

# Personality, socio-economic status and education: factors that contribute to the degree of structure in homeschooling

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**Abstract** Homeschooling has been expanding in many countries in the western world, especially in the United States and in England. Studies have shown that there are different types of homeschooling, with different influences on the outcome of the educational process. However, the research to date has ignored the effects of parents' personality and background on the practice of homeschooling, despite extensive evidence of the important role of these factors in shaping the educational orientation of parents. The present study focused on the impact of different aspects of parents' personality and socioeconomic status on the type of homeschooling they chose. The findings indicated, among other things, that mother's education correlated positively with more structured homeschooling, and family income and conscientiousness both correlated positively with more structure in daily routine and in homeschooling.

**Keywords** Homeschooling · Home education · Personality · Parent's education · Socio-economic status · Structure home education

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## 1 Introduction

Homeschooling is a practice in which children of all ages do not attend school, usually as a result of their parent's choice (Neuman and Aviram 2003). In recent years, the scope of homeschooling has increased considerably. This practice, which began several decades ago with a few families, has, according to various estimates, expanded to more than two million children in the United States (which has the highest percentage and largest number of homeschooled children in the world), 80,000 in England and 50,000, in Canada. It is interesting that although the nature and status of homeschooling varies among countries, most western states have reported a significant increase (Kunzman and Gaither 2013; Guterman and Neuman 2014; Neuman and Aviram 2003). Some of the literature has viewed homeschooling in a negative light, contending that it may prevent proper socialization of the children and perhaps even cause emotional damage (Abrom 2009; Després 2013; Merry and Karsten 2010). Other sources have perceived it more sanguinely, maintaining that homeschooling creates a positive atmosphere at home and promotes the development of children's freedom, creativity, and joy of learning (Lois 2012; Merry and Howell 2009). Regardless of which view is taken, it seems clear that this trend represents a significant development, which has been growing for a relatively long period of time. Therefore, it is important to understand this trend.

It is essential to note that homeschooling, like other types of schools and educational approaches (Phillips and Schweisfurth 2014; Matheson 2014), does not represent a single educational concept beyond its definition as an educational process in which children do not attend conventional schools. Within this general designation of what it is not, the different families that homeschool vary in their underlying educational principles and the actual practice of homeschooling. This diversity is key to any investigation of this type of education (Ricci 2011).

There are numerous ways to categorize the different types of homeschooling (Levison 2000; Ray 2000). However, the one most commonly cited is probably the one that differentiates between "structured" or "unstructured" homeschooling (with the latter also known as "unschooling"). When she first described this dichotomous approach, Van Galen (1988) referred mainly to the gap between parents whose decision not to send their children to school was based on Christian ideology, and those who withdrew their children from conventional schools because of what they perceived as the overly formal teaching method used there. Van Galen dubbed the former group as ideologues and the latter as pedagogues. According to this thesis, the ideologues were conservative Christians who conducted homeschooling much like the schools their children had left: they had a formal curriculum, full schedules, and an authoritative teacher, among other elements, but the curriculum contained extensive religious content. In contrast, the pedagogues did not object to the content of public education but rather to its formalism, and chose to use homeschooling as a safe haven from the rigid order of established schools.

Today, Van Galen's original division has been expanded considerably. While some researchers have suggested models that include more than two groups (Taylor-

Hough 2010), most present the nature of homeschooling on the structured–unstructured continuum (see, for example, Barratt-Peacock 2003; Thomas 1998). Furthermore, this axis no longer refers exclusively to the level of religiosity of a family, and both religious and non-religious families may adopt either method (Taylor-Hough 2010).

For those who do not engage in homeschooling, structured homeschooling is the easiest form to grasp, as it can generally be perceived as a type of “school at home.” In its extreme form, it may include school desks arranged in rows, saluting the flag in the morning, blackboards on the walls, formal textbooks, workbooks, teachers’ lectures, and tests (Taylor-Hough 2010). In contrast, as its name implies, unstructured homeschooling or “unschooling” is not a preplanned, parent-structured process. Instead, it is focused on the desires of the learners, who may engage both extensively and intensively in their varied interests to whatever extent they wish. In his best-selling book, *How Children Learn* (1995), John Holt best described what unschooling is for children. He argued that as much of the world as possible should be incorporated into the school and classroom (in this case—into their lives), that children should be offered assistance and guidance when they asked for it, and be listened to, without intervention. We can trust them to do the rest, he claimed (Holt 1995). In other words, the main difference between the approaches is the extent to which the process is structured in terms of number of hours that are preplanned, structured and devoted to teaching.

Of course, few homeschooling families adhere exclusively to either of these dichotomous divisions. In fact, the contrary seems true. The trend today appears to be a mix-and-match approach, based on the needs of the parents who choose homeschooling. Each family combines the principles it favors to guide its development of a process that fits the specific children and parents (Aurini and Davies 2005).

In previous research (Neuman and Guterman 2016), we argued that the type of homeschooling of families should be examined on a continuum of two major aspects: the number of hours devoted to teaching and the degree of structure in the daily routine of the home. Accordingly, in the present research, the degree of structure in homeschooling was examined in terms of these two continuums.

The research was conducted in Israel, where homeschooling is legal, subject to submission of an approval form (Israel Ministry of Education 2009). The parents present a family plan, but the state does not usually monitor its implementation. As a result, the actual degree of structure in homeschooling depends mainly on the parents.

To this point, we have discussed the main division, as reflected in the literature, into two types of homeschooling. However, the character of homeschooling does not refer only to the theoretical issue of different educational approaches, but involves the actual practice of homeschooling and its consequences for children and family. Several researchers have argued that unschooling has a better and more positive effect on a child’s maturity, leadership, and independent and critical thinking abilities than structured homeschooling does (Gray and Riley 2013). In contrast, other studies point to the greater success that children in structured homeschooling achieve in various academic skills, compared to those in

unschooling settings (Martin-Chang et al. 2011). Although these are preliminary results, it seems reasonable to assume that the nature of homeschooling has a significant effect on the child, and it is important to understand the manner in which parents are actually conducting homeschooling.

A review of the research literature revealed that the question of the type of homeschooling has usually focused on ideological elements, such as the parents' worldview and educational approaches. These are undeniably important issues, but in order to understand how homeschooling is actually practiced in different families, it is also important to examine the effect of parents' personality and family socioeconomic background on its implementation.

The lack of information on the effect of parent's personality and socioeconomic status on the character of their practice of homeschooling is particularly striking in light of the vast volume of data on the impact of these factors on other aspects of the educational approach of parents. For example, in a meta-analysis of the interrelationships among the Big Five personality factors, Prinzie et al. (2009) found that parent's personality was associated with parenting practices. With regard to the focus of the present research, the meta-analysis indicated that a high degree of parental involvement, which is characteristic of extraverted parents, can contribute to more active and assertive parenting, which involves a greater emphasis on discipline and boundaries. It also showed that parents with a high level of conscientiousness were likely to raise their children in a more structured and consistent environment.

Another prominent finding of the research about the relationship between personality and parenting style concerns attachment style. Although a full review of the knowledge in this field is beyond the scope of the present article, it should be noted that anxious attachment, which is associated with fear of abandonment and distancing in intimate relationships, has been found to correlate with the development of strict, and sometimes even inflexible parenting mechanisms. In contrast, avoidant attachment, which is associated with fear of close relationships, has been found in some cases to correlate with a tendency towards more distant parenting (Edelstein et al. 2004; Kindsvatter and Desmond 2013; Sümer and Harna 2015).

Numerous studies have also indicated a correlation between socioeconomic status and aspects of parenting. In a review of cross-cultural research, Hoff et al. (2002) found that mothers with higher levels of education and from strong socioeconomic background families spent more time with their children in activities aimed at acquiring skills—such as doing homework and reading books—and less time watching television, and played a greater role in organizing activities outside of the home. They also found that parenting styles are an expression of the values and beliefs of the parents. Conformist parenting was correlated with the parents' beliefs regarding control and discipline, which predicted their degree of involvement and maternal warmth.

In other important study, Hill and Taylor (2004) found that parents of relatively higher socioeconomic status were more likely to be involved in schools. Similarly, a higher level of education among parents was associated with their tendency to be more active in the education of their children. In contrast, parents of lower

socioeconomic status faced obstacles to involvement, such as less flexible work hours, lack of resources, transportation problems, and pressure due to living in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Another factor was that parents of lower socioeconomic status were usually less educated and had had bad experiences at school. Consequently, these parents felt less able to question and argue with teachers and the school than their more educated counterparts.

The present study examined the effect of salient personality components, based on the literature, and parents' socioeconomic background on central aspects of homeschooling implementation. This is one of the first studies to explore these elements; therefore, in order to create a broad preliminary picture, we selected generally accepted measures based on the research literature in these domains. First, we considered the personality traits of the parents using the Big Five Personality Traits, a widely accepted model in the relevant research. The model is composed of five factors, representing the five main personality traits: neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (John et al. 1991). We employed the five-factor model in an effort to obtain a broad view of the relationship between personality and type of homeschooling practice.

However, despite its importance, the examination of these basic personality traits alone is insufficient. Homeschooling creates a complex situation, in which the interaction between parents and children is more intensive than usual (when children attend school), because the parents and children spend much more time together. Accordingly, we also examined the parents' style of close relationships. For this purpose we adopted the perspective of attachment theory (Mikulincer and Shaver 2003), which is widely used in research of personal and developmental processes and interpersonal differences.

Numerous studies on the attachment styles of children and of adults have shown that it is possible to measure personal differences in attachment styles along two orthogonal axes—anxiety and avoidance (Brennan et al. 1998; Fraley and Waller 1998; Fraley et al. 2000; Shaver et al. 2000). Avoidant attachment refers to a person's tendency to feel uneasy around others. Anxious attachment refers to fear of abandonment. In the present research, we examined the attachment patterns of parents in order to better understand how attachment, together with more general personality traits and socioeconomic background, affect the type of homeschooling that parents choose to undertake.

Although no research to date has reported on the association between parent's personality and type of homeschooling, based on the research findings reviewed above that indicate a correlation between the character of parenting practice in other areas and personality and socioeconomic status, the present research examined three hypotheses: (a) that parent's education and socioeconomic status would be correlated with degree of structure in the home; (b) that an anxious attachment style would be correlated more strongly with the number of hours devoted to teaching and the degree of structure in the home, compared with avoidant attachment, which would be less strongly correlated with number of hours devoted to teaching and not correlated with structure in the home; and (c) that extraversion and conscientiousness would be correlated with more hours devoted to teaching and more structure in the home.

It is our hope that investigation of the relationships between these traits and the degree of structure in the homeschooling will contribute to better understanding of the factors and processes involved in choosing what type of homeschooling to practice.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Participants

The study included 139 parents of children in homeschooling. Of the participants, 103 were women (74.11%) and 36 men (25.89%). The number of children in each family ranged from 1 to 7 children, with an average of 2.36 children (SD 1.19). There were 103 married and 8 unmarried participants. All the parents had children of elementary-school age, that is, 6–12 years.

### 2.2 Procedure

Participants for the study were recruited at weekly homeschooling meetings conducted in different regions of the country. The researchers attended these meetings in order to present the findings of previous research and distribute questionnaires for this study. The questionnaires excluded any identifying details of the respondents in order to assure anonymity. Of 151 parents approached, 12 (8%) refused to complete the questionnaires. After the respondents filled in the questionnaires and the researchers ascertained that all the items had been completed, the parents were then given time for questions and comments.

### 2.3 Instruments

The study used the Big Five Inventory questionnaire (BFI), the Experiences in Close Relationships scale, (ECR), and a demographic questionnaire. Each of the instruments is described below.

#### 2.3.1 *The BFI questionnaire*

The Big Five Inventory (John et al. 1991) examines five main personality traits: neuroticism, openness to experience, extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. Respondents rate the 44 short statements in the questionnaire according to how accurately each statement describes them, on a seven-point scale, ranging from “very inaccurate” (1) to “very accurate” (7). By averaging the relevant items, a separate score is obtained for each of the five personality dimensions. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha coefficients were .85 for extraversion, .76 for agreeableness, .89 for conscientiousness, .86 for neuroticism, and .77 for openness to experience.

### 2.3.2 *The ECR scale*

The Experience in Close Relationships scale (Brennan et al. 1998), translated into Hebrew by Mikulincer and Florian (2000), is a self-report questionnaire composed of 36 items, 18 designed to examine attachment-related anxiety and 18 to examine attachment-related avoidance. Participants are asked to rank each item according to the extent of their agreement that it describes their feelings about close relationships, on a seven-point scale, from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (7). A separate score is calculated for each dimension for each participant by averaging the items pertaining to the specific dimension. In the present study, the Cronbach alpha coefficients were .85 for anxiety and .91 for avoidance.

### 2.3.3 *Demographic questionnaire*

The participating parents completed a demographic questionnaire that included details such as gender, number of children in the family, and the like. In order to assess socioeconomic status, the parents were asked about the family's monthly income in New Israeli Shekels, years of parents' formal education, and so forth. In addition, the questionnaire included quantitative details about the extent to which their daily routine at home was structured, on a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much”), and the average number of hours per week devoted to organized instruction of each child in the family. These two sections of the questionnaire represented the dependent variable in the present research, that is, they measured two dimensions of the structure of homeschooling.

## 3 Results

In order to examine the relationship between the parents' personality and socioeconomic variables and the daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching in their homeschool practice, we calculated Pearson coefficients. The correlations are presented in Table 1.

As the table indicates, there was a positive correlation between mother's education and the number of hours devoted to teaching; the higher the mother's education, the greater the number of hours devoted to teaching. Family income and conscientiousness both correlated positively with daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching. It is important to note that the mean family income shown in the table is significantly higher than the national average in Israel (approximately NIS 9300 per month at the time of writing).

In order to examine the contribution of the variables to the explained variance of daily schedule at home and number of hours devoted to teaching, we performed multiple regression analyses. In the first stage, we entered all the above variables, including those that did not correlate with daily schedule or number of hours devoted to teaching. The purpose of this analysis was to determine whether interactions with other variables would contribute to the explained variance. In the second stage, we performed hierarchical regression analyses, in which we entered

**Table 1** Pearson coefficients of socioeconomic and personality traits with family routine and hours devoted to teaching weekly (N = 139)

Variable	Daily routine	Hours devoted to teaching	M	SD
Mother's education	.16	.22*	15.31	1.68
Father's education	.03	.15	15.01	2.11
Family income	.23**	.43**	17,715.83	9726.71
Attachment anxiety	.16	.13	2.81	.82
Attachment avoidance	.16	.01	3.39	.74
Extraversion	.02	.01	3.39	.74
Agreeableness	.11	.08	3.54	.74
Conscientiousness	.25**	.26**	3.82	.64
Neuroticism	.01	.12	2.93	.74
Openness to experience	.05	.01	4.01	.57
M	3.99	12.76		
SD	1.32	4.76		

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ 

all the variables that were found to be correlated, as a main effect or an interaction, with at least one of the dependent variables. The first regression referred to daily schedule and the second regression, to the number of hours devoted to teaching. Each of the regressions was comprised of four steps: in the first step, we entered the socioeconomic characteristics of mother's education and family income. Father's education, which was not found to be correlated with any of the dependent variables, was not entered in the regression. In the second step, we entered parent's attachment style (anxious and avoidant), as explained in the Instruments section. In the third step, we entered parent's level of conscientiousness. The other BFI components were not entered, because we found no correlation between them and the two dependent variables. In the fourth step, we entered the interactions of family demographic characteristics X parents' personality characteristics, to determine whether personality characteristics contributed to daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching. The first three steps included forced entry of all the variables; in the fourth step, which examined the contribution of the interactions to the explained variance, we entered only those interactions that contributed significantly ( $p < .05$ ) to the explained variance.

The regression pertaining to daily schedule revealed an explained variance of 23%; the explained variance in the regression pertaining to number of hours devoted to teaching was 34%. The coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of the hierarchical regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

As the table shows, the results of the first step indicated that socioeconomic characteristics (mother's education and family income) contributed significantly to the explained variance of daily schedule (6%) and to the explained variance of number of hours devoted to teaching (19%). Family income was positively



**Table 2** Hierarchical regression coefficients to explained variance in daily schedule and number of hours devoted to learning (N = 139)

Predictor	Structural nature of the process			
	Daily schedule		Number of hours devoted to teaching	
	R <sup>2</sup>	β	R <sup>2</sup>	β
Step 1	.06*		.19***	
Mother's education		.11		.12
Family income		.21*		.40***
Step 2	.08**		.02	
Anxiety		.25**		.16*
Avoidance		-.23**		-.04
Step 3	.06**		.07**	
Conscientiousness		.26**		.27**
Step 4	.03*		.06**	
Mother's education × Conscientiousness		-.17*		
Mother's education × Anxiety				-.19*
Mother's education × Avoidance				-.18*
Total R <sup>2</sup>	.23***		.34***	

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ 

correlated with both to daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching; the higher the family income, the more constant the daily schedule and the greater the number of hours devoted to teaching.

The results of the second step indicated a significant contribution of 8% to the explained variance of daily schedule, and no significant contribution to the explained variance of the number of hours devoted to teaching. A positive correlation was found between anxious attachment style and both daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching. A negative correlation was found between avoidant attachment style and daily schedule, so that the higher the level of avoidance, the lower the constancy of the daily schedule.

The results of the third step showed a significant contribution of 6% to the explained variance of daily schedule and a significant contribution of 7% to the explained variance of number of hours devoted to teaching. In other words, both these regressions showed that conscientiousness contributed significantly to the explained variance in structure. Positive correlations were found between conscientiousness and both daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching.

The results of the fourth step, daily schedule was found to contribute significantly (3%) to the interaction of mother's education X conscientiousness. Regarding number of hours devoted to teaching, interactions between mother's education X anxiety, and mother's education X avoidance, added another 6% to the explained variance.

To clarify the interactions, we employed Aiken and West's (1991) method.

Figure 1 is a graphic description of the interaction of mother's education X conscientiousness in the regression pertaining to consistency of daily schedule.

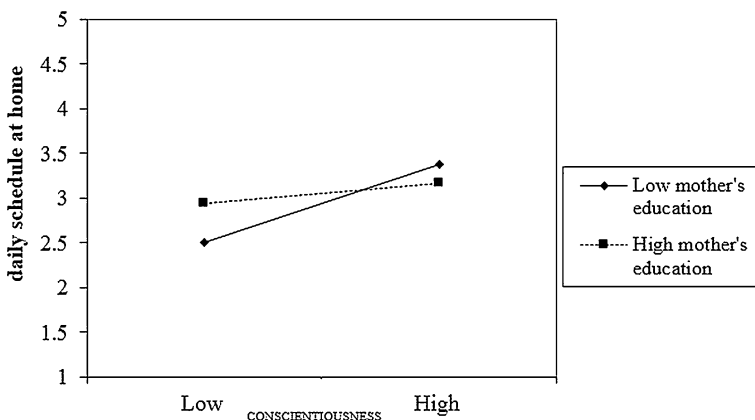
Analysis of the interaction revealed no correlation between conscientiousness and constancy of daily schedule among the mothers with a higher level of education,  $\beta = .05$ ,  $p > .05$ . In contrast, a significant positive correlation between conscientiousness and constancy of daily schedule was found among mothers with lower levels of education,  $\beta = .36$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Figures 2 and 3 describe the interactions mother's education X anxiety and mother's education X avoidance, in the regression pertaining to number of hours devoted to teaching.

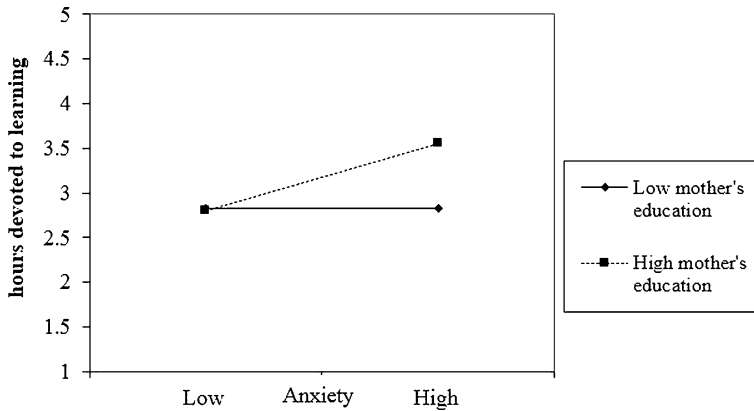
No correlation was found between attachment anxiety and number of hours devoted to teaching among the mothers with a lower level of education,  $\beta = .01$ ,  $p > .05$ , nor between attachment avoidance and the number of hours devoted to teaching,  $\beta = .09$ ,  $p > .05$ . In other words, in this group, attachment did not contribute to the explained variance of the number of hours devoted to teaching. In contrast, among mothers with higher levels of education, a significant positive correlation was found between attachment anxiety and number of hours devoted to teaching,  $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ , and a negative correlation was found between attachment avoidance and number of hours devoted to teaching,  $\beta = -.25$ ,  $p < .05$ . Thus, in this group, the more anxiety the mother experienced in her relationships, the greater the number of hours she devoted to teaching, and the more avoidance experienced in relationships, the lower the number of hours devoted to teaching.

## 4 Discussion

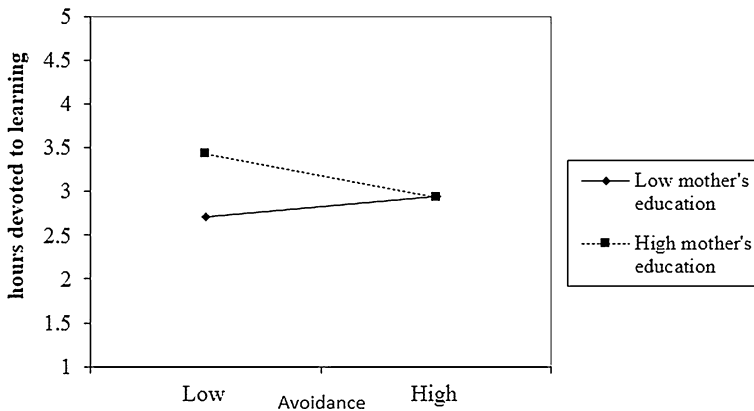
The significant growth in the homeschooling practice over recent decades, combined with a paucity of research knowledge about it, underscores the need for further investigation of this trend in education. Homeschooling should not be



**Fig. 1** Correlation between conscientiousness and daily schedule at home among mothers with high and low levels of education



**Fig. 2** Attachment anxiety and number of hours devoted to teaching among mothers with high and low levels of education



**Fig. 3** Attachment avoidance and number of hours of teaching reported by mothers with high and low levels of education

treated as one uniform entity but rather as a variety of types of activities undertaken by families. In the present study of the factors underlying the different types of family activities included in this general concept, we adopted the division most widely accepted in the literature, namely, between structured homeschooling and unstructured homeschooling, or what is called unschooling. Unlike previous studies in which the researchers divided families into these two separate types based on external characteristics, in the present research, we created a continuum of structure based on the number of hours per week that parents planned in advance to devote to teaching, and the extent to which a constant daily schedule was maintained in the home.

Families at the structured end of the continuum devoted many hours per week to prearranged teaching and had a set daily schedule in the home. Families at the unstructured end of the continuum devoted almost no hours to prearranged teaching

and had no structured daily schedule. Along this continuum, there were various combinations of number of hours devoted to prearranged teaching and constancy in daily home schedule.

In order to understand the factors underlying the differences between families in terms of the structure of the process, we examined the correlation between the process and the personality factors and socioeconomic factors. The results indicated a correlation between the personality and socioeconomic factors and the character of the homeschooling provided. The results regarding the socioeconomic factors examined only partially supported the hypotheses: mother's education was found to correlate positively with the number of hours devoted to teaching, and family income correlated positively with both constancy of daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching.

Several explanations may account for the correlation between mother's education and number of hours devoted to teaching. In most of the families, the mother was the dominant parent who carried out most of the homeschooling activities (Guterman and Neuman 2014), and the more educated mothers might have felt more comfortable with learning processes and therefore tended to engage in them more often. In addition, mothers who have been exposed to more advanced education may have acquired more structured and orderly learning habits, which they then implement in the process of educating their children.

Another possible explanation for the correlation between mother's education and the structure of homeschooling might be the association between less education and an alternative lifestyle, with less emphasis on primary values of conventional culture, such as education and income, and a greater emphasis on values such as family or a return to nature. In such cases, homeschooling might represent an expression of these views, and if so, it may be implemented with less structure. In other words, these mothers may have had less formal education because they ascribed less importance to formal education and more importance to other forms of education, and thus also educated their children accordingly. We assumed an association between homeschooling and structured areas of academic content. This was based, among other things, on previous findings of the authors of the present research (Neuman and Guterman 2016), which indicated that structure incorporates aspects of both process and content and structured homeschooling is often associated with structure of the subjects of study.

Differences in worldview might also explain the correlations of family income with daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching. Previous findings suggested that families with an alternative worldview might tend to engage in employment such as art, therapies, instruction, and others that often generate less income than other occupations (Neuman 2003). Assuming this is true, the alternative worldview, or perhaps a more rounded educational philosophy, might lead to a lower level of mother's education, lower income, and a less structured learning process for the children.

In addition, economic status itself may affect the daily schedule and the number of hours devoted to teaching. For example, low income may lead to economic difficulties, tension, and fewer resources to devote to instruction, which, in turn, could be reflected in a less rigid daily schedule and fewer hours of planned teaching.

In further research, it would be interesting to examine worldview and tensions at home as mediating factors in the relationship between socioeconomic status and degree of structure in homeschooling. It is important to note that in the present research, only about one-third of the families had a family income below the national average, and accordingly, the findings do not provide robust statistics in response to questions regarding this issue.

Better understanding of these factors will further elucidate the homeschooling process and encourage more fruitful discourse between authorities in charge of homeschooling and families engaging in it.

With regard to the personality variables investigated, it was found, as hypothesized, that conscientiousness was positively correlated with both constant daily schedule and number of hours devoted to teaching. Examination of the interaction between variables revealed that this correlation was significant only among mothers with lower education levels, and not those with higher levels of education.

The correlation between conscientiousness and structure in the learning process might have been expected, as conscientiousness is associated with the ability to focus on a goal, and willingness to invest effort and take responsibility, all of which may contribute to a greater degree of structure in various processes, among them the learning process. The question is why this correlation was found only among mothers with a lower level of education. As we saw, the more educated mothers had a greater tendency towards structured learning, perhaps because of the intrinsic link between education and structure. In the case of these mothers, perhaps their education had a strong enough effect on their tendency to structure the environment, rendering their personality traits less significant. In this respect, it can be argued that the experience of higher education may have an impact on the habits of parents who studied in that system.

Furthermore, the mothers who expressed neither of the two components found to contribute to a more structured environment—higher education or conscientiousness—educated their children in a less structured environment. An interesting subject for further research is whether additional factors, such as a social environment that encourages structure, the use of internet programs, or others, might also promote the creation of more structured learning by parents. In addition, it would be interesting to investigate whether similar factors also influence the home life (after school) of families that do not engage in homeschooling.

The findings of the present research also indicated that attachment-related anxiety and avoidance interacted with mother's education to contribute to the number of hours devoted to learning, but only among mothers with a higher level of education. The interaction of attachment-related anxiety with mother's education was positively correlated with number of hours devoted to teaching; and the interaction of attachment-related avoidance with higher mother's education was negatively correlated with number of hours devoted to teaching. In other words, among more educated mothers, more anxiety meant more hours devoted to teaching, and more avoidance was linked with fewer hours devoted to teaching.

Attachment anxiety is associated with greater fear of impairing one's relationships and losing ties with close people (Brennan et al. 1998; Fraley and Waller

1998); thus it can be hypothesized that shared hours of learning constitute—even if only unconsciously—a means for a mother to strengthen and validate her relationship with her child. In contrast, attachment avoidance is associated with discomfort in the presence of others (Fraley et al. 2000). Here too, it can be hypothesized that shared hours of learning, which constitute a period of closeness and intimacy between mother and child, may create a more unpleasant feeling for parents the greater their level of avoidance. This may explain the negative correlation between avoidance and number of hours devoted to learning. Our finding of such a trend among the more educated mothers might be attributed to the fact that more educated mothers are familiar with teaching and find it a simple means for expressing their personality tendencies.

The findings of this research shed light on the processes underlying structured and unstructured family homeschooling activity. However, some limitations should be taken into account. First, this was a preliminary study and therefore focused on main personality and socioeconomic aspects, but certainly not all possible traits. It would be interesting to examine the effect of other aspects, such as parents' locus of control or the nature of their social ties. Second, the present study examined personality aspects after the choice of the type of homeschooling had already been made. In light of findings that homeschooling practices may change over time (Kunzman and Gaither 2013), it would be interesting to examine the effect of the same factors on different aspects of family life over time and their relationship to homeschooling practices. Third, in the present research we used the self-report as the measure of structure in homeschooling. Therefore, it can be assumed that the research results indicate differences in reporting, and not necessarily in actual practices. For example, better-educated parents may have reported more hours of study with their children because they considered this as a more important activity from the social perspective. Further research might examine these variables directly, for instance, by means of observation of families or study of journals.

Finally, it is also interesting that the only trait found to be significant was conscientiousness. In light of the setting of the research in Israel, it would be interesting to conduct a statistical analysis to examine the underlying issues that account for this. Along the same lines, parental interaction with their children and the schools is often associated with the degree of confidence that parents have in the education system and the political system that sets educational policies. It would be interesting in further research to consider these social aspects, as well.

Despite these limitations, the findings of the present study represent an important contribution to homeschooling research. In light of its rapid growth, we should strive to understand the nature of the process of homeschooling. Education shapes children's personalities (Merry and Karsten 2010). In the past, decisions about the education process were to a great extent collective, but today this process has become more individual; this makes research on what is being done in the field all the more important. Studies of this type may help clarify the influence of education on children, on the family cell, and on society as a whole.

Moreover, understanding the nature of homeschooling may also assist professionals and educational agents who engage in the practice and supervision of homeschooling. Knowledge of homeschooling types and underlying factors may

help these agents adapt their discourse and recommendations to the unique character of individual families and the agencies responsible for education in general. For example, the present research may suggest several directions for consideration of the subject. Among other things, the findings indicate that families that enter the homeschooling process with higher education or higher economic status might be better equipped for the challenges that this practice may pose. From this perspective, the means available to families, on emotional, educational, environmental, and other levels, may be significant in understanding their ability to meet the challenges of homeschooling.

For these reasons, we hope that further studies will continue to create a stronger empirical basis for understanding homeschooling.

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