montessori’s major metaphor, the spiritual embryo, illustrates the child’s self-construction in a way that emphasizes energy and momentum on the child’s part. In her philosophy, the energy force is seen as emerging from the child—there is no focus on containing this energy—instead, the focus is on letting it grow. She noted that the child possesses “within him, before birth, a pattern for his psychic unfolding. She referred to this inborn, psychic entity of the child as the ‘spiritual embryo’” (Montessori, in Lillard, 1972, p. 30). This language, in its essence, compares the development of the child to the development of a cell, which has a “predetermined plan for its development.” Further, she claimed that “in a similar way, the child’s psychic growth is guided by a predetermined pattern, not visible at birth” (Lillard, 1972, p. 30) and that this pattern becomes visible through the developmental process. For this process to happen, she argued, two conditions must be met. Because the child is dependent on an integral relationship with is environment, both the things and people in it [o]nly through this interaction can he come to an understanding of himself and the limits of his universe and thus achieve an integration of his personality. (Lillard, 1972, p. 32)

The second part is freedom. The child must be granted this, and “if he has been given the key to his own personality and is governed by his own laws of development, he is in possession of very sensitive and unique powers which can only come forth through freedom” (Lillard, 1972, p. 32). Moreover, Montessori argued that if movement is curtailed, the child’s personality and sense of well-being is threatened. Movement is a part of man’s very personality, and nothing can take
its place. The man who does not move is injured in his very being and is an outcast from life. (Lillard, 1972, p. 31)

This organic momentum is the common element in the Montessori metaphors.

The Montessori method is centered around the child’s growth and forward progress:

There are two key components . . . the environment, including the educational materials and exercises; and the teachers who prepare this environment.

Montessori considered her emphasis on the environment a primary element in her method. She described this environment as a nourishing place for the child. It is designed to meet his needs for self-construction and to reveal his personality and growth patterns to us. (Lillard, 1972, p. 50)

Thus, the outcome desired is evidently the establishment of the child’s self-construction, and all aspects of education using this method support this aim. Adults often “reduce” children to a “humiliating inertia” (Montessori, 1912, p. 360), which Montessori countered in her methods. “The greatest triumph of our educational method should always be this: to bring about the spontaneous progress of the child” (Montessori, 1912, p. 228). The child, in this view, is an “organism still in the process of formation” (Montessori, 1912, p. 87). Children should “go forward guided by the individual force which distinguishes him as an individual” (Montessori, 1912, p. 374). Education should focus on the soul (Montessori, 1912, p. 375) and send the child “forward into the world where continual surprises and discoveries await him; not only in the external environment, but in the intimate recesses of his own soul” (Montessori, 1912, p. 376).
Accordingly, Montessori was pedagogically opposed to the old “domineering” methods of the common school:

We cannot know the consequences of suffocating a spontaneous action . . . perhaps we suffocate life itself. Humanity shows itself in all its intellectual splendor during this age as the sun shows itself at the dawn, and the flower in the first unfolding of the petals; and we must respect religiously, reverently, these first indications of individuality. If any educational act is to be efficacious, it will be only that which tends to help toward the complete unfolding of this life. To be thus helpful it is necessary rigorously to avoid the arrest of spontaneous movements and the imposition of arbitrary tasks. (Montessori, 1912, pp. 87-88)

There is “peril” in “servilism and dependence” (Montessori, 1912, p. 100) and serving children and treating them like puppets or dolls (Montessori, 1912, p. 97). If adults do everything for children, it is “very dangerous for the child, since it closes the way and puts obstacles in the path of the life which is developing” (Montessori, 1912, p. 99). The teacher’s task, therefore, is to be objective and passive, like that of the astronomer who sits immobile before the telescope while the worlds whirl through space. This idea, that life acts of itself, and that in order to study it, to divine its secrets of to direct its activity, it is necessary to observe it and to understand it without intervening . . . The teacher has too thoroughly learned to be the one free activity of the school; it has for too long been virtually her duty to suffocate the activity of her pupils. (Montessori, 1912, p. 87)
The teacher must “take great care not to offend the principles of liberty. For, if she provokes the child to make an unnatural effort, she will no longer know what is the spontaneous activity of the child” (Montessori, 1912, p. 109). This liberty fosters the independent growth of the embryo, Montessori implies. This liberty, she notes, leads to discipline naturally:

Liberty is activity . . . Discipline must come through liberty . . . We do not consider an individual disciplined only when her has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and as immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual annihilated, not disciplined. (Montessori, 1912, p. 86)

This liberty allows the teacher to “follow them in their natural method of spontaneous self-development” (Montessori, 1912, p. 357), rather than requiring them to “possess a piece of information” or “grasp” a “detached piece of knowledge” (Montessori, 1912, p. 357). She claims that “man, disciplined through liberty, begins to desire the true and only prize which will never belittle or disappoint him—the birth of human power and liberty within that inner life of his from which his activities must spring” (Montessori, 1912, p. 101). Disciplined through liberty and independence, the students “have set their feet in the path leading to righteousness . . . and they enjoy with simple hearts the fruits of peace that are to be gathered along the path” (Montessori, 1912, p. 87). Rather than being mastered by adults, the child should be his own master (Montessori, 1912, p. 366). In this vein, the child should also set his own place for task completion.

The child-centered energy is evident in Montessori classrooms as students are free to complete tasks of their choosing at their own pace. The child should be treated as a
child. This is evident in Montessori philosophy. Germaine to this study, a third metaphor used by Montessori is the school as a house. The “children’s house” would be furnished with child-sized furniture; it would cater to the development of the child. The house will perform a “maternal function” (Montessori, 1912, p. 66); it will

Be transformed and perform the functions of the woman . . . it does not consist of walls alone . . . It lives! It has a soul. It may be said to embrace its inmates with the tender, consoling arms of a woman. It is the giver of moral life, of blessings; it cares for, it educates and feeds the little ones. (Montessori, 1912, pp. 68-69)

In this personified house, students should be nourished and not feel confined. On the contrary, “the liberty of the pupils in their spontaneous manifestations . . . the children may be free to go and come as they like, throughout the entire day” (Montessori, 1912, pp. 80-81). Accordingly, Montessori schools are required to use special child-sized furnishings and look at the “pole” idea when designing activities that attend to the unique process of self-construction for the child. The classroom in the children’s house must be furnished with

Little tables and various types of chairs are all light and easily transported, and we permit the child to select the position which he finds most comfortable. He can make himself comfortable as well as seat himself in his own place. And this freedom is not only an external sign of liberty, but a means of education.

(Montessori, 1912, pp. 83-84)

She sets this in opposition to
The old method, the proof of discipline attained lay in a fact entirely contrary to this; that is, in the immobility and silence of the child himself. Immobility and silence which hindered the child from learning to move with grace and with discernment, and left him so untrained that, when he found himself in an environment where the benches and chairs were not nailed to the floor, he was not able to move around without overturning the lighter pieces of furniture . . . [In the Children’s House,] While he is still a child, he becomes capable of conducting himself correctly, and yet, with perfect freedom. (Montessori, 1912, pp. 83-84)

Consequently, individual differences in children should be taken into account. The free reign present in the classroom is regard to choosing their own materials and budgeting their own time fulfills this requirement. Montessori recommends freedom for the child in school, as opposed to the confinement traditionally found in the common school:

We have, until the present day, wished to dominate the child through force, by the imposition of external laws, instead of making an interior conquest of the child, in order to direct him as a human soul. But if we cut away the artificiality with which we have enwrapped them, and the violence through which we have thought to discipline them, they will reveal themselves to us in all the truth of child nature. (Montessori, 1912, p. 117)

Montessori’s natural metaphors for childhood and the development of the child reveal her distinctive vision of childhood and particular set of educational values. Her diction in these metaphors illustrates her belief in the connection between the child and the child’s environment. The images evoked by Montessori express a concern for the
interconnectedness of all things and an emphasis on the shared energies that should be focused on the “discovery of the child and the development of the great potentialities of the human personality.” The substance of the metaphor is still alive.

These metaphors sit in opposition to Bobbitt’s—which were published only two years later—in the factory model, the energy of the educational endeavor is imposed on the student; the raw material is pushed along the conveyor belt and then expelled from the factory into a predetermined place in society as a finished product. They are incongruent with aspects of Deweyan philosophy as well—in Dewey, the organism moves toward being a productive part of a whole democracy. Montessori sees a child’s inertia as detrimental; rather, she envisions bodily freedom and the education of the growing soul. The energy force implied here is both independent and dynamic.

Montessori schools have, for over 100 years, served as a stable alternative to American public schools. The number of Montessori schools in the Cleveland area, for example, has grown exponentially in recent decades—from three in 1975 to 57 telephone directory listings currently.

Why has the option persevered? Are there things to be learned from looking at her metaphors? The controversial residue of Bobbitt’s factory model is still present in schools today; Dewey’s focus on the experimental laboratory democratic education is shown as well. The metaphors of Montessori—the house, the dynamic, independent embryo—are still viable alternatives, and they are also seen in the utopian visions of today’s students.
What if the Dewey or Montessori metaphor had been the dominant metaphor throughout the 20th century instead of Bobbitt’s? A factory conveyor belt has a finite product to produce—a predetermined limit on what it can create. It imprints on the child—the force or energy comes from the factory and it exerted upon the product. This “race” has a predetermined route and goal—a specific start and finish. A growing organism is not so bound. One cannot help but wonder if our metaphorical educational focus was instead on establishment of community, about the engagement of curiosity and love of learning, if the emphasis was mutual respect and contribution to community, not economics . . . what then?
CHAPTER IV

SEMINAL CONTEMPORARY METAPHOR ANALYSES

In order to understand the significance and impact of metaphors in educational discourse, a critical component is understanding how metaphors have come to be; another key is seeing the ways implicit metaphors have been exposed. To do this, one must look at the archetypal analytical process of linguists Michael J. Reddy and Deborah Tannen.

Reddy’s Conduit Metaphor

If metaphors for education and schooling remain implicit, they can influence the educational endeavor in unacknowledged ways. Making these explicit is the key to understanding the true nature of educational issues. This dissertation, which aims to explicate metaphors, is modeled in part on the process seen in the work of linguist Michael Reddy’s (1993) radical piece, “The Conduit Metaphor,” which explicates the systemic metaphor for communication and puts forth the idea that “the way we talk about things often depends on root metaphors that are essentially misleading and inaccurate” (Ortony, 1993b, p. 6). Reddy does this by dismantling the “language as a carrier of ideas” metaphor. He alleges that this metaphor “falsely presupposes objectivity that ignores the contributions of the hearer or reader’s own experience” (Ortony, 1993b, p. 6). Reddy asserts that speakers of English view language as a “conduit” (Reddy, 1993, p.166). This, he shows, is evident in such frequently used expressions as: “Try to get your feelings across better. None of Mary’s feelings came through to me with any clarity. You still haven’t given me any idea of what you mean” (Reddy, 1993, p. 166). His analysis shifted the way metaphors and their entailments were perceived.
In *Metaphor and Thought*, George Lakoff, who was heavily influenced by Reddy, describes the impact of Reddy’s analysis of the common conceptual metaphor for communication. Lakoff credits Michael Reddy with being the first to present, in one intricate example of linguistic analysis, “stating generalizations over voluminous examples,” that a system of conceptual metaphor can be extensive, and that metaphor is “primarily conceptual, conventional, and part of the ordinary system of thought and language” and that “that ordinary everyday English is largely metaphorical, dispelling once and for all the traditional view that metaphor is primarily in the realm of poetic or 'figurative' language” and “that the locus of metaphor is thought, not language, that metaphor is a major and indispensable part of our ordinary, conventional way of conceptualizing the world, and that our everyday behavior reflects our metaphorical understanding of experience” (Lakoff, 1993, p. 204). Since Reddy’s publication of “The Conduit Metaphor,” an entire trajectory of cognitive science and linguistics has been generated to help understand the metaphorical thought complexes that undergird much of linguistic structure (Lakoff, 1993, p. 204). Reddy established this key notion; subsequently, an entire hidden metaphorical world has opened.

Reddy’s work with communication metaphors begot many metaphorical explications in other disciplines, and in the midst of a conversation about disagreements at my school, I had an epiphany: The terms in which we conceptualize education figuratively are contentious and competitive, and this can prove problematic for students. For example, the slogan “No Child Left Behind” requires, figuratively, an enemy. The metaphor, in which Americans are an “army,” requires an adversary. The sound of the
metaphor resonates because it is spondaic and because we have heard it before—it’s mimetic. The cadence of the phrase alludes to the United States military’s motto: “leave no soldier behind.” Explicating this metaphor, it clearly implies that “we,” the American public, are fighting a war, and we need to save all of the students, analogous to the military heroically rescuing its wounded soldiers. This metaphor figuratively unites “us” against the imagined “enemy.” Think of all the famous speeches that have used that enthymeme—us against them. The questions that must be asked about this metaphor are: who is this enemy? Does this imply that there a literal enemy, and if so, who is it? Operating under this metaphor, we may feel compelled, as a society, to imagine an enemy in order to complete an unconscious, combative cognitive mapping, or struggle-based conceptual metaphor. In other words, in the Obama administration’s “race,” who is the U.S. competing against? Contemporary educational discourse is rife with images of conflict and competition. Beginning with “A Nation at Risk” in 1981, the American public has been bombarded with figurative language that compels us to conceptualize education in terms of war and competition.

Based on a conversation at school, I began to wonder how those currently involved in education viewed their experience metaphorically and whether these figures of speech would connect with their ideas. If so, this would be evidence of systemic metaphorical constructs. When I asked my high school students for their metaphors for school, many competitive images emerged in their responses: The theme of competition emerged: school as a figurative *Hunger Games* competition, swimming in a test of
endurance, and the conflict-ridden dynamic metaphor of a battlefield. One participant noted:

School for me is swimming in Lake Erie. Your boat continuously drifts further away, or it seems to, and you must tell yourself that you will make it to the boat. However, the current drags you away with each wave. I suppose reaching the boat would be like receiving your high school diploma. Each day your goal is to swim towards it . . . It’s a test of endurance.

Another posited:

School is a real-life version of The Hunger Games. All students are thrown into a ‘new world’ together only with the knowledge their mentors (their parents) have provided them. Alliances are quickly made, changed, and repaired throughout the course. Some contestants are clearly more cut out for the competition, and it is clear that only some will be successful . . . I chose that comparison because I view school as a competition, and because The Hunger Games is a recent, well known subject . . . Throughout my high school career I have been well ahead of the competition, because of my given ability as well as my (somewhat of a) drive. I have learned the difference between “book smart” and “intelligence” both of which provide good results, but some of us have both abilities pushing us ahead of others. We as students (competitors in this great competition) pick out the other students, trying to figure out who will be a challenge and about whom we won’t need to worry . . . some of us are much more cut out for the competition, improving our odds for the end.
Another aspect of this contentious thematic thread is the battlefield: “School is a battlefield . . . because you fight constantly, with grades, peers, and work for a greater cause,” and “School is a battlefield . . . because kids are struggling to fit in.” School is also viewed as a “for the military . . . just a like a soldier, you need to go through training in order to get where you need to be and be capable of thriving in the future.” School is also conceptualized by one student as “an army of ants.” The themes of strife and competition that materialize in these students’ metaphors are striking.

Why should one scrutinize such figurative language? Why do these types of metaphors matter? First, because close examination of these linguistic figurative comparison patterns in everyday language reveals otherwise implicit meaning. Second, because we actually live these hidden meanings. They create and recreate our experience. According to linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980), metaphor is a cognitive mechanism that lets us understand things based on our physical and social experiences. We may not even notice these metaphors, but they mold our actions and perceptions. Our language and its figurative terms, then, both shape and perpetuate our cultural attitudes. The significance of metaphor in human thought was an instrumental premise in this research.

This basic human tendency toward understanding one thing in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) is shown in theoretical as well as everyday educational discourse, which uses metaphor as a means of conveying concepts. Study of the underlying meanings of these metaphors reveals much about historical and current educational values: “Since communication is based on the same conceptual system that
we use in thinking and acting, language is an important source of evidence for what that system is like” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). Based on linguistic evidence, they describe the metaphorical nature of human thought and claim that these comparisons influence our perceptions, thoughts, and actions (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4).

The study of metaphor has a long lineage of links to the high school English classroom. The ability to recognize metaphor in literature is a skill introduced by elementary school teachers, cultivated by high school teachers, and required for graduation by the state departments of education throughout the United States. The Common Core standards (2019) obligate language arts educators to instill this ability and measure it, as seen in these two standards from the Grades 11–12 Language Arts band: “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful” and “Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. . . Interpret figures of speech (e.g., hyperbole, paradox) in context and analyze their role in the text.” In the classroom, identification of these figures of speech is often followed by analysis of what is being compared, explanation of why it is depicted that way, and identification of the author’s purpose. In this process, the objects compared in the device are uncovered and dissected. Throughout secondary schooling, successful students become adept at scanning literature and recognizing metaphor.
Poet X. J. Kennedy (2007) claims that metaphor is used to enrich description, to render experience in a way that mere direct prose cannot. In this sense, metaphor has always found its place in literature. This, of course, is purposeful metaphor. In a strictly literary sense, purposeful metaphor offers an additional level of understanding of the item being described. *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* extends the general definition of metaphor as the comparison between two unlike things to include “all figures of speech that achieve their effects through association, comparison and resemblance.” The literary devices that fall into the aforementioned category include, according to Kennedy: personification (of a thing, animal, or abstract term); apostrophe (addressing someone or something that is not ordinarily spoken to); overstatement (hyperbole); understatement (saying less than one means); metonymy (using something closely associated with that thing in place of it); transferred epithet (when some characteristic of one thing is given to another thing); paradox; and pun (paranomasia)” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 120). A comparison between a razor and an axe, Kennedy notes, would not be figurative. These items are “of the same class” and, therefore, the comparison is “not offensive to logic” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 110). In figurative language, “we have connotations rather than denotations,” and so “figures of speech are not devices to state what is demonstrably untrue. Indeed they often state truths that more literal language cannot communicate; they call attention to such truths; they lend them emphasis” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 111).

The purposeful use of metaphor, however, is not limited to poets and writers of fictional prose. “For scientists as well as poets, the making of metaphors is customary
... [for example] George Lemaitre’s Big Bang can be compared to a display of fireworks that has just ended” (Kennedy, 2007, p. 113). Often, those outside of the realm of literature will use implied metaphor (which omits the connective or the verb to be) as their main device:

As astrophysicist and poet Alan Lightman has noted, we can’t help envisioning scientific discoveries in terms of things we know from daily life—spinning balls, waves in water, pendulums, weights on springs. ‘We have no other choice,’ Lightman reasons. ‘We cannot avoid forming mental pictures when we try to grasp the meaning of our equations, and how can we picture what we have not seen?’ In science as well as in poetry, it would seem, metaphors are necessary instruments of understanding. (Kennedy, 2007, p. 113)

And, thus, metaphor is used in science, and, analogously, in our thinking and writing about education.

Accepting the critical role of metaphor in revealing the way human beings think about schooling and the narratives that build up to these conceptualizations requires a shift in thinking, because, in fact, “The system of conceptual metaphors is not arbitrary or just historically contingent; rather, all a by the common nature of our bodies and the shared ways that we all function in the everyday world” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980 p. 245). This has significant implications for multiple disciplines, which have cultural effects (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). These cultural effects, arguably, are seen in the realm of education. Human beings conceive of ideas metaphorically, and therefore think metaphorically about education—our metaphors result in part from educational practice
and policies that stem from historical metaphorical conception of education. In fact, metaphor offers a framework for educational philosophy and practice provides a fundamental basis for educational philosophy and practice (Moore, 2009). This is seen in both historical and current educational discourse: some metaphors are explicit. Some are implicit. Both can reveal truths literal language cannot.

**Tannen’s Discourse of Argument**

Metaphors are embedded in many aspects of discourse. Take, for example, the “culture of argument” explored by Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University. In her essay, “Taking a War of Words Too Literally,” she, like Reddy, explicates a systemic metaphor embedded in human communication. She observes that contemporary American culture

Rests on the assumption that opposition is the best way to get anything done; the best way to discuss an idea is to set up a debate. The best way to show you’re really thoughtful is to criticize. The best way to settle disputes is to litigate them. (Tannen, 2009, p. 17)

She asserts that

Everywhere we turn, there is evidence that, in public discourse, we prize contentiousness and aggression more than cooperation and conciliation. Headlines blare about the Starr Wars, the Mommy Wars, the Baby Wars, the Mammography Wars; everything is posed in terms of battles and duels, winners and losers, conflicts and disputes. (Tannen, 2009, p. 17)
Tannen’s observations about the ways we act upon this contentious metaphor have connections to the way students view school.

Tannen, using explication techniques such as those used by Lakoff, lays bare the obscured aspects of this metaphor. “It is the automatic nature of this response that I am calling into question,” Tannen writes:

This is not to say that passionate opposition and strong verbal attacks are never appropriate. In the words of Yugoslavian-born poet Charles Simic, ‘There are moments in life when true invective is called for, when it becomes an absolute necessity, out of a deep sense of justice, to denounce, mock, vituperate, lash out, in the strongest possible language.’ What I’m questioning is the ubiquity, the knee-jerk nature of approaching almost any issue, problem or public person in an adversarial way. (Tannen, 2009, p. 17)

The inclination to struggle does not further our learning, but instead retards it, according to Tannen:

Smashing heads does not open minds. In this as in so many things, results are also causes, looping back and entrapping us. The pervasiveness of warlike formats and language grows out of, but also gives rise to, an ethic of aggression: We some to value aggressive tactics for their own sake—for the sake of argument. Compromise becomes a dirty word, and we often feel guilty if we are conciliatory rather then confrontational—even if we achieve the result we’re seeking. (Tannen, 2009, p. 17)
Tannen’s “head smashing” alludes to Mohandas K. Ghandi’s famous analogy: “There are two ways of countering injustice. One way is to smash the head of the man who perpetuates injustice and to get your own head smashed in the process. All strong people in the world adopt this course” (Ghandi, 2008, p. 312). Gandhi’s ironic critique of “strength” is set in opposition to his peaceful practice of satyagraha, or passive, peaceful resistance, which worked. In fact, it worked well enough to change the world forever, pulling India out from British colonial domination. In another piece of inventive language, Gandhi explores the potential we all have to resist this urge to fight. His analogy: “No clapping is possible without two hands to do it, and no quarrel without two persons to make it,” concisely shows the potential path away from unnecessary conflict. This, however, is not the dynamic seen in American classrooms.

On the contrary, the inclination toward conflict is deeply seeded in American culture, Deborah Tannen claims, because it is perpetuated cyclically through our system of education: “The roots of our love for ritualized opposition lie in the educational system that we all pass through” (Tannen, 2009, p. 19). She describes a “typical scene” in today’s education system: “The teacher sits at the head of the classroom, pleased with herself and her class. The students are engaged in a heated debate. The very noise level reassures the teacher that the students are participating. Learning is going on. The class is a success,” it seems (Tannen, 2009, p. 19). But on closer inspection of this type scene, Tannen argues,

You notice that only a few students are participating in the debate; the majority of the class is sitting silently. And the students who are arguing are not addressing
subtleties, nuances, or complexities of the points they are making or disputing. They don’t have that luxury because they want to win the argument—so they must go for the most dramatic statements they can muster. They will not concede an opponent’s point—even if they see its validity—because that would weaken their position. (Tannen, 2009, p. 19)

Moreover, she asserts, this can create insincere contentions and stymie resolutions:

[In] the ethic of aggression that has us by our throats, particularly in public arenas such as politics and law, issues are routinely approached by having two sides stake out opposing positions and do battle. This sometimes drives people to take positions that are more adversarial than they feel—and can get in the way of reaching a possible resolution. (Tannen, 2009, p. 18)

This prevailing cultural atmosphere of contentiousness has been revealed in my teaching experience as well. In this study, one of the student participants wrote: “School is a battlefield . . . because you fight constantly, with grades, peers, and work for a greater cause.” The metaphorical war is felt by students every day in schools.

The impact of this aggressive paradigm on academic research is apparent, according to Tannen:

This aggressive intellectual style is cultivated and rewarded in our colleges and universities. . . . The standard way to write an academic paper is to position your work in opposition to someone else’s. This creates a need to prove others wrong, which is quite different from reading something with an open mind and discovering that you disagree with it. Graduate students learn that they must
disprove others’ arguments in order to be original, make a contribution and demonstrate intellectual ability. The temptation is great to oversimplify at best, and at worst to distort or even misrepresent other positions, the better to refute them. (Tannen, 2009, p. 19)

This engenders a number of problems. One of the cognitive issues with this dominant metaphor is that “staging everything in terms of polarized opposition limits the information we get rather than broadening it” (Tannen, 2009, p. 19). Creating a binary, in which only two opposing perspectives are set at odds, in effect limits not only the range of information presented, but, consequently, the potential for one’s perspective to be enriched. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote in metaphorical terms, the inclination to take a side, go for the jugular, and obstinately never let go of an idea is “a foolish consistency.” In his essay he argues that “a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do” (Emerson, 2010, p. 28). In this figurative statement, Emerson critiques the need to be consistent for the sake of consistency—the logically fallacious persuasive technique called the appeal to tradition—the fear of being considered “hypocritical” for changing—or opening—one’s mind. The “hobgoblin,” or mischievous goblin, is an apparition, the creation of those with “little minds,” those who will not or cannot think deeply and openly. Emerson espouses nonconformity as its aversion. And this is the type of closed cycle of knowledge acquisition that Tannen rebukes as well.
Moreover, Tannen asserts, this overarching combative mindset about argumentation and persuasion limits the number of active participants.

When a certain kind of interaction is the norm, those who feel comfortable with that type of interaction are drawn to participate, and those who do not feel comfortable with it recoil and go elsewhere. If public discourse included a broad range of types, we would be making room for individuals with different temperaments. But when opposition and fights overwhelmingly predominate, only those who enjoy verbal sparring are likely to take part. Those who cannot comfortably take part in oppositional discourse—or choose not to—are likely to opt out. (Tannen, 2009, p. 20)

In essence, those “left out,” or “left behind” are those with a non-combative view of idea exchange. Tannen warns that this metaphor works to dismantle connectedness. This connectedness is reminiscent of the sense of community celebrated as the aim of education by Dewey and encouraged by Montessori.

But perhaps the most dangerous harvest of the ethic of aggression and ritual fighting is . . . an atmosphere of animosity that spreads like a fever. In extreme forms, it rears its head in road rage and workplace shooting sprees. In more common forms, it leads to what is being decried everywhere as a lack of civility. It erodes our sense of human connection to those in public life—and to the strangers who cross our paths and people our private lives. (Tannen, 2009, p. 20)

Tannen’s writings are rife with metaphor: the harvest reference, the mention of contagious disease (fever), the monster (“rearing its head”), the “eroding” force—
metaphor, the “essence [of which] is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 5) is “pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3). This “atmosphere of animosity,” which students claim is present in schools, runs counter to many theorists’ values; it also arguably spills from our public lives into our private lives, according to Tannen. We live its implications.

Like Tannen, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) posit that our conceptual system is automatic and not something we are typically conscious of; therefore, in their analysis, they look to language as a source of evidence (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). They also assert that metaphors “structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4). The researchers focus on what they call the “argument is war” metaphor, and note that this construct is “reflected in our everyday language by a wide variety of expressions,” such as “your claims are indefensible/He attacked every weak point in my argument/I demolished his argument/He shot down all of my arguments/I’ve never won an argument with him.” Moreover, we

Don’t just talk about arguments in terms of war, we can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we are arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own. We gain and lose ground. We plan and use strategies . . . We don’t just talk about argument as war, we live it: we win or lose, see opponents, attack positions—it structures our actions in this culture. [The key
idea here is that this metaphor is one that we] live by in this culture; it structures the actions we perform in arguing. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4)

In other words, these concepts, activities and language are metaphorically structured: “We talk about arguments that way because we conceive of them that way, and we act according to the way we conceive of things” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 4).

This conceptual structure is so autonomic, and deeply embedded in our culture, in fact, that this pattern, like other linguistic patterns, repeats itself fiercely. Scholars have long examined this human inclination to repeat patterns. Aristotle wrote about mimesis, the act of repetition of linguistic constructs. He claims that humans are “mimetic,” and therefore create language that mirrors and represents reality: “The general origin of poetry is evidently due to two causes, each of them parts and parcel of human nature (1) imitation . . . (2) the sense of harmony and rhythm” (Aristotle, trans. 1967). This tendency to repeat elements of language, he writes, is at the heart of all rhetoric and poetic language. From this, it follows that an ongoing investigation into the metaphorical language of education is a worthy endeavor, perhaps a more valuable “fight” to take on. Thus, we should return again to the implied conflict in “No Child Left Behind.” What is the figurative “war” over? Does this figurative “war” impact views of education? Who is this requisite enemy . . . teachers? It can’t be students, or their parents, the taxpayers who fund schools. What if educational reform was, instead, conceptualized as building a house? Metaphorically speaking, if one worker isn’t building the house well, do we tear the house down and fire the foreman? To mix the metaphor, should we focus on nurturing that worker?
Or consider the “race to the top,” the metaphor used by the Obama administration to encapsulate their policies. This uses an up/down modality that connects to Lakoff and Johnson’s explanation of experiential metaphors. It implies fervent action toward something . . . what, specifically? And why in such haste? This metaphor connotes a sense of urgency. It implies a threat. And it demands competition. Some public school students, however—those who must live the metaphors society imposes on them—see these competitive relationships as discouraging and disempowering. Are the two educational memes—NCLB and Race to the Top, related in ways? They are both spondaic (and therefore metrically resonant) implications of purportedly altruistic impetus that possess an undergirding urgency and conflict; they both convey a propellant momentum; they both mimic the cadence of a military slogan. They, unlike the educational metaphors of Dewey and Montessori, focus on the end, the product, the result. Thus, contentiousness continues to permeate not only cultural views of argument, but metaphorical conceptions of schooling as well.

**Dominant Contemporary Educational Metaphors**

The metaphor work of three prominent contemporary theorists connects to participants’ narratives and metaphors; this indicates systematicity in corporate, military, and prison metaphors for school. Kenneth Saltman’s conception of the corporatization of education, Giroux’s description of the militarization of schools, and Foucault’s theories of power and discipline in social institutions are explored in conjunction with the study participants’ metaphors. Foucault’s observation that schools are metaphorically (and
literally) akin to prisons, and his questions about power and oppression within, echo in the study data, giving rise to questions such as: do student and faculty metaphors provide evidence that the “educational enterprise is intrinsically oppressive?” and that “unequal power relations between teacher and student . . . lead to states of domination and constraint?” (Levinson, 2011, p. 140). This ability of education to produce power relations among students and teachers based on supervision and discipline, as well as a sense of constraint and stasis of energy, is described by the student participants. In addition to Foucault’s prison metaphors, two other major metaphors permeate contemporary educational discourse: the militarization and corporatization of education. These comparisons reveal a number of complex issues; Henry Giroux and Kenneth Saltman have written extensively on these. Student participants in this study produced multiple metaphors that align with these as well, indicating that these three metaphors are, in fact, systemic. They emerge from and create educational experience.

Saltman’s Corporatization of Education

Saltman’s work concerning the contemporary push toward the militarization and corporatization of education correlates with some study participants’ metaphors. He argues that throughout the world, “disaster is providing the means for business to accumulate profit” (2010, p. 131) and that, within education in particular, “the new predatory form of educational privatization aims to dismantle and then commodify particular public schools.” He also cautions that this “threatens the development of public schools as necessary places that foster engaged critical citizenship” while countering the “the public and democratic purposes of public education; it amasses vast
profits for few, and even furthers U.S. foreign policy agendas” (2010, p. 132). This runs
counter to the aims of Montessori’s home for children, Dewey’s democratic organism,
and even Bobbitt’s factory—the ultimate goal here extends beyond the public sphere into
the private sector and even beyond the boundaries of American society.

Examining the history of the implementation and growth of this strategy, Saltman
notes that “by 2000 business publications were eyeing public education as the next big
score, ripe for privatization and commodification, likening it to the medical and military
industries and suggesting that it might yield $600 billion a year in possible takings”
(2010, p. 132). Further, he claims, corporations

Have succeeded in infiltrating nearly every bit of daily life with advertisements
and narratives that proselytize the elements of corporate culture: celebrating
consumerism, possessive individualism, social Darwinism, authoritarianism, and
a corporate vision for the future of work, leisure, politics, and the environment.

(2010, p. 133)

This, he asserts, is wearing away at democratic culture. Further, he warns of the
consequences: if public schools do not “presently foster a democratic ethos necessary for
developing in citizens habits of engaged public criticism and participation, the public
nature of public schools makes crucial ‘site and stake’ of struggle for the expansion of
democratic social relations” (2010, p. 133). Privatizing public schools, he claims, diverts
tax money from public schools to “provide rich investors with profit,” but it will also
have another, more detrimental effect: the curtailling of public discourse. Saltman asserts
that the public school system is unique (and different from private schools) because public schools

   Harbor a distinct potential for public deliberation and oversight that privately owned and controlled educational institutions limit. Privately controlled institutions are captured by private interests . . . In a public school, learning and knowledge can be engaged in relation to pressing public problems in ways that can be limited within privatized schools. (2010, p. 133)

In Saltman’s view, the stakes are high: “At stake in the struggle for public education is the value of critical and public education as a foundation for an engaged citizenry and a substantive democracy (2010, p. 133).

Saltman’s metaphor of the public school as a “harbor” for public discourse is in direct conflict with the metaphor of corporatization that only allows limited expression. His argument that expression is limited in private spheres and that corporations will not make this limitation explicit runs counter to the idea that public school should be, as Dewey put it, a laboratory of democracy. The techniques used by privatization advocates to accomplish this dismantling of public education follow a sequence noted by Saltman:

   The dismantling of public schools followed by the opening of for-profit, charter, and deregulated public schools. These enterprises typically despise teachers’ unions, are hostile to democratic governance and oversight, and have an unquenchable thirst for ‘experiments,’ especially with the private sector. (Saltman, 2010, p. 134)
The personified enterprises he describes advocate for connections between public schools and the private sector, eschew unions, and seek less oversight.

He also claims that specific language is used to create these connections: voucher support comes from the “belief that applying business ideals to the necessary bureaucratic public sector guarantees efficiencies” (Saltman, 2010, p. 134). This creates a direct conceptual link to Bobbitt and his factory model that emphasizes efficiency in schooling. In this more contemporary use, it is “business ideals” which replace the “socially efficient” metaphorical factory language. This is still an acceptance of the ideals of the social efficiency movement—albeit hiding behind different vehicles. This is one of the major reasons why understanding our historical American educational metaphors—both explicit and implicit—is of utmost importance: because the concepts repeat themselves. In understanding the present move toward corporatization in education, one must comprehend the similar goals of the social efficiency educators of the early 20th century and the effects of that movement. Explicating these metaphors and seeing their historical correspondences is critical to understanding the current system of education in which all Americans, whether as students, educators, or taxpayers, are involved.

In addition, Saltman describes the way that language impacts this push for privatization. Here, he looks at the redefinition of freedom by proponents of privatization. He sees that, in this discourse, “‘freedom’ means privatizing public control over public resources so that fewer people with more wealth and power have more political control over said resources” and this is accomplished by “framing the amassing of political and economic control over public resources as individual consumer choice
. . . it takes on the deceptive appearance of increasing individual control” (2010, p. 141). This renaming of public goods is an attempt to normalize the shift, claims Saltman:

Privatizers aim to treat the use of public resources as ‘shopping’ by ‘consumers,’ thereby naturalizing the public sector as a market—as a natural, politically neutral entity ruled by the laws of supply and demand rather then as a matter of public priority, political deliberation, and competing values and visions. (2010, p. 141)

This reframing and renaming furthers the privatization agenda, in essence. The use of these metaphors can also perpetuate hierarchies by concealing aspects of the tenor:

Using the concept of freedom, the metaphors permit private control over public goods. Such metaphors of consumer culture not only conceal the ways that public goods and services are different from markets (public services aim to serve public interest and collective goals not the amassing of private profit). (Saltman, 2010, p. 141)

These appeals “also fail to admit that markets themselves are hardly neutral and natural but are, on the contrary, hierarchical, human-made political configurations unequally distributing power and control over material resources and cultural value” (Saltman, 2010, p. 141). Saltman wrote of this use of language in 2010, and for evidence of its eventual implementation, one needs only to turn to the oratory of the current Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, whose self-proclaimed focus is “school choice” and “freedom” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019).

Ultimately, the effects of using this language and changing a deliberative, democratic culture into a competitive, corporate one are profound, according to Saltman:
The numerous strategies for privatizing public education—from voucher schemes, to for-profit charter schools, to forced for-profit remediation schemes, to dissolving public schools in poor communities and replacing them with a mix of private, charter, and experimental schools—all follow a pattern of destroying and commodifying schools [and] . . . [make] economically marginalized people into opportunities for capital the way that for-profit prisons do. (Saltman, 2010, p. 148)

Here, Saltman identifies the link between schools and prisons—the metaphor explored by Foucault and seen in the study results. In a similar vein, cultural critic Henri Giroux’s work on schools becoming corporatized and militarized also links to the study participants’ responses. Unbeknownst to these students, they are mimicking the cautionary metaphors of these theorists—and they supply details to support their veracity.

Giroux, moreover, lays bare the overarching objective of privatization, achieved by using figures of speech to redefine the role of the student:

While the discourse of privatization has as its major objective that public schools conform to the needs of the market and reflect more completely the interests of corporate culture, its goals are not limited to relocating the wholesale ownership and control of public schools to the private sector . . . [this strategy attempts to] substitute the role of the student as a citizen for that of an education consumer. (Giroux, 2019)

The danger here, according to Giroux, is that this is part of a process of “eroding ‘the public forums in which decisions with social consequences can be democratically
Claiming that education as a public good is central to a democracy, Giroux meets this effort with scrutiny. The residual Social Darwinism identified by Giroux in these metaphors is also seen in the metaphors of competition that students experience, along with the competitiveness seen in the Obama administration’s “Race to the Top.” Each of these runs counter to the cooperative, democratic focus of Dewey and Montessori. Even in students’ metaphors for utopian schools, the students are buying into this consumer metaphor.

Giroux expounds upon the problem with the privatization of a what was a public good: His view of the aims of the privatized school—pushing students into a “place”—runs counter to the goals of the school as espoused by Saltman (the harbor), visualized by Dewey (democracy), and Montessori (spiritual growth of the individual child). The data in this study reveal that the freedom desired is within the child’s experience in school—the intrinsic, intellectual, spiritual freedom of the child, and this is incompatible with the aims of factories, corporations, and prisons.

Akin to Saltman’s analysis, Giroux notes that the way this concept is framed in the language used by these groups is critical to the outcome:

Within the language of privatization and market reforms, there is strong emphasis on standards, measurements of outcomes, and holding teachers and students more accountable . . . Not only do they abstract questions of equity and equality from the discourse of standards, they appropriate the democratic rhetoric of choice and freedom (Giroux, 2019).
They avoid grappling with issues of inequality, however: “The ideas and images that permeate this corporate model of schooling reek with the rhetoric of insincerity and the politics of social indifference” (Giroux 2000, p.88). Giroux further problematizes the use of such language:

There is also the issue of how individual achievement is weighed against issues of equity and the social good, how teaching and learning get defined, and what sorts of identities are produced when the histories, experiences, values, and desires of students are defined through corporate, rather than democratic, ideals. (Giroux, 2000, p. 88)

As students’ experiential metaphors in this study reveal much consumer and corporate language but contain few references to democratic ideals, Giroux’s claims are supported. The significance of this language of corporatization, according to Giroux, should be acknowledged, as it allows proponents of privatization to portray academic failure as personal or cultural, rather than institutional, failing. This is the issue with “privatization schemes in which schools simply mimic the free market, with the assumption that its regulatory and competitive spirit will allow the most motivated and gifted students to succeed” (Giroux, 2000, p. 90).

Giroux cautions that overlapping the language of the corporation and market onto education disguises social factors that prohibit success as individual failure. The emphasis on competition and overly simplistic explanations of success, he argues, serve to justify disregard for social forces of oppression: There is a “shameful element. . . of Social Darwinism that permeates this discourse” (Giroux, 2019) and this attitude
exonerates forces of oppression that create inequality. The focus on a perceived meritocracy, the

Excessive celebration of the sovereign interests of the individual does more than remove the dynamics of student performance from broader social and political considerations . . . what is privileged in the corporate model is a notion of the student as an individual consumer and teachers as the ultimate salespeople.

(Giroux, 2000, p. 90)

Further, he asserts that when education is “viewed as a private good whose organizing principle is simply to mimic the market, education as the experience of democracy is transformed into a discourse and ideology of privilege driven by narrow individual interests” (Giroux, 2000, p. 90). Lamenting the use of figurative language to downplay the literal difference between education and finance, Giroux writes: “Rather, teaching within the corporate model redefines importance by emphasizing the translation of educational exchange into financial exchange” (Giroux, 2000, p. 93). In his examination of the language used: the dominant metaphors utilized by those behind the change, Giroux notes: “Couched in the language of business competition and individual success, the current education reform movement must be recognized as a full-fledged attack on both public education and democracy itself” (Giroux 2000, p. 98). In this view, the privatization movement is capitalizing on the trope of the mythical rags-to-riches story that has been ingrained in the American imagination since Benjamin Franklin penned his Autobiography—the idea that success is highly individual and does not reflect social forces outside the individual. The student, in this metaphor, is no longer a citizen in a
democracy, but, instead, a consumer in a financial transaction. Saltman and Giroux see this as a metaphorical assault on American public goods and forums and, ultimately, on American democracy.

**Giroux’s Militarization of Education**

In subsequent exploration of the language used by privatizers, Giroux ties the consumer metaphor to militarization of schools. Military language allows the “rule of capital,” according to Giroux:

> Zero tolerance has become a metaphor for hollowing out the state and expanding the forces of domestic militarization, for reducing democracy to the rule of capital, and replacing an ethic of mutual aid with an appeal to excessive individualism and social indifference. Within this logic, the notion of the political increasingly equates power with domination, and politics with consumerism and passivity. (Giroux, 2006, p. 170)

The market metaphor influences pedagogy and ignored issues of equity, observes Giroux. As preparation for work becomes the focus of schooling, and

As schooling is defined largely as a disciplinary institution that prepares students for the workplace, the discourse of leadership has been supplanted by a pragmatics of classroom management . . . Pedagogy in this model of control relies heavily on those forms of standardization and values that are consistent with the norms and relations that drive the market economy. Teachers teach for the tests as student behaviors are consistently monitored and knowledge is increasingly quantified. (Giroux, 2006, p. 162)
When the corporation metaphor takes hold, he admonishes:

Made over in the image of corporate culture, schools are no longer valued as a public good but as a private interest . . . concern for the collective good is suppressed and replaced by an excessive emphasis on the language of privatization, individualism, self-interest, and brutal competitiveness. Lost in this discourse of schooling is any notion of democratic community or models of leadership capable or raising questions about what public schools should accomplish in a democracy. (Giroux, 2006, pp. 162-163)

Giroux also explicates the link between the corporation metaphor with the prison-industrial complex. He asserts:

The growth and popularity of zero-tolerance policies within the public schools have to be understood as part of a broader educational reform movement in which the market is now seen as the master design for all pedagogical encounters. At the same time, the corporatizing of public schooling cannot be disassociated from the assault on those public spheres within the larger society that provide the conditions for greater demographic participation in shaping society. (Giroux, 2006, p. 163)

In a prediction of the sequence that follows the implementation of privatization policy, Giroux writes that as

The state is downsized and support services dry up. Containment policies become the principle means to discipline youth and restrict dissent. Within this context, zero tolerance legislation within the schools simply extend to young people
elements of harsh control and administration implemented in other public spheres. (Giroux, 2006, p. 163)

This domestic militarization movement is seen in language, and also its effects, according to Giroux. Under this metaphor, high schools take on the characteristics of prisons. He sees zero tolerance and related laws applied “in areas as different as airport security, the criminal justice system, immigration policy and drug testing programs for athletes.” Although, he argues, these policies have been critiqued, these critiques fail to acknowledge

Connections between that is going on in the criminal justice system and the public schools. While schools share some proximity to prisons in that they are both about disciplining the body, though for allegedly different purposes, little has been written about how zero tolerance policies in schools resonate powerfully with prison practices that signify a shift away from treating the body as a social investment (i.e., rehabilitation) to viewing it as a threat to security, demanding control, surveillance, and punishment. (Giroux, 2006, p. 162)

He cites research that indicates many urban high schools now share the characteristics of prisons, including metal detectors and the principal as figurative warden. “Schools resemble prisons in that they both warehouse students to prevent flooding the labor market while ‘instilling the attitudes of passivity and apprehension, which in turn induce the fear of authority and the habits of obedience’” (Giroux, 2006, p. 162). These schools are, according to Giroux, a “conduit” to prisons:
As compassion and understanding give way to rigidity and intolerance, schools increasingly become more militarized and function as a conduit to the penal system. The measure of such a transformation is not limited to the increasing fortress quality of American schools—which are marked by cafeterias, locked doors, video surveillance cameras, electronic badges, police dogs, and routine drug searches. (Giroux, 2006, p. 166)

And he predicts what could happen in American public schools as this metaphor takes hold:

Within the current climate of domestic militarization, it may just be a matter of time before the surveillance cameras, profiling technologies, and other tools of the penal state become a routine part of the climate of teaching in America’s schools. (Giroux, 2006, p. 166)

Giroux also predicts the effects of all of these changes on students’ perceptions:

Students are quickly realizing that schools have more in common with military boot camps and prisons than they do with other institutions in American society . . . as schools abandon their role as democratic public spheres and are literally ‘fenced off’ from the communities that surround them, they lose their ability to become anything other than spaces of containment and control . . . Coupled with the corporate emphasis on privatizing schools, the motif of punishment and withdrawal—civic and interpersonal—governs this new form of school regulation and administration. (Giroux, 2006, p. 167)
The figurative shift for the public school from a public sphere of democracy to a space of confinement is a shift to be fought against, these theorists imply.

In sum, these theorists see the metaphorical war as one against the public good—not described as the “nation at risk” against other nations, not the war depicted in the “no child left behind” metaphor—this war is couched as a “consumer choice,” but, ultimately, is also a war against democratic forums like the public school. There are, in the study data, many key connections to the militarization, individualism, and social indifference described by Saltman and Giroux. In this study, the students write that they live such language—hence their diction of consumerism and competition and their metaphorical boot camps and prisons.

**Foucault’s Metaphor of Imprisonment**

“Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” philosopher Michel Foucault asks; he also professes that in order to understand the correlation between schools and prisons, one must first understand the measures that were used to combat the plague during the 17th century. As an outbreak of the plague seizes a town, a sequence of events, per governmental order, takes place:

First, a strict spatial partitioning: the closing of the town and is outlying districts . . . the division of the town into distinct quarters . . . everyone is ordered to stay indoors . . . only the intendants, syndics, and guards will move about the streets. The town is partitioned and put under constant surveillance. The town becomes a
. . . Segmented, immobile, frozen space. Each individual is fixed in his place. And, if he moves, he does so at risk of his life, contagion, or punishment. Inspection functions ceaselessly. The gaze is alert everywhere . . . Everyone locked up in his cage, everyone at the window, answering to his name and showing himself when asked . . . The surveillance is based on a system of permanent registration. (Foucault, 1977, pp. 195-196)

And this is analogous to the machinations of power in contemporary social institutions, he posits: “The plague-stricken town, traversed throughout with hierarchy, surveillance, observation, writing; the town immobilized by the functioning of an extensive power that bears in a distinct way over all individual bodies—this is the utopia of the perfectly governed city” (1977, p. 198). The plague is Foucault’s metaphor for any impetus toward social control: “The plague stands for all forms of confusion and disorder” (Foucault, 1977, p. 199). This town, according to Foucault, is also the disciplinary model from which the idea of the Panopticon, his metaphorical prison, emerges.

Michel Foucault wrote of prison metaphors, of the ‘disciplines,’ the technologies and institutions that define, produce, and reproduce ‘normal’ subjects and their ‘abnormal’ or ‘deviant’ counterparts . . . His inspiration is the Panopticon, a circular prison that, had it ever been built, would have been endowed with a central tower from whose dark interiors guardsmen might keep watch, all-seeing but invisible to those whom they were charged to survey. (Faubion, 1995, p. 60)

In Foucault’s metaphor, surveillance is a key function. Prisoners are constantly observed by inspectors.
Foucault came to see subjects as social constructs determined by a multiplicity of power/knowledge relations of both discursive and nondiscursive natures. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* . . . Foucault [shows] that with the rise of capitalism there emerged a new kind of power. This new power relied on less overt forms of violence to control people and more on the steady gaze of surveillance, whose subtle and often highly individualized mechanisms of normalization, and the disciplinary practices and regimes of truth, internalized through constant evaluation of both self and others. What began as a more humane means of addressing specific problems, for example, reforming criminals or educating youth, became a generalized three-part formula (hierarchal observation, normalizing judgment, and examination) applied to the administration of hospitals, prisons, workplaces, and of course, schools. This efficient ordering of human activity, based loosely on models of the military and religious orders, led to the wide-scale objectification and subjugation of subjects; it sought to produce, in his words, ‘docile bodies’ and ‘obedient souls’ (Foucault qtd. in Levinson, 2011). (Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 143)

Foucault’s prison metaphors have many secondary offshoots:

One of Foucault’s most illuminating metaphors is his take on Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon. Picture, if you will, a circular building with a tower constructed in the middle. Each of the cells or rooms in the building is attached to the tower so that the inhabitants—be they prisoners, schoolchildren, or patients—always risk being under the gaze of a supervisor located in the tower. Designed so that no
inhabitant knows when he or she is being watched, surveillance becomes normalized, ‘permanent in its effects,’ inducing ‘in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.’

(Foucault, in Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 152)

In this structure, “it is not necessary to use force to constrain the convict to good behavior, the madman to calm, the worker to work, the schoolboy to application” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). In this environment,

Among schoolchildren, it makes it possible to observe performances (without there being any imitation or copying), to map aptitudes, to assess characters, to draw up rigorous classifications and, in relation to normal development, to distinguish ‘laziness and stubbornness’ from “incurable imbecility.’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 203)

In addition, the automized power of the Panopticon “ensures economy” (in material, personnel, and time) and “assures efficacy” (Foucault, 1977, p. 200). It should be “visible and unverifiable.” “All that is needed, then, is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a schoolboy” (Foucault, 1977, p. 200). Once this “architectural figure” is put in place, there is a “guarantee of order,” and

If the inmates are convicts, there is no danger of a plot, an attempt at a collective escape, the planning of new crimes for the future, had reciprocal influences; if they are patients, there is no danger of contagion; if they are madmen there is no risk of their committing violence upon one another; if they are schoolchildren,
there is no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time. (Foucault, 1977, pp. 200–201)

This structure is also, according to Foucault, a laboratory of power:

It would be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behavior, to train or correct individuals . . . the director may spy on all the employees . . . teachers . . . he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behavior, impose on the m the methods he thinks best . . . it gain in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s behavior. (Foucault, 1977, p. 204)

The structure remained only an idea, but it begot a metaphor:

Though Bentham’s panopticon was never actually built, Foucault argues that it is an apt metaphor for new forms of disciplinary power in which technologies of surveillance and discipline are refined and spread throughout the social body, serving as an organizing and normalizing force and the locus for a detailed examination of social life. In contrast to an older reliance on brute force and authority, these subtle disciplinary mechanisms of both a generalized and polyvalent nature can be applied not only ‘[to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work.’ (Foucault, in Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 152)

That is, it is useful anywhere there is a ‘multiplicity’ of individuals that must be separated, coordinated, and supervised. It is both hierarchical and faceless, since supervisors need not only be specified but can be the social body itself in a functioning democracy where everyone watches everyone else. In
developing the notion of reforming the criminal, it is necessary to know intimate
details of the subject and its context. Thus, power is also individualized at the
same time it is totalized. (Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 152)

The schema of the Panopticon can be used in a plethora of realms, according to Foucault:

It is polyvalent in its application; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat
patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, . . . It is a type of
location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one
another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centers and channels of
power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which
can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. Whenever one is
dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of
behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. (Foucault, 1977, p.
205)

In this figurative construct, the effects are significant:

Not only are individuals physically isolated and constrained, but they become
normalized, ranked, and submitted to detailed examinations—all for the benefit of
strengthening society by raising educational levels, improving public health,
curing the insane, and reforming the criminal. (Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 152)

In fact, “Bentham’s Preface to Panopticon opens with a list of the benefits to be
obtained from his ‘inspection-house’: ‘Morals reformed-health preserved-industry
invigorated-instruction diffused-public burdens lightened’” (Foucault, 1977, p. 207).

Bentham evidently viewed this as a utopian construction; however, in retrospect it
appears dystopian. From the plague to the Panopticon, the undulations of power push toward something: the “aim is to strengthen the social forces—to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality” (Foucault, 1977, p. 208). Thus, in the name of social benefit, all aspects of society become controlled by a nameless, faceless wave of power.

Aspects of these ominous figures of speech reside not only in the metaphors for students’ experiences gathered in this study, but they exist in the words of our present and past educational reformers—John Bobbitt with his focus on efficiency, and our current Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, as well. The current administration has proposed fusing the Department of Education with the Department of Labor; this is seen in the words of Education Secretary DeVos, who recently said: “Artificial barriers between education and workforce programs have existed for far too long. We must reform our 20th century federal agencies to meet the challenges of the 21st century” (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The desire to connect these aspects in evident.

The mimetic effect of these metaphors is also evident: “Effective metaphors tend to be easily remembered and transmitted. This is, in fact, what enables them to become clichés” (Geary, 2011, p. 122). These metaphors persist because the

Best metaphors are sticky . . . The surest sign of a successful metaphor is its ability to reproduce . . . research has shown that people not only remember metaphors better than the actual wording of text but hey also continue to use those metaphors when thinking further about the same topics. (Geary, 2011, p. 124)
Further, “people who get to impose metaphors get to define what we consider to be true” (Geary, 2011, p. 116). For this reason, it is critical to examine the metaphors in use by those in power. Are the students perpetuating, mimetically, what is being described to them—they are consumers with choices; teachers are salespeople? DeVos’s website claims that DeVos’ “political efforts are focused on advancing school choice.” She also claims:

It’s about educational freedom! Freedom from Washington mandates. Freedom from centralized control. Freedom from a one-size-fits-all mentality. Freedom from ‘the system.’” She also praises “choice” in education: “Choice in education is not when a student picks a different classroom in this building or that building, uses this voucher or that tax-credit scholarship. Choice in education is bigger than that. Those are just mechanisms. (2018)

DeVos is appropriating the language of freedom and choice and focusing it on a “consumer choice” metaphor such as the one that Saltman describes. Perhaps students are echoing this subconsciously. My study does indeed show that students as consumers and schools as prisons are prevalent metaphors.

Other scholarly articles exploring metaphor’s relationship to education connect to the themes found in this study as well. These articles use metaphor to put educational reform in different terms; to explore the research base for teacher education; to describe teaching students’ vision of a classroom; to examine teaching and learning in the context of commerce; to determine elementary school students, faculty, and staff metaphors for school; to compare education with commerce, and to examine students’ and teachers’
views of teachers. The literature examined provides more evidence of thematic patterns, validates the findings of this study, and supplies implications for further research.

Education reform described via metaphor is represented as the race to the top, education as a standardized journey, and students are described as consumers with education being the implied business. (Martin & Lararo, 2011, pp. 482-8). All three of these metaphors were also examined in this study. Showing yet another connection is Goldberger’s research alluding to the presence of metaphors for commerce used in the description of education, specifically higher education. (Goldberger, 2008). This suggests the prevalence of certain categories of metaphors for schools and education. It also confirms the impact of consumerist conceptions of education on the reform literature. My study shows how this movement has filtered into student conceptions of their lived experience.

The use of the garden as a metaphor for schools and education is another common category that continues to repeatedly reemerge. For example, a Professor of Education at West Virginia state University polls her students annually regarding metaphors for classrooms and the winner every year is the garden. (Levine, 2005, p. 172). The image of the garden is seen in the faculty metaphors gathered in this study as well.

Continuing along the line of thought of Deborah Tannen, Cochran-Smith explores the research base of teacher education through the metaphorical lens of research as a weapon. (Cochran-Smith, 2002, p. 283). This line of thought examines the battle between two or more viewpoints using metaphorical weaponry. Tannen also explores this view of
confrontation, battle, winners, and losers. This contentious theme is found in my study data as well: students see themselves as engaged in conflict at school.

Additional articles continue the demonstration of common themes concerning metaphorical descriptions of school, education, and teachers. Cerit explores the metaphors of elementary school students, teachers, and administrators for the concept of schools. The researcher’s findings again show the common metaphorical categories of family, prison, factories, and shopping centers. (Cerit, 2006, p. 697). This article confirms my findings in high school students’ metaphors and shows that these ideas seem to set in very early: elementary school in this case. Another article co-authored by Cerit examines the metaphors for supervisors and administrators through the eyes of elementary school teachers. The researchers find that again that one of the primary metaphorical categories is family showing that similar categories of metaphor continue to appear in the exploration of education (Cerit, Ates, & Kagioglu, 2016, p. 359). These repeated thematic connections offer opportunities for further research.

Summary and Implications of Literature Review

Seeing how educational metaphors, theoretical and historical, experienced and ideal, build on and diverge from one another can lead to deeper understanding of concepts, according to Geary:

The paradox of metaphor is that it tells us so much about a person, place, or thing by telling us what that person, place or thing is not. Understanding a metaphor . . . is a seemingly random walk through a deep, dark forest of associations. The path is full of unexpected twists and turns, veering wildly off into the underbrush
one minute and abruptly disappearing down a rabbit hole the next. Signposts spin like weather vanes. You can’t see the wood for the trees. Then, suddenly, somehow you step into the clearing. A metaphor is both a detour and a destination, a digression that gets to the point (2011, p. 13)

In this study, these theorists’ metaphorical ideas intersect with the students’ metaphorical language and narratives, creating that metaphorical point.

Metaphor also has significant implications in multiple disciples (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 246). Geary concurs: “Metaphor is not just confined to art and literature but is at work in all fields of human endeavor, from economics and advertising, to politics and business, to science and psychology” (2011, p. 3.) A gap is apparent in the study of educational metaphor; this is a gap to be filled by my research into students’ metaphors and their experiential correlations. There are a number of aspects of education that can be studied based on the claim that utilized metaphors can help us ascertain how we live. When looking at the specialized case of educational metaphors, a plethora of questions arise. Hence, this study of metaphors for school and their experiential bases, inherent conflicts, and impact on students fills gaps in research on educational metaphor because:

There is surprisingly little interest in the ontogenetic development of conceptual metaphor. Cognitive theory seems to posit individual minds as ready-formed adult thinkers, rather than as individuals whose minds develop through social interaction in particular sociocultural contexts. Given the focus on embodied experience as generative of metaphorical thinking (Lakoff and Turner 1989;
Gibbs 1999a), the neglect of childhood experience in conceptual development is the more surprising. From a sociocultural perspective, the acquisition and use of metaphor is of empirical interest, and we well see how metaphor repertoires are developed through participation in social action and interaction. (Cameron, 2003, p. 21)

Lakoff and Johnson also point out another major void in metaphor research and call for “new collaborative cross-disciplinary methods or inquiry” (2003, p. 274) into metaphor. Combining techniques of language theory in educational research is seen in the deep analysis method. In recent studies, George Lakoff has concentrated on finding ways to create “more productive ways of discussing topics of political and social impact. Metaphor is one of his tools” because metaphor helps “bridge” the gap toward understanding (Geary, 2011, p. 121). In addition, this discussion can be the link to behavioral changes: “Metaphors matter when it comes to changing attitudes as well as behavior” (Geary, 2011, p. 120).

Investigating how “we think metaphorically” about education and schooling and that these metaphors are “shaped and constrained by our bodily experiences in the world” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, pp. 246-247) is one trajectory of this research, because “a great deal of everyday, conventional language is metaphorical, and the metaphorical meanings are given by conceptual metaphorical mappings that ultimately arise from correlations to our embodied experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 267). I also look at how our educational metaphors both stem from our context and create our reality, how they both reveal and influence our thoughts and experiences because “which metaphors we have
and what they mean depend on the nature of our bodies, our interactions in the physical environment, and our social and cultural practices . . . reasoning in abstract domains uses the logic of our sensory-motor experience” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 248). Studying the metaphors that students create, and analyzing the composite metaphors that are comprised of basic metaphors yields insight. The necessity of this analysis is based on the claim that “new metaphorical ideas—that is, new ways of organizing and understanding experience—arise from the combination of simpler conceptual metaphors to form complex ones” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 251). As a result, “innovation and novelty are not miraculous; they do not come out of nowhere. They are built using the tools of everyday metaphorical thought, as well as other commonplace conceptual mechanisms” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 251). Therefore, looking at students’ simpler conceptual metaphors that create the new metaphorical ideas can reveal interesting and significant patterns. Lines of inquiry that emerge from relating Lakoff and Johnson’s conceptual metaphor theory to educational metaphors include: What can be learned through the study of a large pool of educational metaphors? What are the metaphors of those who live the school experience (experientially) every day—students and teachers? What are their entailments? What are the experiential bases for these metaphors? Some students create novel metaphors and some return to patterns. Can they be categorized? What themes emerge? Do these themes point at larger conceptual metaphors at work? Questions arising from Aristotle’s concept of endoxa and Black’s interaction theory include: Just as novel metaphors add to our understanding of the world and the writer’s idea on a level different from literal language, what can we learn about others’
experiences from the creation, explication, and deliberation of school metaphors? Which novel metaphors emerge as one studies metaphors for school within a specific cultural context?

Looking at Lakoff and Johnson’s (2003, p. 243) marriage example as a model, it seems possible that individuals may also possess vastly different and possibly opposing metaphors for school, and this could lead to issues and conflicts (possibly unacknowledged) within schools, districts, or larger contexts. If there are multiple metaphors for school at work in one space or community, studying conflicting metaphors could yield insight. What if there are conflicting metaphors at work (consciously or unconsciously) in one school context or building? Can studying metaphor help uncover tensions we may be otherwise unaware of in buildings and communities? What can be gained from explicating and examining them? What can we learn from asking about the experiences that created them?

Therefore, this study was conducted in order to find empirical evidence of the metaphorical mappings made between students’ metaphorical conceptions of school and the experiences from which they emerge; asking about students’ metaphorical conceptions of school and about the experiences that contribute to the students’ metaphorical conceptions were the way of obtaining this data, which was analyzed using the method of deep analysis (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 249), which allows researchers to look at systems of metaphor. The study of educational discourse outside of schools proved enlightening as well, because human beings think metaphorically and our metaphors may result in part from participation in the educational process and in part
from discourse about education, including current and historical metaphorical conceptions of education, those of Dewey, Plato, Bobbitt, Giroux, Foucault, and Saltman, for example. Because metaphor is experientially based, tracing these ideas to their roots in historical educational texts and their contexts, and then linking them up with their current educational ideas—and their contexts—shows that they are not simply “arbitrary mappings” (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 246).
CHAPTER V
RESEARCH DESIGN, PARTICIPANTS, AND CONTEXT

Metaphor has a long lineage of linkages to the high school English classroom. The ability to recognize metaphor in literature is a skill introduced by elementary school teachers, cultivated by high school teachers, and required for graduation by the state departments of education throughout the United States. State standards obligate language arts educators to instill this ability and measure it. In the classroom, identification of these figures of speech is often followed by analysis of what is being compared, explanation of why it is depicted that way, and identification of the author’s purpose. In this process, the objects compared in the device are discovered, scrutinized, and discussed. Throughout secondary schooling, successful students become adept at scanning literature and recognizing metaphor, therefore, these students are perfect candidates for a metaphor study.

The participants in this study are 18 public high school faculty and 97 high school student volunteers from English classes, including both males and females. The students range in age from 16–18. These students are juniors and seniors, because at this point in their educational careers they are able to write detailed and sustained narratives, as required by the state core curriculum content standards. They also have had many educational experiences from which to draw, and they have solid attitudes toward school and schooling. In addition, they are familiar with the concept of figurative language and metaphor, and they are able to express their conceptualizations in this manner. The research site is high school English classroom because this is an effective forum for
narrative writing, and as juniors and seniors, these students are asked to begin thinking over their own educational experiences and practicing metacognitive strategies as they prepare for college. Authenticity is a key component in this research. Therefore, all participants are volunteers who do not receive compensation.

**Data Collection, Analysis, and Method**

Permission to conduct research was granted by the school principals to the researcher. All Kent State University IRB processes were followed during the study. The plan for collecting the metaphors and narratives through a written survey and writing prompt followed Kent State University IRB approval. All of the faculty and staff members were contacted and all volunteers were accepted. Junior and senior English students were invited to participate; every volunteer was accepted. Prior to the survey, the parental consent form was reviewed and signed by the parent of each student. An oral consent was read aloud; participants consented orally. Faculty and staff participants signed a faculty consent form. Questions were answered about the consent process prior to the start of the survey and writing. The surveys and writing, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes, were conducted in classrooms that ensured privacy and confidentiality. Participants were notified that the surveys were voluntary and that they could choose to omit any questions or leave the study at any time for any reason. The surveys were conducted using a series of written questions.

Once the survey data were collected, numerical tags were assigned and used. The first step in data analysis was to record the metaphors and their corresponding autobiographical narratives and explanations; the surveys were transcribed. All
potentially identifying information was removed from the transcripts. The transcripts were then reread twice to ensure that they were verbatim. In this study, the goals were to elicit and record metaphors and their related narratives and observe emergent patterns and record them. The data were subsequently analyzed using the lens of metaphor theory. The transcripts were then read again and potential themes were recorded. These were then examined for possible metaphorical categories, and entries were grouped based on typologies. Entries were coded according to these patterns. Responses were then placed in a data display according to their thematic links. The data were reviewed repeatedly throughout the research process as themes were noted, explicated, and augmented.

Quotations from the surveys and writing prompt were selected to support the various emerging themes. The study sought the kinds of metaphorical mappings described by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) in their metaphor theory that metaphors are a cognitive mechanism that allow us to understand things based on our physical and social experiences. Seeking out the form of the metaphors in the participants’ written responses, the data were analyzed, looking for types of patterns to emerge. A recursive process was utilized to illuminate the categories that could be ascertained. The aim was to conduct an analysis of narrative, autobiographical writing about school and “to understand how people structure the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives. This form of inquiry builds upon people’s natural impulse to tell stories about past events and personal experiences” (Schram, 2006, p. 104). “An analysis of narrative means that the researcher deliberately elicits complete stories, or narratives, which are then analyzed in terms of concepts from preexisting (often literary theory)”
(Schram, 2006, p. 105). This analysis of autobiographical metaphorical constructs connects directly to the conceptual metaphor theory developed by Lakoff and Johnson, who claimed that human beings make sense of things and actions (entities and actions) metaphorically or conceptually through metaphor. Likewise, this study aimed to collect students’ stories and to see how they metaphorically make sense of these “events and actions in their lives” (Schram, 2006, p. 105). In this study, there was an emphasis on storied data. “Narrative researchers take as the object of investigation the story itself,” rather than interviews or conversations.

Narrative researchers’ storied data refers in a general sense to data that are embodied wholly represented in first-person accounts of personal experiences. This storied quality of data-preserving, not fracturing, its essential structure—enable narrative inquirers to consider both how social actors order and tell their experiences and why they remember and retell what they do. (Coffey & Alkinson, in Scram, 2006, p. 105).

**Interview Questions**

1. Please describe your overall feelings about school.

2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how did you feel before, and why did your feelings change?

3. Do you know what a metaphor is? Please define metaphor.

4. If you could create your own metaphor for school, what would it be?

5. Why did you choose that comparison?
6. Writing prompt: Write about a past experience or a few past experiences that you think contributed to this metaphorical idea that you hold. Please be as descriptive as possible by including specific things that your heard, felt and thought at the time.

7. Do you think that your metaphorical conception has any impact on your schooling right now? Please explain.

8. Please list the schools you have attended.

In this study, the data analysis was performed using the method of deep metaphor analysis, which ultimately revealed more about the underlying concepts at work. This method identifies the components of the metaphorical construction and its entailments and examines the roots as well as potential systematicity of the metaphor.

The study tracked metaphors as they emerged from the written responses, looking for patterns in the metaphors for school, noting shared and related metaphors. Cameron described this process of searching for:

emerging patterns of metaphor use. One kind of pattern, ‘systemic metaphors’ is semantic, and found by identifying connections between individual linguistic metaphors. These systemic metaphors may map on to discourse themes in telling ways . . . Sometimes participants’ metaphors fit into a narrative, construct a metaphorical story, or connect into a larger, coherent ‘metaphor scenario’ (Musolff, 2004). The importance of metaphor stories and scenarios is their power to suggest what is not made explicit—because of our cognitive tendency to
construct explanatory stories for our experiences, a partial story or scenario may
invoke a larger story or scenario in hearer’s minds. (Cameron, 2010b, p. 11)

The first step was to collect the data: the metaphors and explanatory narratives.
Then, as derived from the work of Cameron, Lakoff, and Johnson, the steps in the
explication of the figurative language began with identification of metaphor. The
researcher asked: is there an incongruity in the lexical item and its discourse context and
is there a potential metaphorical focus in the language (Steen, in Cameron, 2010b, p. 11).
Third, the components of the metaphor (topic and vehicle) were explicated, and the
connotations and entailments of these were examined. Fourth, questions about
systematicity were asked: Are they systematic? In other words, does the overlapping
create a number of metaphorical expressions that remain systematic in that language as a
result of their cognitive connections? Fifth, the roots of the metaphor were considered:
whether the metaphor was a novel creation or one that appeared more prevalent was
determined. Additionally, metaphorical categories were examined to establish
correlations with dominant educational metaphors noted by contemporary theorists.

The next step was finding metaphors. Not every attempt at metaphor construction
by the participants was actually metaphorical. Once the metaphors were identified, the
research then followed the system of steps described by Cameron:

They were gathered together in a list. Then they were grouped and organized
according to the basic meanings of the vehicle terms. For example, a grouping
labeled . . . [PRISON included prison, and jail, and terms related to PRISONS,
such as trapped.] A grouping labeled . . . [growth brought together various forms
of natural images, along with related vehicle terms such as develop and expand.} Creating groupings of metaphor vehicles is an interpretive process that works recursively between the data and the emerging categories. Labels for groupings are drawn from participants’ words and placed at a level of generality/specificity just sufficiently above that of the vehicles in the group to include them all. (Cameron, 2010b, p. 12)

The groupings that emerged from this stage of the metaphor analysis are shown in Table 1. The categories are significant in this analysis because

These systematic metaphors serve both as evidence for ideas, attitudes, and values which may not be directly expressed in the discourse, and as a starting point for further exploration of aspects of data which would not otherwise come to light. (Cameron, 2003, p. 116)

**Identification of Metaphor Topics and Vehicles and Grouping of Vehicles**

Once metaphor vehicles were identified, the next step was to create larger groupings of related vehicles. “Grouping vehicles together is a flexible process. Initial decisions remain open to revision until the later stages of analysis, since each addition may change the nature of a grouping, and result in splitting or re-labelling” (Cameron, 2003, p. 119). This “interpretive” process began with listing the vehicles, then grouping them, using a label that comes from the data. Since “there is no single right answer,” it was necessary to:

Make judgements about how best to group the vehicles on the basis of available evidence. The set of groupings evolves as the researcher works through the
metaphor vehicles; each new addition may lead to adapting and adjusting existing groups. Deciding on the range of each grouping and on how to select a label that best describes a grouping involves consideration of connections between metaphor vehicles and of the discourse evidence to support decisions. In turn, decisions about groupings contribute to what they analyst notices about patterns and themes in the data. In this way, metaphor vehicle grouping in a recursive procedure. (Cameron, 2003, p. 120)

Grouping was also assessed carefully as recommended by Cameron:

For trustworthiness in the grouping procedure, each decision carefully follows a central principle of this kind of interpretive analysis—rigorous assessment of the quality, and limits, of the discourse evidence for that decision. As with metaphor identification, reliability is maximized by discussion with, and cross checks by, colleagues, and project notes aid consistency. (Cameron, 2003, p. 120)

Table 1

*Student Metaphors: Student Category, Student Vehicle*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Category</th>
<th>Student Vehicle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home and family</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nepotistic family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociological</td>
<td>American dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>melting pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustatory</td>
<td>Salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PB and J with sand in it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>box of chocolates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plate of lasagna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td>Crop field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tree blossoming in spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flower blooming</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The topic for each metaphor in this study was school, but the vehicles varied. The vehicles were analyzed, looking for systematicity. “A ‘systemic metaphor’ is a set of linguistic metaphors in which connected vehicle words or phrases are used metaphorically about a particular topic” (Cameron, 2003, p. 127).

The identification of systematicity in the study was aligned with the process described by Cameron:

Within each vehicle grouping, all the linguistic metaphors that relate to a particular topic are collected together into a set. This set of related linguistic metaphors is what we call as ‘systemic metaphor.’ A systemic metaphor is a construct of the researcher, not necessarily of the participants, created to condense the discourse data and to summarize metaphorical ways of expressing ideas, attitudes and values. (Cameron, 2003, p. 128)

As the data were analyzed in this study, possible systemic metaphors and metaphor trajectories were identified. Questions were then asked about systematic metaphors “to decide on their importance and relevance, and how to label them.”

Adapted from Cameron, these questions were asked about the systemic metaphors:

1. Which participants used these metaphors? All of them? Or only particular individuals?
2. Do all participants use the metaphors in the same way? Or do some disagree or resist the metaphors?
3. Do all the metaphors singly or in combination carry an evaluation of attitude, e.g., are they positive or negative? Are they highly emphatic?

4. How do the connected linguistic metaphors change with different uses?

Because as Cameron asserts: “The answers to questions like these, together with consideration of the systemic metaphors in relation to the research questions of a particular project, will contribute to the analyst’s decision about the significance of the systemic metaphors” (2003, p. 129), the systemic metaphors were then studied in conjunction with the dominant historical and contemporary education metaphors: those of Bobbitt, Dewey, Giroux, Foucault, and Saltman. The correlations were significant. (See Table 2.) Systematicity in the use of metaphor is important, according to Cameron, because:

Discourse is an outcome of the cognitive and linguistic processes that people engage in when they speak and write. What is expressed or understood in the flow of discourse is the best outcome available at the time, under those constraints and in those circumstances. These outcomes are not arbitrary; they reflect the multiple influences of past experience, sociocultural convention and the constraints of processing. Metaphor, like other aspects of language, is subject to these influences, but choice of metaphor has a particular revelatory capacity. A linguistic metaphor is connected into a dense network of ideas, associations, conceptual and affective patterns which are interwoven with correlates from embodied experience. These connections and patterns are not always expressed directly—indeed, we are not for the most part consciously aware of them—but
they are fundamental to how we perceive, conceptualize, and interact with the world. Systematic connections between semantically similar metaphor vehicles on the one hand and the topics they express on the other, open a window on the ideas, attitudes, and values which may be active in speakers’ or writers’ minds at the time they engage in the discourse. The more robust the relationship, the stronger the claim that can be made about the underlying factors it reveals.

(Cameron, 2003, p. 117)

In addition,

Systemic metaphors as a starting point for further investigation: The examples here are drawn from a single focus group and are far from being an exhaustive list of the systemic topic-vehicle connections in that sample of data. Intriguing
patterns of relations emerge from this subset which might lead us to pursue particular connections or extrapolate to broader themes. (Cameron, 2003, p. 136)

The data in this study did reveal a picture: In this study of student metaphors, it was shown that of the metaphors obtained, many could be described as conveying a positive attitude toward school, a number carried a negative connotation, and some expressed a balanced or ambivalent view of school. As the metaphors were identified and analyzed, it became evident that students conceive of school metaphorically in either terms of a metaphorical image or as a metaphorical sentiment or process. In addition, some of these processes expressed delayed gratification (the construct of the school as a Goodwill store, or the doctor’s office, for example, show this).
CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS OF SYSTEMIC STUDENT CATEGORIES

Corporatization, Consumerism, and Education as Product in Student Data

The student responses varied from the responses of faculty. Although the participants each spend every school day in the same building, their metaphorical conceptions and systemic metaphor categories are incongruous in many ways. Overall, many of the student responses emphasize confinement and stagnation, while many of the faculty metaphors center on growth and activity.

School as a Store, Student as Consumer

Some students conceived of school as a metaphorical provider of a product, or a store. This correlates with the metaphor of the student as an education consumer:

School is like a grocery store. The shopper is like the teacher and the products are the children. Any old person can walk in and purchase any type of food and make some meal, easily. It takes an experienced chef to be able to create a dish that is advanced and special . . . because the experience and the benefit of school is highly dependent on the instructor.

“School is a Goodwill store . . . It may take a long time but eventually you will find something good. Eventually you will get a good job, but you must wait for it to happen.”

School as Provider of Educational Goods

Another student conceived of academic space, a repository of knowledge that provides for students: “School is a library . . . because there are a lot of books and
knowledge in schools, and the teachers are kind of like books.” A related image was that of books:

I believe school is like books, because everyone had their own opinion about a book much like school. While talking with my friends at lunch, we often discuss our classes and school days. By doing so, I get to hear everyone’s different views about their school days. Some of my friends really enjoy it, while others complain about their load of homework or the difficult test next [period]. Each person’s day is filled with knowledge, even though they might not enjoy it as much as they should. At the end of a book, I often realize something new that I have learned. Same with school; I learn something new every day. By listening to all of the students in the cafeteria during lunch, I get to hear all of the comparisons of people’s day. Some people feel fine about school, while others dread it. I usually enjoy school. It is something I have become used to, almost like a habit.

**Student as Consumer of Medical Services**

Medical imagery was seen in a few metaphors: School is a “doctor’s office” because

Going to the doctor’s office is bothersome and scary sometimes, but coming out of the doctor’s office, you realize what is wrong and you get medicine to feel good. The same holds true for school, because while going to school is bothersome and most people hate it, we gain knowledge to help us in the future . . . Last year I decided to take my very first AP class. It was European History.
Anxious and excited to go into class, I prepared by reading a recommended book for the class. However, after only being in the class for a week, I was already stressed out and losing much sleep. I pulled all-nighters to finish my work, and stayed home on weekends to do projects all for that class. Over the school year I would dread going to class and taking home work to do each night. I cried before the tests because my grades were slipping, and they only kept going down. In May I took my AP test and in July had received my scores. I had received a four, and I was ecstatic. I had not only taken college credit from this course, but also a knowledge of how history affects our present. And overall, I am happy to have taken the class, though I dreaded working for it.

Another student saw school as a “hospital,” because

The patients are the students. Some kids are naturally stronger, they fight off the infection of their schoolwork and are able to get better and graduate. Some just get weaker and weaker until they drop out. Some may try unconventional methods to get where they want to be. Others are getting extra help when all they really want is to be left to die in peace.

**Student as Consumer of Products**

A number of students conceived of school in terms of food:

School is a plate of lasagna. . . . The outer pasta shell of the lasagna is nice and enjoyable, just like in school you get to hang out with friends and meet new people but then you really get into it there is the ricotta cheese that’s gross and has a weird flavor, just like there are really boring parts in school, and then there are
really yummy other cheesy or meaty parts hidden deep inside the lasagna that make you feel satisfied, like when you learn something really enriching. After eating the lasagna you are full and satisfied but there are those little ricotta cheese parts that are sometimes hard to endure.

Another student contributed an homage to Forrest Gump:

School is like a box of chocolates; you never know what you’re gonna get . . .

School is fine. I don’t care for it, but it’s okay. It is nice to see my friends and teachers that I like, but there are a few who are (can’t read). I misbehaved when I was younger because I thought I was fun/cool. I realized I wasn’t. My girlfriend I met my sophomore year helped me realize this and I have been maturing since. But recently I stayed back from lunch to eat with a friend. Long story short, I threw an orange peel at a kid I know and [an adult] saw me. He came over and made me pick it up, which was fine, it was my fault, but then I wasn’t allowed on lunch for five days and received a punishment. I thought this was over excessive and that the [adult] was a tool. That’s my story.

An additional food-centered image was:

School is a salad . . . Some parts of the salad contain their own special qualities individually. The lettuce is the majority taste, the paprika has a kick, and the tomatoes give a burst of juice. But overall it is a salad. The name never changes. But special qualities enhance or bring the salad’s overall appeal down.
This ambivalence is similarly shown in: “School is a peanut butter and jelly sandwich with sand in it . . . because I have mixed feelings about school.” And the mixed emotions are echoed in edible metaphor that hones in on the idea of surprise:

School is a cereal box. You know what to expect and it takes time to finish, but there are always surprises in the box . . . Because it makes perfect sense. You think you know what’s coming but there is always a surprise in the box.

Looking at these metaphors, their entailments show that school is something to be eaten—to be consumed. Therefore, these fit in the school as a product/consumption category. Saltman’s words echo those of the students: He noted the “metaphors of consumer culture,” and students see a grocery store or items to be consumed. The language “celebrates consumerism” as Saltman observes; these students view education as a product; they consume the product.

**Competition, Militarization, and War**

Many more images of competition (like those observed by Tannen) emerged from the students’ writing as well: school viewed as a figurative Hunger Games competition, swimming in a test of endurance, and the conflict-ridden dynamic metaphor of a battlefield. One participant noted:

School for me is swimming in [a lake]. Your boat continuously drifts further away, or it seems to, and you must tell yourself that you will make it to the boat. However, the current drags you away with each wave. I suppose reaching to boat would be like receiving your high school diploma. Each day your goal is to swim towards it . . . It’s a test of endurance . . . Every day at school I have to work hard,
keep up with due dates and homework and tests. When I leave school at 3:11, I have work from 4 classes to finish before the next day so I focus, with occasional breaks, until my eyelids feel like heavy weights and the world becomes blurry. In a second, I wake up and immediately notice the grey colors of dawn in my room, It is morning again, and I have to go to school and learn more, add insightful thoughts to class discussion, and receive more work. Every day at school the current pulls me back, and every night I swim one more stroke towards the boat, the end of school.

Another posited:
School is a real life version of the Hunger Games. All students are thrown into a ‘new world’ together only with the knowledge their mentors (their parents) have provided them. Alliances are quickly made, changed, and repaired throughout the course. Some contestants are clearly more cut out for the competition, and it is clear that only some will be successful . . . I chose that comparison because I view school as a competition, and because the Hunger Games is a recent, well known subject.

The most extreme example of this contentious thematic thread was the battlefield (coinciding with the militarization metaphor detailed by Giroux): “School is a battlefield . . . because you fight constantly, with grades, peers, and work for a greater cause.”

Along similar metaphorical lines is: “School is an army of ants. School is a controlling environment that’s not a good one. An army of ants stays in straight lines and carry their food and do the same routine every day. That’s how school feels.”
My junior year was a good one, until halfway through when we switched semesters. I got a whole new set of classes. One of them being [course] with [teacher’s name]. Now let me inform you that I had [the same teacher] for [earlier course], my first . . . class in high school and she doomed me in [course] for the rest of my life, so back to my Junior year . . . I realized that [course] was going to suck really bad because [teacher] is the shittiest teacher I’ve ever had. So I decided to take her class as a pass-fail so then it wouldn’t affect my GPA. My counselor told me I could if I could just get her to sign the paper. A couple days later I asked [the teacher] to sign it and she told me no because she thinks that I was just being lazy!!! Are you serious? I’ve had straight A’s my whole high school career and she thinks I’m just lazy. No! It’s because she never taught me anything in her first . . . class and I didn’t want to get a bad grade just because the teacher sucks, so I couldn’t take the class as a pass-fail just because she wouldn’t sign the paper, even though it wasn’t her decisions. She’s a horrible teacher and she ruined my [course] experience. She should be fired.” School is also seen as “a test for my patience with stupid people . . . I’ve always been mature for my age because I have two older sisters, so it really annoys me when kids don’t realize they are killing themselves with each cigarette . . . Monday morning. I’m tired as usual and the last place I want to go is [high school]. The moment I walk through the doors, a freshman sprints in from of me to go scream about boys to their friends. School’s the most important thing right now, I think to myself, if they want to end up working at McDonald’s, then fine. I turn around the corner to see
a group of shady looking jock guys standing around my locker. Not for me, of course, but their friend’s locker is by mine. As I’m putting my backpack away, I pick up bits and pieces of their conversation, something about this ‘RAGER’ party that was over the weekend and how they got shit-faced. How so you even let your kids do that? I wonder about the boys’ family lives at home. I get to the library. At least I can see Hannah. She’s pretty much my only friend who feels the same way as I do. I just pray that I get through the day with my sanity still intact.

**War and Competition**

The theme of competition seen in the war metaphor (detailed by Saltman and Giroux) is taken a step further by one student:

School is a battlefield . . . because kids are struggling to fit in. If you aren’t ‘normal,’ you’re not accepted and it’s sad. Everyone deserves to have a friend. They shouldn’t have to go through school alone . . . I feel that school is a popularity contest. I didn’t feel this way during elementary school, but as the kids become older, the more judgmental they become. Cliques begin to form and you have to decide where you fit in. Some kids don’t fit in anywhere, leaving them alone . . . I sit down for lunch and glance over to a boy sitting alone. His eyes wander, trying to find a place where he can fit in. He soon gives up, ultimately deciding to fix his eyes on the wall as he eats his lunch. My friends at my table talk and laugh and it makes me wonder if this is what he’s been missing . . . friends, someone to laugh with and be yourself around and ultimately have fun. Is
he missing the opportunity to make memories that will last? I wish I was brave and been the one to go over and include him, but this is exactly what is wrong with school. I didn’t because I, too, want to fit in. It’s sad but true and I hope that somehow kids, all in once place can overcome their fear and reach out to someone who needs a friend.” A battlefield needs a figurative army, and one student expressed the idea that “school is a boot camp for the military, but filed with things that aren’t essential for becoming a soldier . . . just like a soldier, you have to go through training in order to get where you need to be and be capable of thriving in the future.

**School as Politician**

Political imagery was seen in the conceptualization of school as “a modern politician” . . . because

School can be enjoyable with the right classes and teaches, but otherwise it is depressing, stressful and frustrating . . . Because it causes loads of stress and anger, it is very hypocritical, sometimes incompetent, lies a lot, impacts thousands of lives, wastes money, and is overall disliked . . . I have had many experiences in my schooling that caused me to think of that metaphor. In 7th grade, school caused stress and anger by giving me about five hours of assignments a night, while I had family responsibilities, a part time job, and was under constant bullying. This stress and anger led me to depression. Schools are very hypocritical in what they say. When school system says it will protect you, it won’t. In 3rd grade I was bullied, but no punishment was given. When I defended
myself, I received the same punishment as my attacker. School is incompetent in that the two schools I go to in the beginning of my Junior year, were both unprepared and had a spend a month to give necessary info. Overall the public school system is a huge mass of hypocrisy and idiocracy, just like a politician.

Connections to the militarization, individualism, and social indifference described by theorists also appear here. They see school as a battlefield, as an army of ants, as a boot camp for the military. The students write that they live this language—hence their lexicon and metaphors in the study data.

**Confinement Imagery: Prisons and Mental Asylums**

Negative images of confinement, such as a few figurative hell holes and a black hole, were described by a number of students. These correspond to the prison metaphor in the work of Foucault and Giroux. Elements of panopticism echo throughout the observations of these students. One example was: “School is a hell hole . . . Because unless you’re popular and have everything handed to you, it sucks.” There were also confining institutions: prisons, insane asylums, a dungeon, and a government-sanctioned social training facility: “School is a government sanctioned social training facility . . . students’ minds are molded into thinking a certain way,” asserted one participant, because

An example of this is my views of guns are very different than the school’s view. I was discussing my view with a student and was reprimanded by a nearby teacher for simply saying that gun laws are too strict. I was offended and frustrated because I felt my 1st and 2nd Amendment rights were being stripped away.
Another noted:

School is an insane asylum—as well with education all together. The school painted all the walls white and left it white all over. There was no life other than the people here. But even though . . . we are instructed on what to eat, how to dress, what to say, learn, study. Our lives are being dictated here at school. When we all leave we go crazy at college where we are on our own, no longer in the asylum; we did our jobs here. My experience is getting a detention for not saying what’s appropriate [or] not wearing what’s right. You get in trouble for not doing the right things like in the asylum. They have strict therapy and we have extra long detentions that make us stay in this hell hole for longer.

This idea was expounded upon by another participant:

I have ill feelings about school. It is a sterile, fluorescently lit and uncomfortable environment . . . No, I have not always felt this way about school/my education. Before I became cognizant of the ‘importance’ of education or so I’ve been told since 5th grade, I used to actually enjoy school, especially being given recess/time outside, interesting classes . . . [it’s because of] the structure of bells, [and being] forced to be amongst other nut jobs.

These connections between school and prison are described by Giroux, and this is reflected in the student data. Another student expressed this view: “School is a dungeon with one window . . . I say this because I like coming to school to learn. Not to be disgusted by mean people with harsh, unnecessary comments.” There were also three students who conceptualized school as a prison. The first wrote:
School is a prison . . . I chose this because schools are too strict. They ask for 7–8 hours from kids of their lives every day and then assign homework as well. If you’re late or can’t do them you get punished unless the excuse is good enough for the elders. I think this is wrong and we need to break out and explore new forms of education.

The second claimed:

School is a prison. The classrooms are the cells, the teachers are guards, and we are the prisoners . . . It’s true. We run our days on a bell schedule, which prisons do as well. We are under constraints at all times, just like prisoners—except that they get to go to the bathroom without asking for permission.

The third example of this thematic strand was: “School [is] a prison . . . I chose that comparison because school in my perspective is set up like a prison, and it runs like one.”

Another student’s metaphorical prison was described this way:

School is like a prison . . . I haven’t always felt this way, but during 8th grade I began to want to leave Hunterville (graduate) . . . During my ninth grade year, I had a very horrible day. So in order to try to feel better, I said “thank you” to a teacher for having tissues during cold/flu season. She then started to yell at me, saying it’s not her I should be thanking and how some students just aren’t grateful. I then broke down and began crying. I ran out into the hallway. A few minutes later she came out and told me to suck it up and to come back to class. The only thing she ever said to me was a mumbled sorry. We never spoke again.

A fifth student described the prison of school as well, for similar reasons:
School is like a prison . . . school is strict and too regimented with strict teachers and unfriendly administration . . . School is too strict. [There is] too much homework in one night, and the teachers (only a select few are okay) are not that nice . . . When I was little I did not feel this way. My feelings changed when I entered Middle School . . . My experience with that is when I had to go to the bathroom and a teacher gave me a hard time. I’m a good kid and I stay out of trouble so there’s no need to question me about what I’ll be doing when all I need to do is just use the bathroom. No need to be suspicious.

Other participants experienced school as

A prison . . . As a boy, from 5, all the way till 18 in the education program . . . that’s 13 years of my life they put people through schooling. I think that in my life I’ve had experiences with school being like a prison. You have higher authority (principal/teachers), then you have the inmates (students) and then you have the cells (detention halls/walls of the school). Very rarely were you allowed to be outside for school unless for field trips. As I grew up, my favorite class was gym, the reason being that you get to exercise in an area sorta like the courtyards in a prison. Many people don’t see it but children, teens, and young adults are basically sentenced to 13 years in ‘prison’ from birth. Not including the college time you have to spend after that if you choose to. Our society tries to make it seem like education is a great thing, and it is. Just not the way we’re using it. Not the way we are being forced to do things. If they truly want school to not be like a prison, they need change.
Another student wrote:

School is a prison . . . I walked into my first period class on the first day of 8th grade. I had barely slept the night before, due to nerves, and I was fighting to keep my eyes open. I chose an open seat and I sat down. I had one or two friends in my class but I still felt alone. “Does anyone else hate school as much as me?” I thought. The bell rang and my teacher began to introduce herself. I started to feel woosy, like I was going to faint. Was summer really over? How am I going to do this? Questions invaded my brain and I started having a panic attack. I breathed in and out slowly, trying to get my mind back on track. All the while, the teacher keeps talking and the students keep listening. No one knew what was going on inside my head, and if they did, I suspect they would think I was crazy. There was nothing I could do. I sat back in my chair and realized that this isn’t going to end. This is only the beginning. My attitude towards school will never change, even if I wanted it to. I spent so much time engraving into my brain how bad school is. Every bad thought about school was stuck in my head like a cancerous tumor; it wasn’t going to get any better. The cancer spread throughout my whole mind which is now and forever corrupted to feel that school is an endless and ugly black hole.

Another student saw school as

A jail . . . because no matter how bad you don’t want to be there, you have to be there . . . Getting a [detention], and sitting in the cold room, all you hear is the dead silence because talking is prohibited. All you see it the other kids, and you
question if they feel the same way. Also you see the clock that always seems to go slow. And all you feel is pure boredom.

This idea was also reflected in the conception of school as: “A temporary prison with set rules and requirements . . . School is demanding, annoying, and restricting. However, at times it is fun. Certain classes make the day brighter,” because “I failed my [course] paper and was pissed off.” One student chose two metaphors of confinement: “School is a psych ward or a prison.”

**Confinement in Hell**

Others were consigned to their own personal versions of hell. “School is like hell . . . We are trapped in this school building and getting disciplined for things that don’t matter, and we are trapped in here seven hours a day.” This participant said the reason for this comparison was “getting in trouble for stupid shit. Some teachers only look to get kids in trouble instead of trying to educate us.”

School is a hell. A tortuous, living, burning hell . . . High school made me hate school . . . School (minus a few teachers) is pretty much torture [because] moving to Westerville was literally torture. No one talked to me except a group of boys who lived in my apartment but besides that I had no friends. I ate lunch under a staircase alone because there was not a single table that was welcoming. The teachers all thought I was suicidal, which I wasn’t. My teachers were assholes. Then when I moved to [Hunterville], it was like all my friends weren’t the same. Now all they do is drink and get high, so being here is pretty much like
[Holdenville] was, but with people I know so for me school is torture. Yay! Only 129 days till graduation.

The idea of torture was shown in other writing as well:

School is torture . . . I chose this because it’s people telling you where to sit and what to do all day [because] in the past I’ve been told by teachers that I can’t sit in the back row of the classroom. I don’t think they should be able to tell me where to sit; they wouldn’t know if I work better in the front or back. Also I’ve been yelled at for talking in class while the whole class was talking. I think it’s just unfair to do that.

Related to torture was the figurative

Pain in the ass . . . There are some teachers in this school that can be used in saying it’s a pain in the ass. The two teachers that come to mind are Mrs. . . . and the other teacher is Mrs. . . . Those two teachers are the reason I don’t like school.

Prisons and hell were not the only types of confinement described by students:

I feel like I am trapped in a big box all day that people force me into. I also feel like someone is squishing the box and everyone inside the box is in constant competition to get out of the box to save their lives and their selves from harm . . .

I chose that because you are forced to go to school by the government and your parents for eight hours per day, five days a week, and work yourself to death and get sleep deprivation. You are also constantly competing with other students to get out of school with the best GPA possible in order to go to the best college and
work yourself to death there to get the best job you can get. If you don’t do that then you risk struggling for the rest of your life [because] I rush to school every morning to sit at school for eight hours and get the best schooling possible to go home and do more homework for four more hours.

Related to the prison imagery was the idea of school as “a ball and chain holding me back from learning and doing the things I feel are important and aspire to do” . . . because

In my freshman math class we had to spend a gruesome hour . . . every day watching an ancient woman talk to the board while she mumbled on and on and on about stupid math problems that I am never going to have to know or do again.

**Stagnation and Inertia**

A sense of inertia was expressed by some students:

School is a stagnant being . . . Although there may be different parts to a school, such as the types of classes someone takes, the concepts you learn do not change much over time. Also a school may hold you back from what you want out of life . . . An experience of mine that makes a school a stagnant being to me is my entire high school experience, especially this year. Right now, my life consists of me going to school, going home and doing my homework, and going to bed. I feel like I am not learning anything new and my experiences here did not help me decide what I want to be. I feel like high school should help students more on discovering what their strengths and weaknesses are rather than just going through the motions of having a ‘well-rounded education.’ It’s important for
younger students to have that kind of education, but most teenagers already know or have some idea of what they want to do later in life, because my experiences as a junior here are practically the same every day, I think of school as stagnant and not helpful.

Multiple participants expressed a feeling of stagnation associated with school:

A school day is like a century because I feel like school is very long . . . Sitting in classes with my head pounding and slowly drifting off. I never heard very much of it but I always tried to stay awake. All I felt was the pressure around my head, and I just kept staring at the clock, waiting to get out of every class.

This sense of inertia is echoed in the following idea:

School is a life-sucking vacuum . . . School changes who you are and forces you to not always be who you actually are on the inside due to influences from people around you, stereotypes, perceptions, and views . . . School is a good place to learn and socialize and also a good place to build your character. It’s a good routine to have and way to spend most of your time because it occupies your time and draws you away from other activities that could be illegal or harmful. While school can be a good place to attend, it could also bring stress, causing one’s personality to alter and break down. The force of attendance, grades, and possibly extracurricular activities can cause a student to fear school. I love the routine of school and having the responsibility of homework, although it can be overwhelming. It’s a good feeling getting things completed and accomplished. School can also be fearful to me as it is a place of judgment. Not one person will
look the other way when crossing paths. And their thoughts are most likely negative because judgment is natural. . . . Freshman and sophomore year, all the boys of high school believed you had to be skinny, rich, preppy, and easy or a “whore” to be acceptable or worth talking to. I felt empty inside and worthless my whole life. I felt I wasn’t good enough and I was always angry and angry at MYSELF for not having it all. I never understood why I wasn’t up to the standards for my school. The boys of my school are brainwashed into thinking only perfect girls are worth it, which eventually brainwashed me.

The feeling of pressure emerged in certain negative images:

School is like a burden always hanging over your head . . . I never really want to come to school. I don’t like waking up early to learn and I hate the fact that after school, I have to do more school work or things relating to school. If you take upper level classes it’s difficult to fit other things in because of the work load . . . I chose that comparison because school often stresses me out. There’s pressure to get good grades from my parents, homework that can take to the middle of the night, and never ending tests. So I always feel like I’m thinking about something school related . . . I came up with this metaphor because I believe it holds true to myself. Like many other kids in [Hunterville] High School, sports take up time needed to do school work. One time I was at a track meet and it was my birthday I was so stressed out that day because I knew it was going to go late and it was on a school night. I was also nervous for my race and the three tests I had in school the next day. The meet ended up finishing really late and my mom called me in
sick the next day because as soon as the meet was over, I came home and went right to bed and she knew that I was stressed about my three tests. It ended up working out in my favor, but I still think school is a burden hanging over my head sometimes.

**Confinement in Laboratories and Experiments**

A scientific bent appeared in these confinement metaphors as well: “While high school is good for some, it acts as an incubator of immaturity and idiocy for others . . . I’m tired of being surrounded by idiotic and immature people.” Aligned with this scientific construct was a social science oriented construct:

School is a social experiment. While the benefit of the experiment is a higher education, it is still an observation of how adolescents interact. School prepares us for the real world. Academics is not the most important part of the education system. Learning how to interact with your own species is what school is about. Sure getting a 4.2 at the end is great, but it doesn’t mean anything if you don’t know how to work with others.

School is a noble experiment woefully executed with skewed results. I chose that because most teachers teach for a test; they don’t make comparisons or apply concepts to real life situations. Their job required them to. My mother is a teacher . . . and her keeping her job last year depended on her test scores. It’s a rather sad phenomenon which to me produces an entire generation where we lose the ability to think critically or retain information.

This was illustrated in the narrative:
Just last semester I had a . . . class with [teacher]. [A girl’s name] was in my class and received an A and I received a D, yet I was fully able to explain the concepts and apply them all to real life and I would understand everything whereas she didn’t learn anything and said it was pointless daily. Why did she receive such a high grade where I did not? Homework. I didn’t do any of the bookwork, but I did everything we did in class and received A’s on all my tests where (girl) received Ds. and Fs. Why do I say that education systems in America produce skewed results? Because grades don’t show how much one knows and or understands, but whatever the teacher wants them to represent. It’s sad.

There are apparent overlaps between these students’ ideas and those of Foucault: surveillance and confinement feature prominently. In this study, these theorist’s metaphorical ideas repeatedly intersect with the students’ metaphorical language and narratives.

**Natural Imagery**

Repeatedly, the data showed that students conceptualized themselves metaphorically as animals in various contentious or competitive scenarios. Other images that fell into the natural category were plant metaphors.

**Theriomorphism and Animal Imagery**

Another of the natural themes was the concept of theriomorphism, or people conceived of metaphorically as animals. These metaphorical constructs highlight stratification, “leveling,” or forced separation by differences within the group that
comprise the student body. These motifs also overlap with those in the ideas of Giroux and Saltman: in these student metaphors, competition and individual achievement are stressed. One student noted:

My metaphor for school would be a zoo because people are separated into different groups or people with different personality types and behaviors just like different animals are separate. It is a place where growing takes place and learning is all around . . . I feel it accurately depicts school and has many similar elements.

Another wrote:

School is a rainforest . . . I see school as consisting of several unique aspects that most people would not encounter if they did not go to school, as a rainforest consists of unique aspects that other parts of the world do not have. A rainforest enhances quality of life through various plants that cure diseases. Also, a rainforest consists of distinct levels where different organisms reside. School is the same way. Each person goes to school for a slightly different reason and motivation, and this separates students into different levels.

Yet another asserted:

School reminds me of a jungle. In a jungle, you have all these different kinds of animals where in school you have so many different people. In the jungle, you have so many different environments and in school you have different classrooms that teach different subjects . . . I chose this because when I think of school, I
think of difference. When I think of a jungle, I think of different animals living in one environment. Students go to the same school in the same ‘environment.’

One more example of the thematic thread of stratification appeared: “School is an African safari, or just a regular safari, with lions, tigers, and bears . . . oh my . . . There are lions—kings/queens—popular students; tigers—athletes; bears—bullies or panda bears—nerds.” Another student depicted the stratification of the animal-based metaphor as well: “School is a savanna . . . There are people like lions at the top and many layers beneath them.” The animal group conceptualization was seen again in:

School is a group of birds. Once one says something, it quickly catches on . . . Everyone gossips! There is not one incident where no one finds out . . . There are some people that I won’t tell anything to, to ensure that I don’t become the center of gossip. Sometimes this makes me feel very awkward in class because I don’t have a lot of friends.

This student elaborated on the metaphor:

When I first came to [Hunterville] and all the way through my Sophomore year, I had friends at [this school] but I didn’t really hang out with anyone. I did this because I was afraid of being talked about. [This school] is notorious for having rumors spread like wildfire. Quite honestly, you can’t pull a prank, go to a party, or make a mistake without everyone knowing about it. There was a particular incident this past year that involved two underclass girls who ingested [drug] at school. I was not at school that particular day not did I know the girls personally. But one of them was the cousin of an old friend of mine. And I think it’s really
sad that I, a girl that barely knows what happened, found out before the girl’s cousin did. I do not sympathize with these girls because it was a very dumb thing to do, but I have nothing to do with the situation; why did I even have to know?

Aspects of these metaphors, including the stratification or levels, are consistent with Lakoff and Johnson’s orientational metaphor: high status is up; low status is down. In addition, this hierarchy correlates with the hierarchical nature of the corporate educational metaphor as analyzed by Saltman.

**Predatory Animals**

This idea of hierarchy, along with images of conflict, emerges again in: “School is a big, hungry cat, and I was a mouse. Freshman year I was so scared of high school, but I got more used to it and then I became the cat and the school became the mouse.” This predatory dynamic is explained in the following narrative:

On day one of high school I was terrified from the moment I walk in school to the moment I walked out. Thoughts were racing through my mind. Once I was in first block, it wasn’t as scary, but I feared every time I had to walk through a hallway with big kids passing and coming toward me. I didn’t want to end up like one of those kids in the movies who get shoved in lockers. I kept my mouth shut and moved quickly from class to class. Before I knew it, seven hours later, I was on my way home in my mom’s white Town and Country van, safe. I had made it through the hardest day of high school. Tomorrow would be even better as I grew more comfortable with my surroundings. In just a week, I no longer felt like a mouse in a room full of hungry cats. [Hunterville] was my school now.
School is a sea of sharks with creatures lurking in the halls, waiting for someone to bite... I truly feel that as I walk down the hallways during school every person has something to say about whoever is walking down the hallway as well. This is illustrated in the following story:

One day of my junior year of high school, I was standing at my friend’s locker with the anticipation for the first bell to ring. It was the beginning of the day, and I started that day with an apple. I stood there eating my apple and out of nowhere a kid in my grade walked past me and smacked the apple right out of my hand. My apple rolled down the hallway, snaking through people’s feet. This kid kept walking and pretended like he did nothing. Because this kid did it on purpose and pretended like nothing happened, he truly taught me something about how people act in the world... I have taught myself not to act like that kid did that one morning. I have learned to accept how many cruel people there are in the world.

School can be a dog, as well: “School is a dog. When it is here it will bark and annoy you. Sometimes it won’t. But when it has passed, you will miss it very much,” which was illustrated in the following:

In my freshman year I had taken biology. It was a class I expected to be easy because of the science behind it. I had no idea what I was getting into. I was struggling in that class more than anything. I wanted to quit more than anything in the world and just drop the class. But, what kept me going in the class was the great atmosphere of students in the classroom. They were all so nice to me even
though I was one of three freshmen. Although the class itself wasn’t fun, I did really enjoy the students in it and had a really great time with them. One student added a related metaphor:

School is a modern day mating ground . . . because of the competitiveness and the lengths and things people will do to feel better than the next person . . . The one I attend has an overwhelming sense of competitiveness where everyone thinks they are better than the next person in every aspect, from social to academic. If really puts a lot of unfair pressure on you; people begin to feel outcast because of the clique like structure the kids in school operate by, [because] going into high school at the end of Middle School my supposed friends would do nothing but talk bad about one another and would be constantly be stabbing each other in the back for no apparent reason. They would make some lame excuse for why they did what they did, but the truth must have been they had felt jealous or threatened in the littlest way and would be down to outcast and ridicule the person.

**Confined Animals**

Two thematically related metaphors connected to the others in terms of the event/situation and expressed a sense of confinement as well as incorporation of animal elements, but differed in focus: “School is a circus . . . because it can be exciting but if things don’t go as planned, it can be tragic,” “School is a circus,” because

School is a crazy place that has many events happening at one time and a place that contains many people . . . First time I was changing classes in high school. The bell rang, and suddenly, there were sounds of feet on the floor, lockers
opening and shutting and people talking. Going into the hallway, I experienced an atmosphere like a circus. People were yelling to each other, teachers were standing by like ringmasters waiting to tame the mob of students. I could hear many different conversations at once, like one would hear at a circus. There were even smells of food. Even though this craziness was happening, there was a sense of everything being under control. Just like a circus, it may seem like nothing is under control, but really, everything is under the surface.

Another animal-based metaphor emerged:

School is a puppy pound, because people are always judging . . . When people are looking for a puppy, they base it off looks/abilities (not peeing in the house, catch ball, etc.) and when people are at school, they base friendships and relationships on looks and academics.

The number of metaphors in this study that fall under this figurative umbrella is striking. In addition, the metaphors’ entailments include: the student as a captive animal, the student as a competitive animal, the student engaged in a tiered society akin to the animal kingdom’s “pecking order” of dominance. Studying the number and entailments of these metaphors lead to this conclusion: this may indicate a systemic metaphor for school.

**Plant Images**

The idea that students are pushed into roles was also evident. In some constructs that were positive in tone: “School is a crop field . . . All students, despite their differences in intellect, passions, and talents are cultivated and taught to become one ‘real
world ready’ crop.” An organic image with an emphasis on separation was: “School is an onion. Onions have layers, like school has classes. You go more in depth in subjects as the years pass. Also, like in school, parts of the onion are used, and some are waste.”

**Home and Family Imagery**

Relating to the ideas of Montessori, school was also compared to a home, and to the process of building a house, and a nepotistic family:

My metaphor for school would be that it is like a home . . . I compared school to a home because it is something you dwell at every day and become accustomed to. You see familiar faces there and take pride in your school, including its teams and activities.

Another example of this thread was “school is home . . . I feel safe at school as if I was at my own house. Everyone looks out for each other like family.” There was also the process of building a home: “Building a house by hand . . . Because the physical labor involved in building a house is exhausting and repetitive, but everyone wants to have a house and enjoy the fruits of their labor.” The family metaphor, however, takes on a negative connotation here:

The school is a powerful, nepotistic family . . . This is because, as a student, I have experienced when the privileged few earn things they do not deserve. I feel the community, as well as the school, favors family lineage. This discourages a majority of the students, and it is a prevalent issue.

A Montessori type of comparison is also seen in:
School is a community... It’s a social place to learn and communicate... I enjoy school for the most part besides for unnecessary classes... Because there are different friend groups that form... In past experiences I think that lunch is a perfect example of how school is a community because everyone at lunch is part of the school/community but the tables are divided among friends/neighbors, and therefore the isles of separation between friend groups would become streets of the community where the halls would be highways, the classes would be town meeting places, such as the library, gym, auditorium, etc.

In addition, there was a familial comparison with negative connotations and implied stratification, combining the Montessori type of community with the language of corporatization:

The school is a powerful, nepotistic family... This is because, as a student, I have experienced when the privileged few earn things they do not deserve. I feel the community, as well as the school, favors family lineage. This discourages a majority of the students, and it is a prevalent issue.

Underlying many of these images of different categories were suggestions of social stratification (the “privileged few” in the “nepotistic family”).

**American Dream**

A few metaphors were tied into metaphorical concepts for aspects of American society, including:

School is a representation of the American dream. Our opportunities to pursue happiness begin through education. Without education, our nation and our world
as a whole will not progress. The application of knowledge is the creating force of the universe. As citizens of the world, it is our duty to pursue opportunities in order to make the world a better place.

A related idea was:

School is a melting pot. It melts different people together and makes them one, and spills along the surface of your life . . . Because school unites people with different beliefs, personalities, but it also unites people with similar thoughts. Also, school stays with your for your whole life if you choose. Finally, school develops a ground/basis for your life in developing who you want to be and what you want to do.

This melting pot image connects to a vision of America—it is a commonly used metaphor for American society—but it is also a container metaphor, implying confinement. Another incarnation of the dream aspect of this metaphor is:

School feels like a dream. You’re only there for a certain amount of time, but sometimes it feels like you’re there forever . . . [A] past experience that I’ve had that holds me to my metaphorical idea is that one time during the school week I was at home sleeping and I had a dream that I was in school. This is weird and hard to explain, but when I thought I was asleep at home, supposedly having a dream, I was actually at school. I fell asleep during school while watching a movie.
Organic Versus Inorganic

An obvious binary materialized as well: material or nonliving items and natural or organic images. This is the same binary that metaphorically split the education reform movement of the early 20th century: Dewey’s natural organism and Bobbitt’s industrial metaphor. It also manifests itself in theory: in the polarity between Montessori’s imagery and imagery in the work of Saltman, Giroux, and Foucault.

In this study, school was often conceptualized in terms of some concrete items: Play-Doh or an inspirational poster. There were also natural process images that overlap with Dewey’s metaphor. One student responded:

School is a tree blossoming in the spring. First day of school, everyone is blossoming in their vibrant colors, and smiles. We stay this way for a while; then our bursting colors and excitement start to fade away. School becomes the norm, and our once exaggerated colors turn a solid green. Everyone, the same green, some a little lighter in their persistent A’s, the others a darker shade, consumed by their schoolwork. Then our colors seem to change; now everyone is in their groove and on the path of where their school year is headed. As the days become colder, our leaves fall. We have fully been exhausted from school. The tree is left empty. The bare tree branches represent our exhausted minds by the end of the school year. Finally the days become warmer and the hope for an end begins. School is out and the buds start popping! Sumer break is here, but once we’ve finally sprouted a flower, school begins again . . . because trees go through changes of seasons and we go through phases of excitement and boredom.
Plant imagery was also seen in:

School is a flower blooming . . . I chose this comparison because each year we are growing and becoming bigger and brighter. Also, each year we are dying and when a new year comes we are blooming into a new flower . . . In high school I have had many struggles and had to overcome many things. Ever since I was in second grade I have had a hard time reading. I have barely passed a class in ten years. I started to give up. I have made countless attempts to work as hard as I can. I put in many frustrating hours, which caused me to break down many times. Everyone believed that I just was unable to read. I would cry every day because no one thought I could do it and would never make it to college. Finally, I found a love for math and English became easier and easier for me. I found what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. At the beginning of high school I was planted and I had shriveled up into the ground from my discouragements. Finally, I began to bloom and shine when I found my calling in life, like a flower.

Another student described grades in natural metaphoric terms:

Grades are like leaves on a tree . . . Everyone wants to keep their grades up, but once they fall nobody wants to touch them or pick them up . . . I have noticed that all the kids that have bad grades just don’t care anymore and they feel that it would be too much work to pick them up, so they just let them sit there and they know that eventually they will get to start over (i.e., new semester). Then they try to keep their grades up, but they fall and they give up again and just stop caring. I have also noticed that there are no incentives to do better for the people that have
given up. They know that the government will just give them money, which in turn makes them care even less.

Another participant also imagined the figurative tree:

School is mother birds pushing their hatchlings out of the nest . . . ‘Jeff’ started out hating everything in life. Eventually, he overcame every block and liked everything he once hated. Jeff used to hate school but ended up feeling content with attending. The same applies to food, all veggies and fruits are now preferred. It is all part of the maturity cycle of life.

The concept of school as life itself was proposed by another participant:

School is life . . . I woke up. It was 7:48. I felt a sense of shame. I would be late for school, and miss the first block test I spent all night studying for. There was hope, however. Never in my life had I done routine things so quickly. My heart was racing. I jumped out of bed, quickly dressed myself, and hopped on my bike and sped away to the school. Throwing my bike into the buses outside in front of the school, I walk in as the bell rings. I get to my seat just in time, and feel relieved that I made it to take the test. I feel relieved. School is life.

Another nature-oriented, process or task-based response was: “School is like fishing in the ocean,” because

I enjoy school. I enjoy learning about stuff. I enjoy learning about everything mostly. I am interested in everything pretty much . . . Because you never know what you’re gonna have at the end of the day . . . The first time I ever went fishing in the ocean was crazy. You would slap a chunk of meat on the end of the hook
and toss it in. After the line starts tugging you would start to reel in. I pulled up sharks, sting rays, bait fish, and even hooked a jellyfish! At the end of the day I never expected to catch any of that, but I learned so much in just a couple of hours.

There was natural image expressing a balanced attitude toward school: “School is like a rainbow. You have to get through the rain before you see the rainbow... You have to go through the hard part to get to the good part,” and then there was the negative natural imagery: “School is like a pile of dirt. It’s bland and useless... I haven’t really gotten anything out of school. I have always been a hands-on guy.” An additional nature-based figment was:

School is the sun... To describe/compare school to the sun would be a true statement for myself. The best way I can portray/apply that metaphor to my life is Sophomore year finals. I hadn’t done great my freshman year, which is not uncommon, considering the major adjustments one had to make going to high school. But my Sophomore year I was determined to do well in class and on my finals. So when Christmas break ended and we all came back for the dreaded week and a half of last ditch efforts to try and boost our grades I was certainly nervous. I had a Biology, English, and Design final, the latter two I could handle but Biology was going to kill me. I had somehow maintained an A average all year, and in my head I knew that I would have to bomb the final to get less than an B in the class, but still I couldn’t help but get caught up in all the study hype. Our last real days of class consisted of endless review sheets and projects, but I
still didn’t feel confident enough. The weekend before the big test I left my house maybe twice, the rest of my time was spent eating, sleeping, and studying. I went through all my notes and recopied almost everything. Then I memorized all the multiple choice answers from old tests. My brain was fried. I didn’t sleep the night before the Bio final, but I still got a B+ on the test and an A in the class. Still I can’t help but wonder why we choose to spend all of our time away from school doing school work. The most stressful weekend of my life, I was earth and Biology was my sun.

Aspects of the images of nature in these responses connect with the faculty responses as well as the work of researchers currently studying metaphor.

**Discouraging Experiences**

Discouraging experience images also came forth in the data: a funeral for one’s childhood, a rainy day with which one must cope: “High school is a funeral . . . You see the childhood/past you once loved and yet you miss it and cry for joy/sadness because you’re going to a better place, but the past will never be forgotten,” and

School is a rainy day . . . I chose this because you have to make the best of rainy days, just like you do with school; you can either play in the rain or sit inside and be sad; with school you can either enjoy yourself or sit and be bored.

**Media Imagery**

One student wrote: “School is an open-role movie. Kids try to find a ‘role’ to play/one they enjoy . . . it is a messy social tool.” Another noted:
School is like a movie preview... Sometimes, when the weeks are really long, I tend to fake sick one day or sleep in to make the week shorter. Sometimes classes get boring, like math or government. So I like missing school. School can be boring, so sometimes it helps to miss a day.

Another version of the media-based metaphor was:

School is the ancient TV you keep in your basement... Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t. When it doesn’t work we often find complacency will set in, and few things can be done to make it work. There are better methods. School is outdated... In all but a very small amount of time I have found that school does not work for me. Kindergarten was pretty good I remember, the parent-teacher conferences had few issues. Apparently I had trouble staying on task, for a year and a half I was at [Smith] Road Elementary then my family moved to [Northville], and I joined Forest Elementary School halfway through the first grade. Parent-teacher conferences ended up with me coming home with homework... regardless of my participation in class and the praise of “how smart [student name] is...” I’ve since had issues with homework, and next to none with behavior. Basically nothing significant happened until third grade—although my highlight in the meantime was that the teacher’s aide taught me the word procrastinator, which I was often called and referred to as. So third grade, get my first detention from Mrs. [Smith], and learn that according to Mrs. [Jones] thinks I am a pack rat. The whole time I lack all of the friends everyone else seems to have. Fourth grade was good, I liked my teachers but homework was
still a problem, I just wasn’t doing it. Fifth grade still makes me mad. My male
teacher would keep me after school daily to make up homework and projects,
after facing an exorbanent amount of consequences at home my mother finds that
a large sum of my “missing assignments” were things that had been handed back
to me, graded in fact. Sixth grade has the same scene, always grounded, still not
doing work. My parents decide to enroll me in an online school. I loved that. I
think that being able to see that if and when I finish this assignment I’ll be done
and move on was great motivation. I feel my entire experience summed up yearly
will help show the way I feel the way I do, understanding that all this is a lot.
Skip forward to eighth grade, I am enrolled in public schooling again, this time
[Hunterville] Schools. I sink into my old routines, my parents try to stay on top of
where I’m at with my schoolwork, but not too far into the year they find how
much I’m not doing. Freshman year I started strong, had all As and Bs, then I’m
not sure why but I stopped caring again. I failed all of my classes second
semester. Without describing every fresh memory of high school, the biggest
thing that bothers me in school is that homework/participation in class, homework
being generally more so, is all you seem to need to do to pass courses. I see
people who personally I know I am smarter than fail tests or at least do horrible,
but a lot of people just share and copy homework, giving them the advantage.
Tests should affect your grade more than your ability to care outside of school.
All we seem to strive for in school is a piece of paper that proves you know
something. So why aren’t tests more important? That’s a lot of experience.
The metaphors included multiple literary items: School was seen by one student as: “A seminar . . . we’re learning many different things that we will be able to use later in the future.” Another student explained that “school is a library . . . because there are a lot of books and knowledge in schools, and the teachers are kind of like books.” There was also: “School is an inspirational poster . . . School never changes, just gets old and worn out, and often no one actually uses the teachings.”

**School is Work**

One metaphor of pressure was the idea of school as a task, or job:

School is the full time job of a kid. It is where you learn different skills needed for different jobs. School is also a way to get people to get used to lives as a adult and find their spot in society. There are a lot of things you don’t notice that make you conform to the ideas. For example, class bells are getting you ready for working in factories and teachers are the future bosses you have to give respect to, even though they don’t necessarily deserve it. The school hours are also preparing you for long work hours. I like school for the most part because it keeps me busy and helps me find my interests. For example, my electives I chose are teaching me more about thinks I like such as construction, sculpture, and law. I have always for the most part felt this way about my schooling. I chose the comparison I did because we are here for several hours a day and have to listen to people I don’t like necessarily or get along with. My metaphorical conception does impact my schooling because since I view it as a job, I treat it like one by working hard and showing respect to most people.
Another variation of the job or burden metaphor is the chore:

School is a chore . . . Overall, school is something I want to have good feelings for because I know it’s beneficial, but most of the time I’m just irritated by it . . . Since I was old enough to attend school, I’ve gone five days a week, at the same time, to the same classes. I sat in the same seat for the classes and listened to the same teachers. School is ultimately routine. When I was younger, I had naptime. I had to pretend to nap because I was never tired, but the teachers made me. This gave me feelings of boredom. As I got older, I was given a schedule with rudimentary classes that were taught at the same time every day. This growing boredom with routine has shaped my metaphorical idea that school is a chore.

**School is a Journey**

Metaphorically, the idea of life being a journey is seen in literature across cultures and throughout time. From Dante’s path through the dark wood of error to salvation to Huckleberry Finn’s adventures on the river to Cheryl Stayed’s hike on the Pacific Crest Trail, this archetypal conception is also shown in this study’s data. As Lakoff and Johnson note, this is a conceptual metaphor. Some of the metaphors mentioned previously in the data incorporate this idea. This idea permeates our cultural thinking about life: it is seen in Robert Frost’s widely read “The Road Less Traveled,” for example. In the study, one image of school as a journey (a version of life as a journey) was:

School is like a path that is split into two . . . I faced a lot of peer pressure Sophomore year that started to lean me down the wrong path. The group of
friends I had been hanging out with was getting into drugs and other things that were harmful. I had a reality check and realized the consequences of what I was getting into, and I broke off from that group of kids. I watched a lot of my old friends crash and burn from what they were doing, and now their futures are looking tougher than it could’ve been. I’m glad I got out of it as soon as I did, and started down the right path.

The journey is also conceived of as a staircase:

School is a step in the stairway of life . . . It started in elementary school, when I got an F on a test. I thought it would be the end of the world, but it wasn’t. That’s when I realized that messing up a few times in school isn’t bad. Then I started to see school as just a small part of life compared to the whole thing. I could hear other people saying the same thing, that school isn’t the absolute most important thing in life. If anything, it teaches you everything you need to know to be good at any kind of job. Everything I thought, felt, and heard was in harmony.

School is like a stepping stone to the stairway of life.

One subset of life is a journey seen in this discourse was the train journey:

School is a train . . . It is difficult sometimes to feel positive about school because even though everything is simple, I feel like I am being watched over and having my future decided by people that know nothing about me but my grades . . . When you look at where you are in the present, everything appears so slow, but if you look forward or back, you realize how fast it all went by . . . When I think back to when I was little it felt so long each day, but when I think back it feels like it was
minutes. When I think about a lot of things like college it feels so far away, but each day it comes a bit closer.

One volunteer wrote about a journey-related metaphor:

School is a crowded train station . . . Some people at train stations know exactly how to get around the station. Others have no idea what they are doing. Some like to travel and try new places. The people there are just like the students at school. Some people have no idea what is going on, some people know exactly what they like to learn and do, and others like trying new things . . . I was sitting in my biology class, listening to the lecture. I have read the chapter for what we are learning so I do not need to listen that closely. I look around the class and I notice the mixture of people in the room. Some actually enjoy the class. There are others who are forced to be there, who fool around. The next year we are able to pick our own classes and that will split up these people in the classroom. Right now, everyone is mixed together and different people think of different things. Having a mixture of people is a good learning environment for students to grow.

Another subset of the life is a journey metaphor that emerged in this data was the amusement park subset. One student described: “School is a roller coaster . . . because it was the best thing I could think of quickly while trying to think of a good and bad connotation.”

There were two amusement parks in the data: School is seen as an Amusement park . . . Being a part of the soccer team here basically sums up my feelings about Lake High. As a freshman, I was really scared of everyone and the
older kids would joke around and pick on us. But as I grew up in the program, I became somewhat a leader of the program and was respected. Without my friends, I would not be where I am today. I would be lost in high school, not knowing what to do. I think being a part of the soccer team sums up my high school experience.

The amusement park was a variance of this idea: “School is an amusement park . . . because it can be a lot of fun, but if you go alone or you get lost, it can be your worst nightmare.” Another trajectory of life is a journey was:

School is a guide and head start to the future . . . Many things have happened in my life to give me this idea and feeling on school. I have grown up around people who have not completed school and I have seen how much it has affected them and how much they regret it. School helps you in the future by educating you and getting you prepared for life ahead of you. Everyone should take it seriously and think about the outcomes. I’ve had a personal experience with a close friend who had been through this and who has taught me to have a positive attitude throughout school. I think that many people who don’t take school seriously now will really end up regretting it in their future.

There was also a metaphorical variance of this journey that implied life is a swim:

A child friendly life vest with a lot of decoration that makes it seem safe and friendly for everyone but makes it harder to swim . . . Because school is necessary to be successfully competitive, but there’s so much pointless coddling and encouraging of students who have no desire to be there, that the classes and
structures designed for the unwilling waste other people’s energy . . . Freshman year all students are required to take health and communications classes. I have no idea why. Every day I would walk into the stifling heat of the health room just as the bell rang and slump down into my chair, trying to make myself as comfortable as possible for the hour and a half school mandated ‘elective.’ The class was always the same, 10 minutes of content was drawn out across an entire period, time slowing to a near halt every time the teacher stopped to tell a story about their family. After an eternity in the stifling blue brick room, the bell would ring, letting us out into freedom, knowing we would be back listening to the same stories in the same hot room the next day, and the next, and every day for the rest of the long year.

Multiple students noted swimming in their metaphors and narratives; this idea was also expressed in the swimming metaphor in the competition section.

**School is a Game**

The thrill of a game was expressed in multiple metaphors that relate to the conceptual metaphor outlined by Lakoff and Johnson: life is a game. Game imagery emerged in the following:

School is a giant puzzle waiting to be put together, especially for a freshman. The confusion of classes, people, teachers, and students, and for a senior is the biggest piece to the puzzle dealing with moving out, going to college, and turning eighteen . . . A past experience that was confusing was all senior year trying to figure out the start of my life, or where I will be attending college, or the time my
did asked me where I was going to college, and I was instantly nervous and stressed out.

This “school is a game” idea is also seen in:

School is a gamble . . . I enter class every semester unsure of whether or not that particular class will end up being relevant, insightful, and accepting. Oftentimes the courses are not largely impactful, and the gamble results in failure, but sometimes I am treated to an educational experience that revolutionizes my world. This has more to do with the teacher than any of the other elements combined.

Teachers who are not arrogant, closed-minded or oppressive make the learning environment one that is ripe with possibilities, and oftentimes inspire students to express their opinions and take an interest in the subject matter. Having a teacher who was wise, just, thoughtful, and accepting made me strive to achieve more than was necessary, and resulted in my growth as a person. On the other hand, having a teacher who smothered the student voice, was arrogant, and picked favorites nearly ruined a subject I love.

This idea also came forth in: “School is a piece of play dough . . . Everyone (adults) try to form it into what they want it to when there is no defined answer.”

Evidently, there is not one guiding metaphor, but a number of striking categories of metaphor in the ways that students conceive of school. Some of these categories relate to the writings of contemporary educational theorists; others appear to branch from conceptual metaphors observed by Lakoff and Johnson.
CHAPTER VII
ANALYSIS OF FACULTY AND STAFF RESPONSES

These responses varied from the responses of students in multiple aspects. Interestingly, these participants each spend approximately eight hours in the same space each day, but their metaphorical conceptions and systemic metaphor categories show discrepancies. Overall, many of the faculty responses conveyed energy and growth instead of the stagnation seen in much of the student data.

Performance or Rehearsal

Shakespeare wrote “All the world’s a stage;” Lakoff and Johnson identify this as a conceptual metaphor. One faculty member wrote along similar lines:

School is a theater performance . . . We are actors—on stage—with a scripted play (state set curriculum.) And the students are the audience. Passive—non-participatory . . . Assignment where students were required to think on their own, using concepts we have covered. They were unable to think!!! They prefer to write sentences individually them to speak and formulate thoughts off the top of their heads.

Another’s response revealed the guiding concept of preparation as well:

School is a training camp . . . In baseball, athletes prepare, practice, and work for the next season in training camp . . . School is controlled environment where students learn risk, reward, work ethic, and character. It is a place where the effects of failure are minimized and can be used for future growth.”
Movement or Journey

The adults in the study, as well as the students, used the conceptual metaphor of the journey in their metaphors.

School is a journey with purposes and destinations, means and routes; difficulties are obstacles, counselors are guides, achievements are landmarks, and choices are crossroads . . . Some days I can work with students on college choices, mental health issues, picking classes for their schedule, working with a student who had a learning disability and trying to calm an angry parent. Every day is different for me and students go through highs and lows each day.

The school experience is seen as a “step” toward the future in this response:

School is a place of unlimited opportunities . . . A well rounded education allows an individual to grow and develop in many ways. It increases knowledge but also helps round out an individual. It unlocks opportunities to grow in life. I have seen people study for a certain major or career and then do something completely different—but the education was not wasted—it provided a stepping stone to the future.

A boat journey is another version of this metaphor:

I must first separate the concept of school from that of teaching, or even education, since I think the word “school” has a negative connotation, while teaching, learning, and education do not. School is more than just a place to have an opportunity for learning. School is a place young people gather to learn mostly about themselves and where they fit within that small universe, with a little
history (English, math, science, etc.) on the side. It is a place where they learn, for example, that life isn’t fair and that people are different from them: both valuable lessons. In the past, I would have considered school more as the place for opportunities for academic exploration. But I don’t think that’s totally true anymore. School has become a time of confinement, a holding cell. We, as educators, are expected to stick to the program-of-the-year, an emphasis that usually is best practice, dolled up and re-named. While complying with that expectation, and its rigmarole, time spent on students is reduced. Too many people who do not understand young minds or the special dynamic that we call learning are infiltrating education and corrupting the school. They bring their set models and standards and testing and consultants and politics and sit in the front row—blocking the view for those in the room, including teachers, who want to explore ideas while growing in all ways during the year. Also, since I started in the profession 30 years ago, I recognize and am astounded by the abdication of responsibility for these young people by their parents. Too many of them are willing to give up their child to us because they are otherwise occupied. In the suburbs like [Hunterville], it is not as obvious. But we here know the loneliness of too many students whose mother or father is too busy making the mortgage payment or making the grade at work to fully engage in the lives of their children. Or, contrarily, we know the over-involved parents who put too much pressure on students to get high grades, regardless of lessons learned. While I don’t really think it can be Laura Ingalls Wilder’s schoolhouse, a little trust of us teachers
goes a long way. What arrives in the classroom are students whose parents do not really believe that we are partners in the education of their child. There is too often a posture of animosity instead of belief that we do care and do know how to help a student reach his or her potential. School is a giant ship that sets sail to learn about the world. It can take its passengers far and wide. On board, people have different jobs to keep the craft afloat and moving forward. In water, the education and practices learned while sailing will weather any storm. (Oh yes, we can name the sharks in the water, the shallow depths, the faulty navigation systems in this metaphor of the educational system!) This is a faulty metaphor, however, since a giant ship cannot take everyone. Inclusivity is a good thing in education. But maybe, then, school(s) can be a fleet of ships with different purposes and practices. Some ships sail fast because they are smaller, while some haul much cargo and speed to a destination is not prime.

There is another subset of the journey present in this data. The journey can also, as with the student metaphors, be conceptualized of as an amusement park ride:

School is a merry-go-round . . . Because that is how I feel and I think the day goes that way, round and round, no time to stop and enjoy it is just go-go-go . . . Sometimes what I think is a simple worksheet or reading becomes a race to help answer all questions or put out the fire. Or race through the day with unexpected disruptions—announcements that keep you from closure—bell rings and out they go. And NOISE the students are noisy and talk out . . . seems like my job is more disciplining than teaching.
The amusement park imagery is also seen in:

School is a roller coaster . . . Both have ups and downs, both eventually come to an end. Some roller coasters are exciting and some aren’t like times at school. Coasters have rules to get on and ride; schools have rules to attend and graduate . . . Some classes I have taken at schools have been exciting, enlightening, and enjoyable. I would take the classes and teachers over if I could. Other classes I couldn’t wait until the end. Some roller coasters I will ride over and over as a fan favorite, other roller coasters are one and done.

**Miniature World**

A few participants saw school as a miniature world:

School is the universe . . . Because, just as the universe is filled with different types of stars and black holes—so is school. Every student shines in some way—and has black holes of insecurity. As an educator, my job is to help a student shine . . . After I had been teaching a few years, I knew I wanted to put more experiential education into my curriculum. I thought if I could help my students to experience an event, they would internalize the learning. I had never written a grant, but decided to try. I felt certain that my ideas would be rejected—but forged ahead with applying. I sat at my computer and the ideas sprang onto paper. I received $400, purchased cameras for my third grade students, and took them to downtown Cleveland to point and shoot, then write photo journals, and culminate as tour guides for their parents. I wrote 16 more grants in years after that.
The miniature world idea is also reflected in:

School is a microcosm of society . . . As a member of the community in which I teach, I get to see students both in an out of school and in both academic and extracurricular contexts. I feel very lucky to have this opportunity. As a teacher, I try not only to deliver academic lessons but also to instruct students on the realities of the world. Whether this is a good or accepting thing or not, I believe it is part of my calling as a teacher. In my classroom, in the halls of the school, in the cafeteria, and during sporting and club events, I witness, on a daily basis, students interacting with their peers and adults. I believe there are far more lessons about how to get along in a society learned in this building than there are academic ones. The first example I can think of is the reaction of both students and staff to a horrible instance of online bullying that occurred toward the end of the school year. From what I witnessed, students reacted to this situation, in my opinion, better than most of the adults. Many students were proactive in turning the situation into a positive one. So many of the teachers and parents in the community made what is probably a very common issue in other schools, into something atrocious and criminal. This reminded me of what a small, sheltered community this is. But, the fact that so many students forgave and forgot so quickly, gives me hope that they will be able to deal with this kind of adversity in the future when they leave high school. However, the way adults (especially parents) reacted makes me disappointed that so many seem to perpetuate this sheltering and coddling of our young people.
Old House

One respondent viewed school as a house in need of repair:

School is an old house that either needs to be fixed up or torn down . . . I had a student who was very intelligent but did not have an interest in education. He had the desire to learn many things but in his own ways. He ended up failing many classes because of his lack of interest and dropped out of school prior to his senior year. Through him I realized that all of the aspects of education do not work for all students.

Industry

The socially efficient ideas of Bobbitt echo in two faculty responses:

School is an anomaly yet [Hunterville] is a well-oiled machine . . . Well, I feel as if the current state of education—in [state]—is confusing and we are the recipients of many baffling changes, which seem pointless. Although I question the motives of some peers, I trust the administration, student body and parents, hence offering comfort.

This mechanical idea was also seen in:

School is a crucible for learning and forming a future . . . A crucible takes raw material and forges it into something new and different. School is the same . . . It is through school that we practice and experience new things that help us make decisions about who and what we want to be.
Nature

Many of the faculty responses indicated growth akin to Dewey’s metaphor. This is a stark contrast to the students’ negative images of confinement. The natural images included: “School is a place to grow . . . As a teenager I first felt the sensation of academic growth in a class where I connected multiple disciplines and truly felt the positive power of academic growth.” Similarly, one teacher wrote:

School is an empty garden at the beginning of spring . . . Each spring you are given the opportunity to put time and effort into an expected outcome. However, with the right soil conditions, water, sunlight, etc. the harvest is not always guaranteed. Sometimes the rabbits eat your produce, sometimes you see growth beyond your wildest dreams . . . 1. Seeing students set goals and achieve them, when they have ever been given the opportunity to be successful. This happens annually in a class I teach with lower level students. 2. Having students come back to you can say you have made me think about life events from a unique perspective. 3. “That was difficult, but well worth it!” This idea emerged again in: “School is a beehive of activity. Many interactions, many experiences that can be not so good (bee sting) or good (sweet as honey) . . . A school has many students, very active, sometimes chaotic. Each student is flying through their own personal universe . . . 1. The rush of students into “beehives” for each class. 2. Learning during each class period, or in each nest of bees, is led by the leader (queen bee). Students (bees, young and older) set their own destiny in each class. Scrambling to figure out what to learn, how to learn, and why. Taking in
“nutrients” along the way. 3. Monthly drills and after school activities promote more bee activity!

The conceptualization of school as a garden emerged multiple times in the data: School is a garden. It takes many different systems/people to make it great. It needs sunlight, water, insects, soil, and many others to grow and be healthy, just as schools need teachers, administrators, hard working students, custodians, and supportive community to be successful . . . I have had students over the years that were works in progress. Perhaps a flower that might not make it, or did not look so good at first. After working with them over the years, they grew into wonderful musicians or leaders. It was not just one thing I or anyone else did but a community of support and guidance.

Conclusions

Why do the students’ metaphors align with those of the theorists? Metaphor theory shows this is because the metaphors may be part of a systematic whole. This systematicity may exist because the common lived experiences of students perpetuate this language; this potential systematicity is also revealed in the work of Saltman, Foucault, and Giroux. The language associated with these common themes is used by those who advocate for the corporatization, militarization, and Panopticism of schools. Thematic similarities also shown in the industrial metaphors of Bobbitt and the organic, natural metaphors of Dewey. These, based on the evidence of this metaphor study, are guiding metaphorical categories for school.
But what about the discrepancies? Much can be learned from what does not connect thematically as well. What’s missing? Connections between the faculty metaphors and Foucault, Saltzman, and Giroux are less apparent. One might account for this difference by looking at power dynamics in schools: administrators and faculty feeling empowered compared with students who feel disempowered. There is ample metaphorical and narrative evidence of this in the study.

This study sought answers to metaphorical questions and attempted to synthesize these ideas into a coherent explanation. It began with an in-depth analysis of students’ figurative conceptions of school. Students are, after all, immersed in the experience of schooling daily. As we aim to improve education, it is important to hear from the students themselves: their voices, their stories, and their metaphors. (See Table 3.)

Table 3

*Discrepancies Between Student Vehicles and Faculty Vehicles as Related to Theorists*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theorist</th>
<th>Student Vehicles</th>
<th>Faculty Vehicles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporation (Salzman, Giroux)</td>
<td>Grocery store     Goodwill store Competition like Hunger Games Full time job of a kid</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militarization (Giroux)</td>
<td>Army of ants Boot camp of the military Battlefield Government sanctioned social Training facility</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison (Foucault)</td>
<td>Insane asylum Dungeon Prison Prison Jail Trapped in a big box</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Systemic PRISON, MILITARY, AND CORPORATION metaphors in student data
Out of 97 student responses, there were: 8 prison/jail, 1 insane asylum, 2 hell, 1 hellhole = 12/94 (13%); 15 animal = 16% animal; 4 gustatory; 2 business/corporation; 2 medical; 3 military; and 2 sociological. Of the same responses, 62 (66%) were material/nonliving images; 32 (34%) were natural or organic images.

**Additional Emerging Systematic Categories in Student Data:**

1. Providers
2. Commercialism
3. Competition
4. Confinement
5. Scientific Experiment
6. Theriomorphism
7. Nature
8. Home or family
9. Societal metaphors
10. Machine
11. Dynamic process
12. Objects
13. Gustatory
14. Amusement park related
15. Film and television related (media)
16. A journey: step in the stairway of life, train, train station, birds pushed out of the nest, path split in two, guide and head start to the future
Overall, the reoccurring themes in the student data were: corporate, factory and consumer; conflict, war and military; prison and mental asylum; and natural images. In contrast to students’ metaphors for the current school experience, when asked to describe the utopian or perfect school in metaphor, the students’ responses repeatedly emphasize comfort, choice, control, and power on the part of the student; less restricted spaces and varied activities; more active learning; and openness and freedom of movement. A few ideas permeate all of the responses. These responses fall into five main thematic categories: home and spaces of comfort, places of play and movement, natural images, employment and finance images, and metaphors of democracy and diversity. These utopian responses (as opposed to the reality-based metaphors) correlate with the findings in the faculty metaphors and perceptions as well, indicating that faculty view the school as currently existing the way the students wish it could be. In other words, the metaphors of the students’ current experiences stand opposed to the adults’ current metaphors as well as the district’s metaphorical mission; the students’ utopian metaphors also correlate more closely with the adults’ current metaphors. Explicating these metaphors shows what students desire in their schools, but do not currently experience: comfort, movement, control, diversity, equity, and freedom.

**Home and Spaces of Comfort**

The evident thematic threads in the student responses to the utopian concept include a strong theme of school as a home or place of comfort. One student wrote that the perfect school is a
Home, you feel comfortable in it . . . School would be so much for interesting if students were comfortable and wanted to come to school instead of hating it. It would encourage students to participate more often and encourage them to do better overall in school. The perfect school would [have] patient teachers. Teachers can teach better if they have the patience to. Have more language classes. Spanish/French isn’t enough. Give students more options to learn and succeed.

A second student wrote about the need for a figurative

Home welcoming its family members . . . I chose this because a perfect school to me should make me feel like I am at home. I want teachers and staff to be welcoming and caring towards each other. I want the students to act as if they were siblings and cared for everybody around them. The perfect school would be warm, be welcoming, smell like baked cookies, decorated nicely, feels like a home, reasonable rules, everybody dressed up every day.

Another described:

A home . . . I chose this because by the time you’re a senior your classmates and surroundings are very familiar to you. You are comfortable and not afraid to express your opinions. It allows you to get more out of your experience and is also more enjoyable. The perfect school would [have] more freedom, allows you to experience how the real world is. More class options specified to what you want to do as a career, more worthwhile. Allow you to choose your teachers.
In these responses, there is an emphasis on comfort but also on options; home connotes a sense of freedom versus the confinement of the school. Moreover, one compared the perfect school to

A little slice of heaven; my home away from home . . . students should be able to come to school and feel safe and be surrounded by friends and people who love them. There shouldn’t be a problem with not wearing makeup to school, or not wearing the right clothes or acting a certain way. No one should be judged because of the way they look, and I feel that a lot of judging exists in my school right now. The perfect school would have better lunches and even breakfast (some kids don’t have a lot of food at home), start at a later hour (kids are tired and not ready to learn early on), have a wider variety of classes based on students’ interests (to prepare them for college better, when they have a major).

Options are emphasized again here—implying students feel more liberty in the home than in school. Another child described the utopian school as

A place to get the chance to figure out about your interests in life. A place where you can be fully comfortable. With easy leisure and no pressures. Our goal is to help you find yours . . . I believe that through your high school years you need to be as open as possible. But not everybody wants to or feels comfortable doing so. My goal would be to assure students to just be who they are and help them down the path that they choose. I believe this shouldn’t be the start of the hardest years of your life. We want you to find a purpose and help you find your place in the world that makes your happy. We should make the school easy to be in so they
can feel easy doing their work. The perfect school would have a 10 minute homeroom to get attendance ready and students could start to awaken for school. Study hall—kids need time to work on their assignments and maybe projects going on in class. Wide variety of electives—they’re many different types of kids with unique mindsets, you don’t know whose potential you might spark. Start school later, like 8:15.

Home and comfort clearly emerge as themes in these responses; this is in clear juxtaposition to the images of confinement and disempowerment shown in their responses about their current school experience. Comfort, in these responses, is understood as “helping students learn,” and a sense of openness to new experiences. Students view their ideal school as a space of safety, featuring “familiar” classmates and surroundings and patient teachers who help them “find their path” and “find their place in this world that makes them happy.” The metaphors show that many students are concerned with the need for curricular variety, choices, and options. The data also reveals a tension: school should be a place of safety but also freedom—academic freedom. The physical comfort in these metaphors provides the basis for the curricular and mental freedom the students say they desire. These students desire more control over what they learn, and a comfortable place to explore these ideas.

**Spaces of Play and Movement**

Other students’ responses revealed a second major theme: spaces of play and movement. These images stand opposed to the images of stasis and confinement
revealed in their descriptions of their current experience. One student described the utopian school as

An unrestricted and fun place for all the students to learn, like a playground . . .

Because students should enjoy their high school years and not just remember all the stress from it. The perfect school would [be a place] where you can take any class out there, so you can be able to experience all kinds of fields.

Another chose

A playground . . . I chose this comparison because I think that a playground is both fun and hands-on learning experience which is exactly what school should be. The perfect school would have breaks (recess) for health, more specialization, less emphasis on tests, more on effort because a test only appeals to one kind of learning, windows and pleasant learning environment, healthy, whole lunches, later mornings so students are more awake.

Related to the playground in terms of play and movement, other metaphors are a Playground . . . the freedom to do what you like while enjoying it and having fun. The perfect school would have freedoms by making it more like college for upperclassmen. An example would be no punishments for skipping class, just knowing that the student missed content and missed grades,” and “an amusement park . . . because everything at an amusement park is fun. A perfect school would be where you can meet new people like you do at an amusement park. The rides are always changing and getting better and more fun like a school should be. The food would be really good. You get to pick what rides that you want to go one.
The perfect school would have a lot of people (more chances of having more friends), fun ways to get to class, have great food (like a food card), have more athletic activities, a water park to relieve stress, have more comfy couches. (School should be fun.)

This same idea is embedded in this response:

An amusement park . . . At an amusement park you have the freedom to do whatever you wish, but there are still limits for safety. Just like in my ideal school you would have the freedom to follow what subjects and learning processes would be best for you. But the school would still have a few limits and rules so kids had some motivation and would not just get to lay and do nothing. Learning would be fun (like amusement parks are fun) and engaging so students would be willing and excited to learn the information. The perfect school would be fun so students would like to learn, give lots of freedom to students, allow students to choose the classes they enjoy and will actually benefit from, give students a lot of independence but have opportunities to be helped if students realize it is needed (tutoring, one-on-one teacher time).

The sense of enjoyment, choice, and flexibility are stressed here. Also related is the image of

A water park . . . I love water slides. There [is] some guidelines at a water park but the goal is to have fun. You respect the people there so there isn’t a need for everyone to go crazy because of the little guidelines. It’s a comfortable climate. It doesn’t matter what you wear or look like. There is a lot of options at water
parks. Slower slides and faster slides. So it is like slower types of classes and more advanced classes. People at water parks can be inside or outside and I want class inside or outside. The perfect school would [have] funny teachers, little guidelines, a lot of classes, variety of classes, variety of people, friendly climate, air conditioning in summer, heat in winter, easy and hard classes.

Here, the focus is on options and choices; the emphasis on enjoyment also appears in the related metaphor of the field trip. Another student wrote about

A field trip . . . Field trips, for the most part, are fun and educational. A perfect school should have a balance of fun and education. During a field trip, you are having fun and don’t even realize you are learning. You are not sitting in one spot the whole time This is how schools should be. The perfect school would have not cliques, no judgement, good lunches, be fun, start later, no homework.

This student eschewed the confinement of the clique; a related metaphor is

A zoo . . . School is a zoo because there are so many different kids of all different ages walking around the school dealing with their own business. It can get very busy and hectic at times. The perfect school would [have] more freedom in scheduling.

Another student describes

A zoo full of creatures both majestic and terrifying . . . I chose this comparison because it’s true. I view school as a zoo and the students are the majestic creatures. The teachers are the trainers who care for the creatures and help them progress along. The “zoo” is wild and crazy, but sometimes can be a prison and
the place becomes dark and the students begin to become unhappy. The perfect school would have longer breaks, choose your own class, better lunches, recess, swimming time, multi-sport complex, underground parking, A/C., increase in science and social studies.

Enjoyment, in the form of a paradise or vacation, is a recurrent aspect of these related metaphors as well:

School is a paradise that I would never want to leave . . . I chose this comparison because in a utopian school, class would be fun and I would enjoy being a student instead of dreading it. The perfect school would [have] teachers whose teaching styles match with how I learn, fun classes with more hands-on things and less lectures, starts later (9:00?).

A vacation . . . because school should be place we want to go and enjoy every day. We spend a huge chunk of our lives here and we should have at least a little input on what goes on and how we are treated. We deserve not as many rules and a little fun after all of the work that we do. Some teachers don’t see this at all and think they should have full control over every move that we make. We should look forward to going there. The perfect school would not have as many rules and restrictions as there are now. Everyone is so strict here and expects so much that everyone hates coming every day. Some of the teachers treat us like they are so much better and control every move we make. We need more freedom and more trust around you.
Two final examples that emphasize the enjoyment theme are:

A perfect school would be sports clubs. It’s fun, you can learn something, but it really doesn’t count for anything. The scariest part about high school is it really affects your future. It causes a lot of stress and grief. The problem too is this is an age where we aren’t ready to make those kinds of decisions and we could really screw ourselves. College should be where it counts the most. The perfect school would [go from] 9-4, [have] more choices in classes, and make me want to learn, and someone “rubbing your shoulders . . . School should be a relaxing environment . . . The perfect school would be a place where I want to go every day.

In these metaphors, social interaction, in the form of discussion and social relationships, is the key aspect in need of improvement. There is an emphasis on movement versus stillness, on excitement to learn versus boredom. These metaphors reveal a need for options—but options within confines—students desire more choices in courses, more freedom in scheduling, fewer restrictions. There also exists a tension, however: they desire “some guidelines” and the implication is that students want limits within the fun—school should be a place of safety but also of certain types of limitations. Amusement parks, playgrounds, and waterparks, albeit enjoyable, are confined areas themselves. The students are not expressing a desire to venture out into the figurative unknown; school is not conceived of as an infinite entity, it is a somewhat controlled or cultivated environment, overseen by benevolent adults, perhaps reflecting a type of parental concerted cultivation. Therefore, their ideal “field trip” has a chaperone and
their metaphorical “zoo” contains walled in “majestic animals,” undoubtedly taken care of by a metaphorical zookeeper. These metaphors exhibit acceptance of a certain type of environmental constraint and passivity on the part of the student.

**Natural Imagery and Human Body Metaphors**

The data also show the theme of nature, including the subtheme of metaphors for the human body. This was stated in many ways, including:

A brain . . . It’s the control center, it shapes people (kids). They spend so much time there. It’s where people should be learning or thinking, wanting to use all of their brain, enjoying thinking. School will ‘control’ their thoughts and shape them. The perfect school would have more discussions, have a more open atmosphere, would offer as many things as possible.

Another variation of the body part metaphor compared school to:

A pair of lungs . . . If school was a perfect place. It would have no problems and this would cause it to be a perfect environment. School offers education, social interactions, food, and good mentor/pupil relationships. If schools perfectly balanced these aspects, then school would be a place where all students would want to be. Kids would be able to feel comfortable with their social relationships and they would also be able to feel enriched by their learning experience. We need and want our lungs in order to live and continue to breathe, just as we would desire the school. The perfect school would be one that was able to balance all aspects of a school setting, which includes: education, social interactions, teacher
–student relationships, lunch, cliques, dress code, building design, class time length.

This data imply less control and more interaction: the students want “discussions” and more emphasis on relationships in their school experience.

**Metaphors for the Natural World**

In the responses, aspects of the natural world also emphasize the need for safety and comfort, such as “a warm summer day . . . a place where people feel free of harm and comfortable in their own skin. The perfect school would have no bullies, people should feel safe. No weapons, safety. No judgement, comfort.” Another student wrote about school being

A butterfly . . . because in a perfect world everyone would be different just like every butterfly. Everyone would love another and wouldn’t see anything wrong with anyone. We would all just go with [the] flow and wouldn’t have to worry about anything bad happening. The perfect school would have colors everywhere, no white. No one would care what you looked like or what you wore. You could be super weird and no one would care. No one would be mean to one another and if so they would have harsh punishments. Classes would be only as long as you wanted. We would have an open campus. We would have amazing food inside the school. The teachers would teach you in your learning style. No bells or rules.

The unconfining, perfect school was described by other students as plantlike:
Life, a tree . . . I chose life because your entire life you are in school from age 5-24. Your entire life you spend each day in school, with the same people, at the same time. It’s endless and everyone goes [there] it. A tree because it stays the same but it grown old but repeats the same thing every day. The perfect school would be if there was zero drama, if there weren’t so many “cliques,” if everyone could be friends and be nice to each other.

A young tree . . . I chose this because a young tree is fragile and one does not see all parts of it, such as its roots. It has to be taken care of with love and patience in order for it to open to its fullest potential. Students and staff alike are like this in a school. Without mutual support respect and love from the students and staff, the school will not “grow” like a young tree. These are things hidden about both as well (their roots). The perfect school would be accepting to all walks of life, despite race, gender, and sexual orientation. This would allow for students and staff to create a happier and more loving environment. Try to understand people’s issues better, only if the person is open to this though. This again will create a more peaceful place. Put more trust into students (ex= allowing them to all have senior lunch and wear hats). This avoids students’ disdain for figureheads at the school.

An additional variation of this idea is school as

A gardening/flower store . . . there are many different types of flowers which require different amounts of attention. Some flowers are rather independent and need little attention, while others need a lot of attention and care to ensure they
grow properly. The gardeners/employees are paid to care for the flowers that grow the best are chosen first and are more expensive (meaning they go to better homes) and the lower quality flowers in the end go to whichever home will accept them. Most importantly, regardless of the quality of the flower, if it begins showing/shows a need for attention, it receives it. The perfect school would allow students to accurately discover their identities, best prepare students for college/the real world, develop life skills in addition to academic skills, allow for the proper social development of students, be judgement and clique free, have no intimidation (whether between student-teacher, student-student, or teacher-teacher).

The idea of more openness and freedom is also evident in these responses: An open field full of endless possibilities . . . In a perfect school, students should be able to have equal opportunities and pursue their dreams. School should also be an environment that is similar to a filed such as fresh air, natural lighting, and open space. School should not feel like a prison, but instead like a place where the possibilities are endless. The perfect school would [let] students choose their own path—specialize in an area more quickly, [have] open windows with natural lighting, teachers are in part chosen by students—teachers may be more involved in their students’ learning, more breaks in the school day, healthier food choices—promote health and life choices, environmentally friendly building—healthy people and healthy earth.
An open field . . . an open field is a calm place where people can reflect freely and be who they want, No drama, no rumors, no stress, just nature. The perfect school would be drama free, would have understanding teachers, everyone would be friends, there wouldn’t be any kids who feel alone, stress free, have better food.

Freedom is also the emphasis of the comparison to

A breath of fresh air . . . I chose this comparison because in my utopian school students would not feel all cooped up all day, in jail as some students in high school feel now. The freedoms with hall passes and being able to go home during lunch/relaxing time would be like a breath of fresh air for students who feel trapped in their normal high schools. The perfect school would have windows (feels like a jail without windows in the classrooms), have no hall passes to ensure freedom for students and need to gain some responsibility for college, have a choice to go home for at least an hour and a half to nap. Relax, recess and do whatever—studies show we actually do need an hour of relaxing during the day to focus in later classes. Less required classes to be able to take courses you will pursue, Able to walk/go home for lunch whether they are seniors or not, choosing teachers based on your learning style to help you learn more efficiently.

Natural imagery is also seen in these images of water:

A well of nourishing water . . . A utopian school would be like a well of nourishing water because each time we get water from the well is like each time we go to school. It is an obligation to go to school and it is an obligation to get water from the well; but because water is nourishing, people want to keep coming
back to the well. Just like the water, students will want to keep coming back to
school and enjoy school because they feel nourished with fun education in an
active learning environment. The perfect school would have much more windows
because the walls of the school are confining and I feel as if I am in jail. I also
feel that the perfect school would have active learning. This is because so many
students come to school dreading the lesson, but when lessons are taught in an
enjoyable manner, students will enjoy coming to school and will actually want to
learn new topics.

The water motif is shown in another student’s response as
A new river . . . because it has the option to do what is wants and also go where it
wants. You should have the option to go through school how you want. The
perfect school would be later in the morning, actually take the classes you want, if
you have a car at school you can go get lunch, classes will be shorter and more
entertaining, you focus more on what you want to do later in life.

The water concept also emerges in this conception:

A relaxing beach . . . the environment at school can truly affect a student. The
more comfortable a student is the more willing they are to learn. They will also
become more engaged to what the teacher is saying, if the environment remains
the way it is, the student will feel trapped or forced to be here. The perfect school
gives students more freedom when it comes to learning, opportunity to help pick
faculty (teachers), colorful walls—the environment is more welcoming and
comfortable, more hands-on learning = more involvement = information staying in student’s head.

One last example ties into the water concept:

Waking up to a foot of fresh powder (snow) . . . because when I wake up to a foot of fresh snow I am excited to get out there and there’s just so many possibilities. The perfect school would offer more in the career center—I already know the type of field I am going into, but there’s nothing I can take now to help me get ready for it. Would have a slightly shorter day—I get so bored with these long classes all day.”

In these images of nature, comfort and openness emerge again, as seen in the emphasis on an “open atmosphere,” “open campus,” and “more interaction.” These conceptions connote safety, acceptance, but also choice and empowerment. The “tree” needs water, the idea of students as flowers implies a florist; the students indicate they want to be cared for, “receiving attention if needed.” In the “open field,” students can “choose their own path” and they are guided by teachers who “help you learn.” The noted figurative “well” of the school can “nourish” the students with water—their metaphorical rivers diverse in the directions they want, and of course there are escape hatches: “windows” permeate the responses as well. All of these metaphors, whether related to nature, home, or play and movement, emphasize comfort, freedom, and action, not stagnation. These themes are also developed in images of employment with student empowerment.
Employment and Financial Images

Empowerment appears in the imagery as well. Employment and financial images emphasizing students having more control include school viewed as:

Your own company; you make all the decisions. You would make almost all the decisions. You’d choose the times, the subject, and what else to do. The perfect school would have a wider variety of courses, have more down time, shorter classes, and days but longer school year, comfortable classrooms. Students rate the teacher, graded tests only.

A second version of this type of concept is:

Your dream job, an environment in which one would love to spend time and allow students to thrive in both academics and life. Have chefs as opposed to just lunch ladies who stick frozen food in the oven (not that I have a problem with the cafeteria workers). Let students have greater involvement in pursuing classes they are actually interested in.

Another variation of this core idea is:

He followed his own agenda . . . because if you didn’t have so many required classes and offered more diverse classes there would be a better overall attitude. If you allow them to do the work on their own time they will have a better product because they can take their time. The perfect school would [have] more understanding about late work during extended absences, better lunches, faster computers, and one due date for all work.

A different version of the financial concept with control is school as
A $50 bill . . . when a 50 dollar bill is in your possession, it can be powerful or it can be weak. You have a million options to do with a simple piece of paper, and whatever path you take with that worthy paper could be wise or stupid, but there’s always an outcome that is worth the amount of the paper. In a perfect school, whatever path your take or decision you make, it should be equal to everyone else’s outcome no matter what you choose. The perfect school would [have the] ability to study anything because a teenager’s mind is more curious than the basic studies. Grades are not given because it is poor judgement of one’s ability.

Lastly, one student thought of the utopian school as

A supermall . . . If school was like a supermall it would be huge and you could choose which ‘stores’ classes you wanted to walk into (take) and there would be a huge food court with lots of options. Supermalls have hundreds of people who don’t know each other except for the select few who you be huge and have all the accommodies [sic] you would have at home, but also a swimming pool, movie theater, and like I mentioned above a food court. As far as academics, freshmen year would have required curriculum but the next 3 years you could choose exactly what classes you want so you can find an interest for college and career earlier.

These responses all emphasize choice and control on the part of the students, much like the other metaphors. Unpacking these metaphors, a subtheme of consumerism is also revealed. Students emphasize certain aspects of the consumer experience: choice and power. This is seen in the idea of the supermall and the food court—students, as
consumers in these metaphors, have more control over their education—they are offered more choices than they currently have. Related in terms of empowerment and choice, images of democracy and diversity emerged in the metaphors as well.

**Images of Democracy and Diversity**

The images of democracy and diversity include the political: the idea that the perfect school would be

Like the U.S.A. with many choices and opportunities . . . Because there are many choices and opportunities in the U.S.A You can also take your own path in life or create your own way in the world. The perfect school would not make you ashamed if you are not naturally good at math or science. ‘If you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life thinking it’s stupid.’ Cater towards what you love and are good at, have many choices for classes, [and] more teaching styles in each class.

Another version was democratic:

A democracy . . . In the new schooling system students would have a voice, just as the people of a democratic nation would. The perfect school would be fair for everyone, there would be one teacher teaching each subject, so there wouldn’t be students that are placed with a harder teacher than others, students would have their own scheduled homework hours, depending on their schedule after school, students could rate on who they like for faculty/staff.

The data also include the vision that
School should be injected with diversity . . . because then people can see how people live. Also so more students can learn how to be socially accepted. The perfect school would [have] more time outside, people pick who are in their classes, 4 principles to represent different personalities, have designated hallways, hidden hallways, phones in classroom, include more diversity.

The idea of equity is also stressed in this description of the school as

Rankless . . . the ranks of all students are forgotten, the grades don’t matter and the students don’t care what they get at school. The perfect school would [have] no grades, no clicks [sic], it would create a classless society for all people.

Here, students’ conceptions emphasize equity in different forms—fairness is valued, as is “having a voice.” They visualize this as a way of breaking out of aspects of their current confinement—breaking the confines of ranks and cliques. The focus here is on more equity and differentiation in the school experience, but also on choice.

**Library Metaphors**

Library metaphors noting variance and activity are also present in the data: Two students envisioned their utopian school as a library. One wrote:

A library full of books . . . School is a library full of books, because there are many different types of books that make up the library. Each book contains pages full knowledge, such as each class that students participate in. Just like there being many types of books, there are many classes that students are able to expand their knowledge in. As students get older, subjects become more advanced. This compares to books that appeal to different age groups. The
perfect school would start later in the morning so students are able to sleep and would not be so tired. When students are tired during school it is harder for them to concentrate and overall, do not do well in some of their morning classes. Another student wrote that school should be

Like a library . . . collaborative, inclusive, learning because they want to, specific to their interests. The perfect school would be much more vocational, [have a] range of activities when younger and gradually narrow it down to more specific interests, need to spend a certain amount of time in each chosen class each year in order to pass it, doesn’t matter when or how, more interactive, hands-on programs, simulations.

This concept connects to the idea of the supermall: students can enter a space, metaphorically, and like a library user or consumer at the mall, have choices and the power to make decisions about their own education. They want choice, as seen in their desire for a “range of activities” and many types of classes from which to select.

**Gustatory Imagery**

The ideal school was also described in gustatory terms: as a

Box of chocolates because each part is different and unique, but if you get lucky, none of the pieces are bad. So like school, each class/department should be unique but they should all be enjoyable. The perfect school would start later—students are more awake! Fit the learning style of students—each student learns differently. Provide food the students will actually eat—if you eat the ‘healthy’ garbage they give us now, you must be starving.
A second example of this idea is:

A box of chocolates. You never know what you’re going to get . . . each day of school is different. You never know what challenges you will be presented or what each new day will put on your plate. The perfect school would give more liberties to the students, bring the students more freedom to express themselves and do what they want would make the school more perfect.

Differences are emphasized in these conceptions as well:

A mixing bowl of knowledge . . . the perfect school would be a mixing bowl of knowledge because there are different kinds of people and knowledge at school that would be blended together. And together they would make a wide spread of ‘taste’—knowledge. The perfect school would offer any class, allow anything that is not distracting or disruptive, [have a] large environmentally friendly and open campus, windows, natural light, and trees indoors and in walkways.

**Conclusions and Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of the study was to gather the school metaphors of students and faculty in an “excellent” school district and to seek thematic patterns among them. This study produced a plethora of metaphors, chronicled their supporting tales, and traced interconnecting themes. Analysis of these metaphors allows insight into the common categories of metaphor held by these students and the problematic experiential basis for them. Unpacking these metaphors, their entailments, and their undergirding narratives shows recurring, dominant images of disempowerment and confinement. Undesired competition and categorization are also significant stresses expressed by these high
school students through their metaphors. Evidently, students are currently competing in schools, racing to the “top,” fighting the “enemy,” and seeing a great deal of conflict—literal and figurative. It is also evident that, although the students are being educated in a successful district, questions must be raised about whether they are actually being restricted in ways that hinder them, despite the statistical success of the school as a whole. Metaphor can be “an indispensable tool for informed decision making” (Geary 2011, p. 124). To that end, this data may be a reflective tool that can illuminate the origins of such conceptions and the significance these have concerning students’ fulfillment of the figurative missions of schools. This study data reveals that faculty and staff in the high school building describe the current experience of school in natural, comfortable, terms, while the students emphasize confinement and disempowerment—the student responses are power and space-focused. This is a clear discrepancy. The analysis suggests incongruity and a conflict of paradigms: the mission of the school, the adults’ conception of school, and the students’ experience of the school. It also reveals the potential existence of potentially systemic metaphors among students and faculty, as well as evidence of the conceptual metaphor of “life as a journey” and its variances undergirding a number of metaphors.

Overall, the most frequently occurring themes in the student data were corporate, factory and consumer; conflict, war and military; prison and mental asylum; and natural images. There were also numerous images of confinement and disempowerment and images of competition and stratification. A contradiction is evident: the environment described by students is not, on the whole, perceived as safe or supportive; conversely, it
is a competitive, hierarchical atmosphere, rife with conflict. The stratification opposes
imagined “support”; the competitive, difficult experiences described contradict the
desired “safety” implied in many mission statements. Metaphors of growth were seen in
the faculty data: six of the faculty metaphorical responses mention growth; nine mention
movement. These responses all indicate enlargement, momentum, or the potential for
change. They are neither stagnant nor confining images. Many faculty metaphors align
with Dewey’s natural images. They are far removed from the confined categories found
in the students’ metaphors: school as commercial space, military space, or prison. This
particular data is significant because it bolsters the assertion that, in our society, we have
certain thematic similarities in metaphors for school. Based on the research on metaphors,
we may derive the conclusion that these metaphors arise from the bodily experiences of
students in school. These conflicting embodied experiences prompt additional questions
such as: Why are the students living such vastly different metaphors than the faculty
members in the same building? How do faculty in the same building perceive the
experience so differently from the students? Perhaps because our bodily experiences
prime our metaphors, according to Geary, and subsequently how we perceive and behave
(2011). If our embodied metaphors are consequential, understanding them seems
imperative.

Although the faculty and student data describe bounded experiences, the faculty
data shows bounded metaphors that carry mainly positive connotations, while the student
metaphors hold negative connotations. There is a coherence to these metaphors: Students
illustrate their enclosure, for the most part, with negative connotations. Even metaphors
with positive connotations also reveal a sense of confinement. The place of confinement is seen in the majority of metaphors generated by students and teachers. The major discrepancy is that the confined space is interpreted by faculty as a place for growth and development, while the students see the confinement producing stagnation. The faculty responses hold possible reasons for these confinement motifs: “over-involved parents who put too much pressure on students to get high grades” and what a “small, sheltered community this is.” Further, one faculty member noted, “many people seem to perpetuate this sheltering and coddling of our young people.” Are their enclosure metaphors a result of this “sheltering” and “coddling”? In attempts to “shelter” and “coddle” students, are the adults in the community creating bodily experiences that, to students, seem like “prisons”? The “small universe” idea is repeatedly mentioned, the idea that school is no longer provides “opportunities for academic exploration,” and this connects to the students’ desire, seen in their utopian school metaphors, for new academic experiences.

The faculty data does not show consumer or corporate conceptions; it does not show conflict or asylums, but it does show bounded images and spaces of detention. Conversely, faculty mention controlled environments with a positive connotation: training camp, a theater performance. Further, in the faculty data, there are comments about how this is a change from the past, such as “school has become a time of confinement, a holding cell.” These motifs of enclosure prompt questions: In the name of safety, what are we giving up? What freedoms did school once offer, that it no longer offers? What freedoms should schools offer, even if they did not before? What does all of this say something about the experience of schooling now as opposed to the experience of
school for past generations? Are we, as Saltman warns, eroding forums and incubators for democratic ideas, the incubators and ideas that Dewey advocates? The faculty conception of school as a “beehive of activity” allows movement within the confines of the hive and an emphasis on future growth, a “stepping stone” to the future. This is in essence about an enclosed experience or a brief and speedy ride that focuses on something in the future, something upcoming, something delayed, a “journey with purposes and destinations” concept that emphasizes speed: “keep the craft afloat and moving forward” and “speed to a destination”; “race through the day.” These words are reminiscent of the “race to the top.”

Even within the natural images in the faculty data, the growth takes place in a controlled, pruned environment, for example, one teacher likens the school to “an empty garden at the beginning of spring.” Gardens are images of control and confinement, places with boundaries. Gardens are also “about power and control…making gardens, using or admiring them, and dreaming of them, we create our own idealized order of nature and culture” (Francis, 1991, p. 2). According to Mark Francis: “The garden has been viewed philosophically as the balancing point between human control on one hand and wild nature on the other. The garden has represented safety from the threat of wild nature or escape from barbarian outsiders. The garden has been nature-under-control, an idealization of what society believed that nature should be and should be like” (Francis, 1991, p. 2). This is because: “in the garden as in society, there is an ongoing battle of seeming oppositions...self vs. community…science vs. institution…Some of these conflicts in the garden are age-old, while others are a result of modern life (and a desire
to control and order our personal worlds)” (Francis, 1991, p. 4). Thus, in addition to nurture and growth, the lovely gardens described in the data connote confinement.

The significance of this disparity should alarm educators: the lived experiences of individuals within an “excellent” school building can be vastly different. In particular, the adults’ views of what the students are experiencing appear far removed from what the students experience. Enclosed in the structures of an overwhelmingly adult-controlled society, these students are trapped in the historical constructs of educational reform. These students are constricted and restricted by the policies and practices of educational reformers of previous centuries. In metaphor, these policies live on. The faculty concept of the “well-oiled machine” connects to the industrial, school-as-factory metaphor of the administrative progressives, as does the idea of the school as a “crucible for learning and forming a future…A crucible takes raw material and forges it into something new and different”—these are also transformative, albeit in a mechanical, industrial way, echoing Bobbitt. The energy in these metaphors comes from the mechanism, not the student. In these conceptions, the student is confined and must conform to the machine or crucible. Evidently, there are faculty members who still live these metaphors.

What do these metaphors reveal about our social ideals? Societally, do we perpetuate these metaphors in varied forms over decades, over centuries? How do we escape metaphors that are no longer relevant? How do we avoid regurgitating the stale metaphors of the social efficiency movement, for example, such as a “well-oiled machine”? The first step is making implicit metaphors explicit. The second step is looking at their entailments. Then we need to ask if we are perpetuating (perhaps couched
in new language) some metaphor that has historically proven to be ineffective. Only then do we have the potential to change the metaphor. When faced with massively complex issues . . . “it can be difficult to imagine what our responsibility could be. Metaphor helps by putting these things on a human scale. Any metaphor is a distortion, but some are more constructive than others. The challenge is to find metaphors that do some good” (Geary 2011, p. 124). Perhaps this method of analysis can, in some sense, then become transformative: of ideas, understanding, and experience.

Reddy puts forth the idea that “the way we talk about things often depends on root metaphors” (Ortony, 1993b, p. 6) while Cameron claims “the vehicle terms of linguistic metaphors often carry evaluations, attitudes, values, perspectives, or beliefs” (Cameron, 2010b, p. 6). The task of the educator, then, akin to the foundational researcher, remains one of conceptual analysis and synthesis, in the way “a scholar drawing from . . . Foucault’s work might identify and examine various metaphors (for example, society as a salad bowl, principal as manager, world as globalized market), concepts . . . that not only frame our current educational discourse but also reflect our historically specific notions of the good life and what it is to be human” (Metro-Roland, 2011, p. 142). This seems a worthy endeavor if these metaphors have the power to create and recreate our experience. This replicative process “grounds even the most abstract ideas in the physical facts of our bodies. Through a process known as ‘priming,’ these physiological facts insensibly shape our beliefs and behavior. Priming posits that, through a process of metaphorical associations, the physical profoundly impact the psychological, and vice versa. Sensations, objects, and experiences repeatedly occur together with internal states,
thereby becoming linked in our minds. Proximity, for instance, occasions both bodily and emotional warmth. So over time, we come to connect the two, describing our loved ones as near and dear and our most intimate friends as bosom buddies” (Geary, 2011, p. 96). This cyclical process of physical and psychological priming through the development and deployment of metaphor is significant; unpacking our use of it would seem a worthy endeavor.

Re-examining educational history, it is seen that these apparitions appear again and again, couched in different adjectives, disguised in varied verbs, but still spiraling off of root metaphors that took hold long ago and have been difficult, evidently impossible, to uproot. In “priming, the physical fuses with the psychological” (Geary, 2011, p. 96). Therefore, because “our bodies prime our metaphors,” confining and competitive experiences, through the phenomenon of associative priming, create metaphorical expressions of limits, which perpetuate the confinement because students’ conceptualizations become limited. “Our metaphors prime how we think and act” and metaphor “primes so many of our opinions, attitudes, and beliefs” (Geary, 2011, p. 114) so as students experience the metaphorical prison, then they may expect limits and perhaps even perpetuate the idea: perhaps this way they learn to think “inside the box.” Educators may perpetuate these confines even if we don’t identify them. In effect, the remnants of the failed factory model have been used to build a prison for today’s students. These insidious tropes re-emerge throughout time; as Geary states, “traffic flows both ways: from mind to matter and from matter to mind” (2011, p. 97). Educators
need to be vigilant about this: We must know our metaphors’ history and the present ways they are lived, in order to create an equitable future for students.

As I analyze discourse, uncover obscured figurative comparisons, and synthesize new ideas about metaphor and research, I notice more about myself and about how and what to teach. If I can explore these fundamental ideas inherent in teaching and educational rhetoric, I can share what I discover and enlighten others about the metaphors they are living. Enlightening those who participate in the educational endeavor about metaphors and what they offer us intellectually, and engaging in discussion of them, is critical in combatting the erosion of the purpose of the public school: to be one of “the public forums in which decisions with social consequences can be democratically resolved” described by Giroux. In essence, the very process of gathering and explicating these metaphors builds toward such a figurative forum.

While the students’ metaphors for their current school experience expose a variety of problems, the students’ metaphors for their utopian school experience, however, present numerous potential solutions. In contrast to students’ metaphors for the current school experience, when asked to describe the utopian or perfect school in metaphor, the students’ responses repeatedly emphasize comfort, choice, control, and power on the part of the student; less restricted spaces and varied activities; more active learning; and openness and freedom of movement. These responses also fall into five main thematic categories: home and spaces of comfort, places of play and movement, natural images, employment and finance images, and metaphors of democracy and diversity. These utopian responses (as opposed to the reality-based metaphors) correlate
with the findings in the faculty metaphors and perceptions as well, indicating that faculty view the school as currently existing the way the students wish it could be. In their remedies for their educational issues, students replicate spaces of confinement, but these confined spaces are more kinetic, less stagnant. Their metaphors reveal a desire to feel more freedom within these confined spaces. The coherence the study revealed in metaphors of students could be explained by a common impulse to struggle free from educational and metaphorical confinement through reconfigurations of buildings, faculty, and curriculum. In sum, the metaphors of the students’ current experiences stand opposed to the adults’ current metaphors as well as the district’s metaphorical mission; the students’ utopian metaphors also correlate more closely with the adults’ current metaphors. Explicating these metaphors shows what students desire in their schools, but do not currently experience: comfort, movement, control, diversity, equity, and freedom.

What does the utopian school data fail to show? The disempowering confinement found in the students’ current, reality-based descriptions of their school experiences. The data does, however, show a significant incongruity between the present teacher and student perceptions of the school setting. It is critical to note that the adults demonstrably have more control of the school environment. While students currently experience school in certain metaphorical terms, adults in the same building see a completely different experience taking place, and what students ultimately want in their school experience is comfort, movement, control, diversity, equity, and freedom. The utopian school metaphor data shows that students value schools that foster comfort, enjoyment, openness, a variety of options, curricular choice, and individual attention. These
metaphors can be used as a source of insight into how can make schools more effective: overall, students, while replicating motifs of enclosure, want more power over their own education: they desire guidance, not force; they crave cultivation, not disempowering confinement; they seek a familiar home, not an institutional asylum. Much can be learned from looking an individual school (or group within the school)’s metaphors for school, but also those for teachers, students, and for education itself.

All of this prompts the questions: Why do the students generate the alternative metaphors they do? Is the recognition of their generation a call to action? Should we find ways to align the adults’ metaphors with the students’ utopian metaphors? Since “metaphor is a tool for a more productive discussion” (Geary 2011, p. 121), it is a circumstance worth mentioning that the students’ utopian desires align directly with the ideas of educational theorists such as John Dewey and Maria Montessori—regarding comfort in the environment, the use of experimental ideas, movement of the body, diversity in instruction, and freedom for the student. This leads to the overwhelming question: Do we already have the alternative educational theory we need to build a better school experience for children? Is the ideal school a Montessori or Dewey school? Through detailed analysis of student metaphors, I hope to find new ways in which students’ experiences can be better understood. Implications for future research include studying the evident thematic similarities throughout multiple studies in different contexts and periods throughout other metaphor researchers’ findings, asking what students at the Hershey Montessori School in Painesville, Ohio would say, asking students at private Hawken School in Cleveland, Ohio, asking college students, asking
elementary school students, asking online students, asking students from different socioeconomic classes, asking students from different cultural backgrounds—and these are just a few potential future metaphorical investigations.

Anecdotally, the potential significance of such discussions was made terribly clear in a class discussion recently. My students were presenting their utopian school projects, which, every year include their alterations and additions to the school that fall into categories that have emerged many times over many semesters: details like more windows, more curricular options, more field trips, more free time, more nurturing faculty, outdoor classes, greenhouses, and gardens. As we discussed their imagined changes, there was exchange like this: one student posed a poignant and unsettling question: “Do you think there’s a correlation between kids viewing the school as a prison and all the school shootings we’ve seen?” There was silence, and then one of his classmates responded: “Yes. It would be different, though, if kids saw the school as a beehive of activity, because who wants to shoot up a beehive?” The study data implies a need to clarify how adults perceive they are educating versus how students perceive they are being educated. Can we replace metaphors of enclosure with those desired by the students in my class: one full of windows—opening insights, allowing visions, giving us a figurative escape from the confines of our societal constructs—to imagine what might be? The dual task of the educator is the analysis of problems and synthesis of solutions; perhaps we have the answers in front of us, we just need to explicate them.

From this study, the conclusion may be drawn that there may exist an essential incongruity between the figurative mission of a school and the metaphorical experience
of the students who attend it. If we can accept that metaphors matter, that understanding our historical educational metaphors helps our understanding of the present, and that students’ embodied educational experiences are in conflict with the adults’ perceptions of those experiences—if we believe that students should not feel confined and disempowered in the school setting, then educators need to find ways to provide freedom for and empowerment of all students. These, then, are the concepts that must guide educational decisions and practices. A discussion of this question, and a wider dialogue, can begin with these metaphors—one that centers on the significance of embodied metaphors and explicates those lived in one context. This, metaphorically, can be an opening for students—an escape hatch from their embodied prisons, from their envisioned hell holes, from their imagined asylums.
REFERENCES
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