The Contribution of the Parent Volunteer to School Culture

Ethnographic Case Study

Alissa Beth Burstein
School of Education

Ph.D. Thesis

Submitted to the Senate of Bar-Ilan University

Ramat-Gan, Israel   November 2013

The Contribution of the Parent Volunteer to School Culture

Ethnographic Case Study

Alissa Beth Burstein
School of Education

Ph.D. Thesis

*This work was carried out under the supervision of Prof. Deborah Court,
School of Education, Bar-Ilan University.*

Table of Contents

Abstract

Research on those involved in the daily school experience typically focuses on the child, teacher and principal. This qualitative study explores another, equally important, population: the parents. It looks at the parent volunteer and sets out to shed light on the contribution that parent involvement (PI) has on school culture.

Following the findings of a small pilot study at one Israeli school that explored the phenomenon of parent volunteerism in general, this current study goes one step further, studying parent volunteers in two Israeli schools and two American schools of a similar ideological background to the Israeli schools (Zionist modern Orthodox day schools). This will be an attempt to not only understand parent volunteerism in general—from the viewpoint of the parent him or herself—but specifically in this instance, to explore the influence of volunteerism on school culture. By using this prominent population as a vanguard, we will hopefully begin to understand and lay the theoretical groundwork for explaining how the parent volunteer is intertwined in the school culture, and for understanding the interplay between theories of volunteerism in general, active parent involvement in the school, and school culture.

Friedman (2010) presents a general yet broad survey of the history of PI in Israel, and offers a typology of different parent types including their various potential roles in the school. Epstein (2001) is well known for promoting the importance of the school-family-community partnership. Wilson (2000) and Gromav (2011) discuss at great length the phenomenon of volunteerism, with Gromav focusing on the phenomenon in Israel. Schein (1985) discusses organizational culture, with Deal and Peterson (1999) honing in on school culture in particular, with a focus on leadership. And Bourdieu (1986) is well known for his theories on human, social and cultural capital which researchers have connected to the phenomenon of PI, while Durkheim (1973 and 1956, based on much earlier works) was actually one of the first philosophers to link education and sociology. The topic of PI has also been given utmost priority at the political and national levels, as seen in the Israeli Dovrat Commission report of 2005, "Ofek Chadash" 2008 elementary school and "Oz Letmura" 2011 high school reforms; and the American No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

After two years of ethnographic case study research at two Israeli schools and two American schools, during which time over 40 interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, administrators and political figures; some dozens of observations were logged; and hundreds of documents were collected and analyzed—the researcher presents a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973). These findings discuss who the parent volunteer is (e.g., reasons for volunteering); the structural dynamics of power, politics and partnership displayed at the schools; and the parent as agent of socialization, informal education, and culture at the school.

The discussion takes the above findings to a deeper, theoretical as well as practical, level, offering a new classification of volunteer types in light of these four schools; discussing the concept of leadership and how the roles of the principal and parent are often intertwined in a partnership; and linking education and socialization both today and in light of classical sociological thought.

This study sheds light not only on classical theory regarding sociology and education as well as methodological challenges that arose with regard to insider/outsider issues, but most importantly, its practical implications and applications in the school setting. It also raises questions for future research, such as the role of the specifically non-involved parent. It is hoped that administrators, principals, teachers, and most importantly, parents will be able to glean the fruits of these findings and in so doing, enhance and enrich the overall school experience for all players involved.

Acknowledgements

"...when the people offer themselves willingly, bless the Lord" (Judges, 5:2)
בְּהִתְנַדֵּב עָם בָּרְכוּ ה' (שופטים ה:ב)

At various stages throughout this research I asked myself how I would be able to sufficiently thank all the people without whom this endeavor would have been impossible. Mention here is a start, but cannot possibly express the magnitude of my true thanks and appreciation. I am truly indebted to everyone who made this possible.

First and foremost, I thank my dear parents, of blessed memory. My mother, Pearl (nee Shmidman) Burstein, was involved in the pilot study and the beginning stages of this research but very unfortunately passed away before being able to see the final fruits. I endured a very difficult period in the middle, but carrying on the tradition of education in my family gave me the impetus to continue, even from my depths of mourning and pain. My mother was a teacher—a very dedicated, good, and loved one at that—and she always tried to convince me to follow in her footsteps. I resisted and studied psychology and mathematics instead. It is now ironic that after she is gone, I have carried on the family tradition of education, albeit not as a teacher, but from the academic perspective. I emerge with a deeper understanding and appreciation for school culture and all that surrounds it. My mother too returned to study later in life, when she enrolled in college courses for advanced teacher accreditation requirements. We were always very proud of her achievements, and I hope she would have been proud of mine.

My father too, Rabbi Samuel Moses Burstein, who passed away some twenty years ago, in his reserved, quiet, understated, gentle, and subtle way, must have also endowed me with the overarching importance of education. Originally trained in physics and mathematics, he was not only an ordained pulpit rabbi and educator, but also a volunteer—he illegally entered the fledgling state of Israel after having served as a US Army chaplain in displaced persons camps in Frankfurt Germany after WWII, to serve as a pilot (his memoirs are documented in his 1964 autobiography originally published by Herzl Press, *Rabbi With Wings*). I come from a family of rabbis and educators, men as well as women, on both sides.

On a day to day basis, no one deserves more thanks than my advisor and mentor, Dr. Deborah Court, who made studying for my doctorate a once in a lifetime, invaluable experience. It's the process, not just the product. These have been irreplaceable years of growth. Meeting with her was the highlight of my day—and she was wholeheartedly willing to meet, talk and/or correspond as necessary. I always felt I had her support, starting from the first time we met regarding the continuation of my studies, and she was always with me no matter how silly a mistake I may have made (and there were plenty!). Her partnership is a major reason I consider these past four years among the best four years of my life. It has been an incredible journey.

I would also like to thank Rabbi Stuart Zweiter for helping me in more ways than he can possibly imagine. At times I expressed my thanks to him, at times not. This doctorate would have been impossible without him.

And of course, my deepest thanks and appreciation go to my husband, Yitzchak Bruchim, for supporting me from day one, when this was just a crazy far-fetched idea, knowing that it would mean compromises on his part in terms of money, time and enduring my unpredictable mood swings. This would have been impossible had I not known that I had his unwavering full support all these years. Special thanks go to Itzik for holding the fort when I went to the States to do two weeks of research (and for that early morning emergency room run with one of our kids who got his finger stuck in a trundle bed while I was away!). We are not a family that travels or separates much; we are a strong knit unit that is used to seeing one another on a daily basis so my absence surely rocked the boat. But his support, and the kids' encouragement and willingness to help when needed, facilitated the journey. And of course, the most special and warm thanks are offered to my wonderful children—Michael Samuel, Daniella, Nathan, and Tehilla—who did not have me around as much as they probably should have, and also had to put up with occasional outbursts of frustration and stress, as well as lectures. I can only hope that in the long run I will have been a good role model for them, both in terms of my value for lifelong learning as well as the lessons learned from the research. Bottom line, I did this for them.

Thank you to my workmates and friends for putting up with my periodic "monologues" whenever I needed to vent. I know, you've heard enough about Durkheim and the merits of qualitative research!

All of the personalities at the schools I researched deserve thanks, but I refrain from mentioning names, for the sake of confidentiality. Some secretaries, administrators and teachers were more helpful than others—but all deserve my thanks.

Thank you to the librarians who so graciously assisted me, not only in finding resources, but in their moral support every time I would show up at all times of the day, laptop strung over my shoulder, wondering if today would be a productive writing day. Their smiles always helped!

And finally, thanks to The Lookstein Center for Jewish Education of Bar-Ilan University for a research grant that enabled me to travel to the States to do the necessary research. Special thanks to my sister Ilana Benson for hosting me those two hectic weeks, making sure I always had strong coffee in the morning, good meals at the best restaurants when I returned from my daily observations and interviews, and red wine available as needed in the evenings!

Introduction

Research on personalities involved in the school setting typically focuses on the child, teacher and principal. This qualitative study explores another population: the parents. Though parents can be considered the largest population in the school system (Gur & Zalmanson-Levy, 2005), the term "parent" is not commonly seen as central to the concept of "school." And although parents clearly contribute their "cultural capital" (Bourdieu, 1986) to the school culture, this population has remained largely untapped.

This study will look at parent volunteerism at the school, following the findings of a small pilot study at one Israeli school that shed light on the phenomenon of parent volunteerism heavily influenced by the contribution of the American parent body. This study will go one step further, exploring both parent volunteers in two Israeli schools and two American schools of a similar ideological background to the Israeli schools (Zionist modern Orthodox day schools). *This will be an attempt to not only understand parent volunteerism in general—from the viewpoint of the parent him or herself—but specifically, to explore the influence of volunteerism on the school culture.* By using this prominent population as a vanguard, we will hopefully begin to understand and lay the theoretical groundwork for explaining how the parent volunteer is intertwined in the school culture, and for understanding the interplay between theories of volunteerism in general, active parent involvement in the school, and school culture.

Note that the terms parent involvement, engagement, and volunteerism are used interchangeably and are often abbreviated simply as PI. For the purposes of this research, PI does *not* refer to parents involved in their own children's schooling (e.g., helping out with homework, meeting with teachers to discuss the child), but rather, involvement in the school itself. Please also note that all parent led organizations are referred to here as PTA, even though some schools refer to them as "parent teacher organization," "parent teacher association," "parent council," "parent leadership," "parent liaison," and the like.

Literature Review

Whether defined as "parent involvement" (PI), "parent participation," "parent volunteerism," "parent cooperation," or "parent engagement," little research documents from the perspective of the parent, in a qualitative manner, from where parents bring their volunteering ideas and desire to become involved, how these parents and other personalities in the school setting view their activities, and the influence this involvement has on school culture. Existing research literature discusses the phenomenon of PI, but lacks the parent's voice and its contribution to school culture.

Definition and Categories of PI

Epstein (1995, 2001) offers six PI levels: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. Ji and Koblinsky (2009, p. 691) have defined the volunteering level as, "parents who assist teachers, students, administrators, and other parents in classrooms or other areas of the school"; the decision making level as "parent involvement in school decisions through participation in…parent organizations"; and collaborating with the community level as "parents working with the community." Sanders (2008) adds to Epstein's categories by saying that when schools incorporate in their programming, activities that utilize all of these types of involvement—they create meaningful interactions for individuals in the schools, families and communities.

Indeed, Epstein's (1995, 2001) categories can also be viewed as "in school" as opposed to "outside of school" activities, or "active" as opposed to "passive" involvement (Fisher & Friedman, 2009).

Abrams and Gibbs (2002) offer four parent involvement roles, based on their qualitative research findings of parents active in the school setting: helper, monitor, advocate and active decision maker. This runs the spectrum from supporter to powerful leader.

In Israel, Friedman and Fisher (2003) describe the parent as observer, as service provider not related directly to the educational process, as learner, as partner in the educational process and as decision maker. Gur and Zalmanson-Levy (2005) suggest

the models of parent as observer, parent as resource, parent as learner, committee (PTA), open communication (democratic school), and activist for change.

Volunteerism

Volunteering is an old American tradition: "Back in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocquville, a Frenchman, traveled across the United States, observing the customs of this new nation. His report, *Democracy in America* (1835) became widely read….One of [his] observations was that Americans joined a lot of voluntary associations….Sociologist David Sills (1968) identified four other functions [that apply to voluntary groups]— Some voluntary groups pave the way to social change" (Henslin, 2001, p. 183-5. See also Gromav, 2001, p. 36, who states that volunteers have always been at the forefront of change, and is a positive aspect of the strength of Israeli culture). Dekker and Halman (2003, p.1) take a more cautious view, "…decline of civic community….and the erosion of social capital, volunteering is an indicator of the negative trends as well as a possible instrument for recovery." Adds Gromav (2011, p. 34), volunteerism increases as society realizes that capitalist society cannot answer to the humanitarian needs of all (as an example at the governmental level, see PMO Round Table initiative, 2010).

Carson (1999) says, "It is unlikely that a single definition can cover the different manifestations of volunteering across cultures." However, it is generally accepted that a volunteer is broadly defined as one who acts out of free will, without pay, and for the purpose of helping someone or something (Gromav, 2011, p. 29). Alternatively, it can be viewed as four dimensions on a continuum: the voluntary nature of the act, the nature of the reward, the context of the activity and who benefits (Cnaan, Handy & Wadsworth, 1996, p. 365).

David Horton Smith, founder of the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) opens his paper on altruism, volunteers and volunteering by stating, "The question of the relationship of altruism to volunteerism and to volunteers is a huge topic on which one could write several volumes" (Smith, 1981). That said, and bearing in mind differing social constructs, he does offer some definitions which set a framework for this research, as follows: " I define a volunteer as an individual engaging in behavior that is not bio-socially

determined (e.g., eating, sleeping), nor economically necessitated (e.g., paid work, housework, home repair), nor sociopolitically compelled (e.g., paying one's taxes, clothing oneself before appearing in public), but rather that is essentially (primarily) motivated by the expectation of psychic benefits of some kind as a result of activities that have a market value greater than any remuneration received for such activities…. I find it most useful to define "altruism" as an aspect of human motivation that is present to the degree that the individual derives intrinsic satisfaction or psychic rewards … without the conscious expectation of participating in an exchange relationship" (Smith, 1981).

It is generally accepted that the "essence" of volunteerism is not the same as that of altruism, that the contribution is defined as coming "without substantial coercion or direct remuneration" (Wilson & Musick, 1997, p. 695). Volunteering often, however, answers to man's basic needs—belonging, achieving and influencing (Gromav, 2011, p. 33), and often becomes a lifestyle (p. 30). Furthermore, distinction is made between planned "volunteering" and more ad hoc "helping," in fact, "Volunteering encourages helping, but helping does not affect formal volunteering" (Wilson & Musick, p. 711). Similarly, motives for volunteering can be seen from varied perspectives, depending on whether one comes from the psychological stance (e.g., cost-benefit) or the sociological (e.g., social-cultural norm, rational choice theory, human capital) (Wilson, 2000). Some psychologists have even designed models based on demographic qualities, personality, identity, values, and social relationships to describe one's commitment to volunteering (Matsuba, Hart & Atkins, 2007). Often, it is as simple as "because somebody showed them the way to a socially worthy deed" (Sokolowki, 1996, p. 275).

School/Organizational Culture and Climate

Organizational climate has been studied for decades, with a switch to focusing on culture in the 1980s "to capture the richness of the organizational environment" (Schneider, Ehrhart & Macey, 2013, p. 363). But what is known about organizational climate and culture specifically in the school? And why is it important? A brief overview follows.

Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2013, p.362) state "Organizational climate and organizational culture are two alternative constructs for conceptualizing the way people experience and describe their work settings (including not only businesses but also schools and governments)." They are "overlapping perspectives" (p. 380). School is a work setting and hence has a climate as well as a culture.

The definition of what exactly and specifically is "school culture" has been discussed by many and Stolp (1994) offers a few definitions. Peterson and Deal (1998) are bold enough to declare, "Culture influences everything that goes on in schools" (p. 28) and they claim that the principal is the shaper of school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1990).

Erickson (1987), however, steps back and brings up an important question that is still relevant today: "Is school culture something more than just another word for school climate?" (p.11). In explanation, he offers, "Sarason (1971) and Feiman-Nemser and Floden (1986) who have used the term culture to refer to an undifferentiated entity; the overall character or ethos of an educational setting, such as a school, or of an educational role, such as that of teacher...but we can't see it or talk about it…serious questions have been raised about whether or not the anthropological conception of culture is applicable at all to modern societies" (p. 12). Erickson offers three conceptions of culture, one very relevant when considering the school: "One of the conceptions of culture defines it by analogy to information bits in a computer or to genetic information in a breeding population. According to this interpretation, culture consists of many small chunks of knowledge that are stored as a large pool of information within the bounded social group....It should come as no surprise, then, that the three conceptions of culture might illuminate different aspects of daily life and everyday sense-making in the school as a formal organization" (p. 13). Furthermore, he suggests, "In all of these conceptions, culture is seen as knowledge and as framing for meaning...the notion of culture as shared ways of making sense" (p. 22).

Hoy (1990) offers a simple distinction between climate and culture: "Organizational climate and culture have different intellectual traditions. Climate studies typically have their roots in industrial psychology and social psychology and employ survey research techniques and multivariate statistical analyses to describe shared perceptions of

patterns of behavior. Studies of culture, in contrast, have their bases in anthropology and sociology and use qualitative and ethnographic techniques to identify a system of shared beliefs and values. Although both climate and culture are attempts to describe the basic atmosphere of schools, each delivers a distinct view of school life" (p. 165). Schneider et al (2011) go one step further, proposing that climate refers more to leadership and supervisory styles—constructs very relevant for the school environment (Schneider, Ehrhart, and Macey (2013).

Schoen and Teddlie (2008) bring in that "Some organizational studies distinguish between climate and culture by defining climate in terms of behavior and culture in terms of values and norms" (p. 133). Adds Schein (1990), "climate is only a surface manifestation of culture, and thus research on climate has not enabled us to delve into the deeper causal aspects of how organizations function….Until we have a better understanding of how culture works, it is probably best to work with qualitative research approaches that combine field work methods from ethnography with interview and observation methods from clinical and consulting work" (p. 109, 118).

Hofstede (1991) has said that "culture is learned, not inherited. It derives from one's social environment, not from one's genes" (p. 5). And after presenting various definitions of "culture," Deal and Peterson (1999) specifically say that, "School cultures are complex webs of traditions and rituals that have been built up over time as teachers, students, parents, and administrators work together and deal with crises and accomplishments" (p. 4), stressing in a later publication (2009) the importance of reconsidering school culture in today's environment. Furthermore, Peterson (2001) points out that principals must uncover, understand, and address the special history of the school in order to implement change. Indeed, explains Alvesson (2012), "The centrality of the culture concept follows from the profound importance of shared meanings for a coordinated action" (p. 2). One can see the importance of understanding school culture, a dynamic social setting that includes many players all striving towards a shared goal, education.

The Role of the Parent in the School

More parent involvement may not always be better parent involvement (Pomerantz, Moorman & Litwack, 2007). It appears that the type and match is what matters, a "collaborative philosophy" (Matusov & Rogoff, 2002, p. 416).

The literature generally agrees that middle class parents tend to be the most involved (Abrams & Gibbs, 2002), that highly educated parents who share the culture of formal education, seem to be more involved too (Lareau, 1996, in Shumow & Miller, 2001), and it has been suggested that parents of successful children are more involved at the school simply because they feel validated by their children's school success, or do not have to spend time on homework (Shumow & Miller, 2001). Or, as Clary and Snyder (1999) hint, the interplay between "personal and situational forces" (p. 159) is behind one's decision to volunteer in any setting.

No matter what, the "ideal parent" is often viewed as both the "problem and protector"—putting parents in a double-bind (Nakagawa, 2000, p. 448). In fact, research has pointed out that many parent involvement policies at the governmental level stress the importance of families—but present them as a problem, oftentimes, as in a California code, even distinguishing between different "parents more culpable than others" (p. 450). On the other hand, another code from Delaware is quoted as saying, "There is no adequate substitute for the involvement of a concerned and committed family in the education of a child"—showing the "parent as protector" paradigm (p. 452). Parents are therefore placed in a bind: "The good parent is constructed as the one who takes the lead of the school, who is involved but not too involved, and who supports but does not challenge" (p. 456). Further, as Nakagawa (2000, p. 466) points out, "the prevailing discourse says that the good, involved parent is one who visits the school site and participates in sanctioned school activities."

In all, parent involvement in the school decreases as children get older (Eccles & Harold, 1996 in Mattingly, *et al.*, 2002). In any case, most agree that the parent must be approached in order to volunteer (for instance, Lopez , Scribner & Mahitivanichcha, 2001; Rihani, 2004).

Recently, Rubin Ross (2012) explored two private schools in the United States, a Jewish school and a Catholic school, and found similar patterns of volunteering at both schools with differences at the governance level, which she attributes to differences in history and culture of the school (Rubin Ross's qualitative study included supporting student learning at home as PI, a definition not used in this current study). She states that research on PI in religious Catholic schools, as well as Jewish schools, is lacking (p. 8, 9).

Minority Involvement in the School

One of the more intensely researched topics regarding parent involvement is minority parent involvement—it seems that not enough minorities are involved, and when they are, their effectiveness is questioned. Lee and Bowen (2006): "As would be expected from Bourdieu's theory of structural constraints among nondominant groups that result in unequal access to institutional resources (Lareau, 2001), involvement at school occurred most frequently for those parents whose culture and lifestyle were most likely to be congruent with the school's culture" (p. 21). Lightfoot (2004, p. 93) says that parents of the lower socio-economic strata are often seen as "empty containers" that need to be filled. Many programs are geared towards empowering minority parents, for example, "…policies and interventions are more often directed towards working class or 'socially excluded' families…" (Gillies & Edwards, 2006). However, Anderson and Minke (2007) point out that minority parents may indeed be very involved, yet behind the scenes and hence, unseen, qualifying for Epstein's "parenting" and "learning at home" levels. Abrams and Gibbs (2002) hint at lower-class parent frustration, pointing out that middle class parents are more familiar with the language of schooling and curriculum. And, Lopez *et al.* (2001) point out that minority parents may define parent involvement differently than the school, leading to misunderstanding on both sides. Some researchers even found that some minority parents felt that teachers felt "threatened" by their involvement in the school; some felt it wasn't their role; some, did not know how to get involved (Pena, 2000).

Furthermore, most literature refers by and large to parents in a general manner, without making a distinction between mothers and fathers, whose presence is generally less than mothers. One study, however, offers that "fathers were involved with their young adolescents in academic work at home to the same extent as were mothers." (Shumow & Miller, 2001, p. 85). Shumow and Miller continue to explain, that low visibility of fathers may account for schools erroneously thinking fathers less involved. "Educators will need to be sensitive to the reticence of less-educated parents and be careful not to blame those parents for lack of interest" (p. 87).

Burstein (2010) found that in one school setting, minorities (including fathers) were very clearly active, and did indeed have a profound effect and influence on the school. The possibility that this group's strong social, human and cultural capital were so influential at the school (in this case, the "minority," *olim,* was middle to upper class), indicates the need for more exploration, especially regarding the cultural background of these types of parents and of the interplay between the parent volunteer, forms of human and social capital, and the effect on the predominant school culture.

The Principal's Perspective

Many researchers have reiterated the importance of the principal. Flynn and Nolan (2008) summarize the principal's perspective: "At every level, principals complain about the lack of parent involvement and report the most common reason parents call administration is to complain" (p. 178). They must also contend with the new view of parent as consumer (Keller, 2008; Ynon, 1997). "Parents are approaching schools with much more of a contract mentality. Expecting results has come well within the realm of parenting" (Keller, p. 2).

Mapp (2002) adds: "… one of the most pronounced influences on the family involvement initiative at [the school] was the example set by the principal. When he arrived as the new principal, William Henderson embraced a high level of family involvement and demonstrated his commitment through his own actions" (p. 60).

Principals suggested that "preservice programs include parent-teacher relationships….
and developing plans to effectively engage parents" (Flynn & Nolan, 2008, p. 180). And
to apply this, Fullan (2001) adds: "Leading in a culture of change does not mean placing
changed individuals into unchanged environments. Rather, change leaders work on
changing the context, helping create new settings conducive to learning and sharing that
learning" (p. 79). Teachers should have the training, but the principal must know how to
apply this knowledge in the field.

School-Family-Community, and the "Community School" Movement in Israel
Many researchers have documented the strong link between school, family and
community (Epstein, 2001; Fisher, 2010; Hoover-Dempsey, Walker, Sandler, Wehtsel,
Green, Wilkins *et al*., 2005). Epstein's (1995) sixth type of parent involvement
("collaborating with the community") is a theme that reverberates throughout her three
decades of research, especially its importance in reduction of student absenteeism
(Sheldon & Epstein, 2004). Henderson and Mapp (2002) highlight that programs that
are effective in engaging families and community, embrace a philosophy of partnership.
Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2005) pointed out that strong principals who support parent-
teacher relationships are also likely to lead schools who develop strong programs of
parent and community involvement.

In Israel, Machter (2001), Harpaz (2004), and Fisher (2010), among others, describe the
history of the development of the local "community school," going back to 1978, and its
benefits. Harpaz stresses the non-curricular related involvement parents offer to the
school, and mentions the founder of the community school movement, Dr. Yael Posner,
as stating that the second of the five directing principles is "dialogue and open
communication between the school and parents" (p. 30).

Ackerman (2000) points out the link that American Jews have historically had on
education in Israel (e.g., Alexander Dushkin, Judah Magnes), adding that the first Tali
school in 1976 opened in Jerusalem with over one half American children. Furthermore,
"The school came into being because of the voluntary efforts of parents" (p. 237).

Parent Involvement in Israel

Friedman and Fisher (2003) point out that in the past few decades, parents in Israel have become more involved due to budget cuts, lack of trust in the educational system, and growing democratic ideals. Harpaz (2004) offers another explanation, mentioning that principals believe that parents now understand it is important to act in a tangible way for the welfare of the students, to feel better about the school, and improve the learning and achievement. Guidelines and popular articles have begun to appear on government (e.g., http://cms.education.gov.il, the Ministry of Education, http:///pmo.gov.il, the Prime Minister's Office), education-related (http://www.daat.ac.il, a religious education site, e.g., Winkler, 1997) and popular (Levy, 2010, ynet) sites.

The importance of parent involvement in higher academic achievement and lowering of violence among the students is beginning to be documented, as in Benvenishti (2006) and Omar (2008). However, Ynon (1997) mentions that the issue of parent involvement in the Israeli school can be a source of conflict between the school and the parents. She points out that parents no longer send their children to school with blind faith; they, in Israel too, are consumers who must be satisfied. She sees the increase in PI as a result of not only budget cuts and a lack of trust in the system but also the growing democratization of Israeli society.

Machter (2001) also offers a short survey of the history of Israeli education, including the development of the middle school in the 1960s, that saw some parent involvement, and budget cuts of the 1970s that brought the community school. He quotes Goldberger (1991) and Friedman (1989) as saying that the factors that brought on increased PI are: higher educational level of the parents, the alienation of the parent from the school, the process of Israeli democratization, education budget cuts, parents' increased leisure time and money, and parent involvement in school budgets. He also adds the following reasons: increasing competition in Israeli society, increasing openness in the parent-child relationship, "conscious involvement" that *olim* from western countries brought with them, and programs of integration that pushed parents into action. Machter points out that parent involvement also serves the intellectual and social needs of the parent. He proceeds to explain that in an era of such fast change, the parent's relationship with

the child is being threatened, that due to anonymity and alienation in the formal school system, parents see the need to develop the emotional and personal aspects of education. Some parents, he says, see PI as a shortcut to their children via personal contact and non-formal pressure placed on the teachers and educators. Some parents view the crisis in hierarchy as threatening both parental and teacher authority. The most important factor pushing the parents to be involved, in his study, is the desire to empower the child, both in the eyes of the teacher and his/her friends.

The Szold Institute, in their series of research tools, published a quantitative questionnaire for parent self-report based on Friedman and Fisher's (2003) categories. Amit (2005, p. 42) offers the additional categories of parent as enemy, customer, resource, partner. They agree that current research has shown that parents get involved because of budget cuts, lack of trust in the educational system, and democratic ideals. Parents will typically get involved in the school if they trust the school and if they identify with the school. In Israel it was found that other predictors of parent involvement include good teacher self image, grade school more than high school, and secular schools more than religious. Zevulun Hammer, Minister of Education in the 1990s, was a strong proponent of PI, reiterating the State Education Act of 1953 stating that parents can choose 25% of the curriculum. They point out that Ministry of Education policies are run not only by pedagogical dictates, but by social processes.

Most recently, Friedman and Fisher (2002) Fisher and Friedman (2009) carried out broad quantitative empirical studies about the conditions behind the various levels of parent involvement in the school. The most important predictor for active as well as passive PI that they found, was the parent's feeling of trust in them from the school's perspective as well as parents' identifying with the school. Unfortunately, Friedman (2004) notes that teachers often feel that they are not appreciated by parents.

Not all parents want to be involved, however. Gur and Zalmanson-Levy (2005) bring in Molland (1999) as mentioning a few reason for lack of involvement, factors that may very well be applicable in Israel too—feelings of insecurity or inequality on the basis of socio-economic or cultural status (even a handicap) causing the parent to feel rejected in

the school setting. This avoidance behavior is often translated as child neglect, when in fact it is the only way for parents to maintain their remaining self respect.

The Governmental Level—NCLB, Dovrat Commission, Ofek Chadash, Oz Letmura

In the United States, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has increasing parent involvement as one of the six targeted areas for reform (though Wang and Fahey [2010] questioned the effectiveness of this Act). Ji and Koblinsky (2009) point out that the Act mandates that schools prepare written parent involvement policies. Pomerantz *et al.* (2007) suggest several reasons why this may be very important: Parents may glean information they hear at the school site, to help their children at home (e.g., with homework); when parents are involved in their children's academic lives, they are highlighting the value of the school; parents are communicating to their children that they care; it empowers the parent. And even before NCLB, in the 1990s, DeMoss, Vaughn and Lagenbach (1996) point out that various states have mandated parent involvement in the public schools at all levels. The State of California Assembly Bill 2590 (Family School Partnership Act) of 1994 goes so far as to state that parents must be allowed a certain number of hours for school-related activity. Clearly, this is a priority at the governmental and state levels.

In Israel too, there has been growing awareness as to the importance of parent involvement, as seen in the Dovrat Commission and later, Ministry of Education recommendations in "Ofek Chadash" and "Oz Letmura." Some recent guidelines for Israeli parent involvement per these reforms can be seen in Vidislavsky (n.d.) and Vidislavsky and Shemesh (2010).

Practical Applications

Almost all publications—research studies and popular professional literature alike—call for increased research on the topic and above all, teacher training (see Jeynes, 2010). Flynn and Nolan (2008) believe pre-service programs have failed to adequately train teacher candidates to work effectively with families. They quote from Hoover-Dempsey *et al.* (2005) as to why parents do **not** get involved—feelings of intimidation, lack of

understanding of importance of their role, lack of self-efficacy, preexisting negative feelings about the school, feeling that teachers do not care, language barrier, and being overwhelmed by day-to-day tasks. They point out the importance of the principal (principals have reported the importance of contacting families early in the school year with positive news). De Acosta (1996) also stresses the importance of teaching teachers about PI. She stresses the "social capital" that parents, family and community can invest in the children's learning (p. 11). And Murray, Curran and Zellers (2008) mention that recently the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has encouraged teacher education programs to include coursework on "parent/professional partnerships."

Shepard and Carlson (2003) note Epstein's (1996) six ways parents can be involved. They add, "Parents can be involved in their children's education, but that does not mean there is a collaborative relationship between parents and educators....Parents are more willing to participate when they are treated as useful resources rather than bad parents" (p. 642, 653). In Israel, Ben-Ari in a "popular" undated document placed on the Israeli Ministry of Education site, says that parent volunteerism is a positive role model for their children, but parents will only volunteer when they feel wanted and appreciated and if their actions are meaningful enough to the school, especially the children.

In summary, the literature is rife with research on parent involvement. Much research however has been quantitative/evaluative in nature and largely focused on specific aspects of achievement and intervention (e.g. violence) for various age and population groups (e.g. minorities, fathers). An exploration of organizational culture as it expresses itself in the school setting is also lacking. Bearing this in mind, there is a need to further explore the phenomenon of parent involvement qualitatively, and in the context of school culture.

Research Questions

 "The research question in a qualitative study is a statement that identifies the topic area to be studied and tells the reader what there is about this particular topic that is of interest to the researcher" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 25). By focusing on the parent volunteer and school culture, this study will attempt to answer the following questions:

- How and why do parents volunteer, viewed from self reported perspectives/constructs?

- How and why does parent involvement influence school culture, and/or how and why does the school culture influence parent involvement—or both?

- How do these involved parents, and school administrators, view PI activity at the school, what the parents are bringing to the school, and the influence it has on the school and its culture?

- Is there an "ideal" and/or "successful" parent volunteer formula for a school and if so, what does it look like?

18

Methodology

Introduction

This study is an ethnographic case study. As defined by Creswell, ethnography "is a strategy of inquiry in which the research studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a prolonged period of time by collecting, primarily, observational and interview data" and case studies "are a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time" (Stake, 1995, p. 13).

This research studies in depth, four schools over approximately a two year period. Throughout this two year period, interviews with individuals involved in the various aspects of the school were carried out, researcher observations took place, and documents were collected.

After introducing and discussing the background of the researcher, the general research paradigm will be discussed before delving into the methods of data collection and the specific research procedure. This chapter will end with a brief discussion regarding ethical concerns.

The Researcher's Background

Researcher

Interest in the topic researched emanated from a variety of reasons, all of which set an important context for understanding the exploration. First, all of the researcher's children either have studied or are currently studying in one of the schools being researched, and the culture of that school, from a research perspective, has for years intrigued the researcher. The implications in terms of observer/participant and insider/outside issues, will be discussed below. Second, the researcher has never been a parent actively involved in school activities on a regular basis, has never been a parent volunteer, yet has always viewed other active parents with an inquisitive eye, wondering what factors are involved in this dynamic. Through the eyes and experiences

of her children, the researcher has seen a plethora of parent involvement paradigms at all levels and of all natures, including periods of richer parent involvement and cooperation accompanied by a seemingly more harmonious school environment and population. The researcher has always been keenly aware of these trends and with time began to question how and why parent volunteerism and school culture appeared to be so closely intertwined. And third, the concept of volunteerism has always been an area of interest to the researcher, going back to master's level fieldwork in psychology. As Lareau (2003) states, "It is a truism in ethnographic research, our own biographies influenced the research, especially my reasons for beginning the study and what we saw" (p. 259).

Furthermore, regarding choice of methodology, the researcher quickly discovered the research interview to be a rather natural form of inquiry for her in order to explore the topic, perhaps due to her previous training as a counseling psychologist, with a preference for the client-centered Rogerian approach. Indeed, Kvale (2007, p. 17) mentions the similarity between the two approaches, while qualifying of course that the purpose of the therapeutic interview is therapy, and the research interview, obtaining knowledge, "with the emphasis on knowledge production in a research interview and on personal change in a therapeutic interview." Kvale mentions (2007, p. 18) and the researcher indeed confirmed, that the research interviewer can learn from the techniques developed within the therapeutic profession.

Pilot study

This doctoral research follows a year-long pilot study at one of the Israeli schools (Burstein, 2010). The researcher, having discovered and documented the contribution of the heavily American parent volunteer body at the school, wondered whether these findings were local and contained, or part of a larger phenomenon that could be linked to existing theory. She wondered what could be learned from other schools of similar (although clearly not identical) ideologies, in terms of the interplay between the parent body and school culture.

Observer/participant and insider/outsider challenges

The researcher grappled with observer/participant and insider/outside issues throughout the scope of the research and analysis. In order to reap a better understanding of the findings, it is important to present these challenges at the outset. At times the boundaries were murky.

At the school level

As mentioned above, all of the researcher's children either are or were students at one of the Israeli schools; one child became a student at the other Israeli school at one point during the scope of the research. Among others, the following questions arose, as the researcher dealt with conflict of interest issues: will this particular researcher's presence affect the behavior of those at the school (e.g., teachers, principal)? Will it positively or negatively affect how they treat her children? What information can the researcher use as data, for example, can she make use of a document that was sent to her as parent, but not as a researcher? By nature of her increased presence at the school, the researcher was privy to information that she otherwise would not have known—if this directly affects her children, can she act, or must she remain purely a researcher, potentially leading to harm to her children (see the section on Ethical Concerns)? Is the researcher ethically "required" to act if she sees something amiss, or must she remain neutral—and where is the boundary? Need the researcher wait for official approval before collecting data, or, since she was there anyway as a parent, can she collect observational data before the actual approval?

One also wonders whether the researcher's "watchful eye" motivated the various personalities who knew about the research (e.g. PTA heads, principals) to act differently, not unlike the Hawthorne Effect. In at least one instance, a school principal approached the researcher after a school activity, asking the researcher if she noticed one particular aspect of the activity, and what she thought about it.

In summary, the researcher admittedly found it challenging at times to remain objective in terms of viewing the school as a research setting, and to separate personal emotions, needs and expectations of a parent.

At the personal level

The researcher was personally acquainted with many individuals at all of the schools, and/or circulates among the same social circles—a positive aspect that clearly facilitated entry into the schools and data collection. But what are the potentially negative implications of such close, personal relationships? In the case of those who were interviewed, were their interviews honest? Was access to data blocked due to over reliance on the specific "gatekeepers" (though, to be sure, cognizant of this challenge, concerted effort was made to gain access in a variety of ways)? It was also, admittedly, a challenge at times for the researcher to keep data she had gleaned confidential, as school is a widely discussed topic at social gatherings, at chance meetings, and in friendly one on one conversations. And of course, interviewees are always interested in knowing what other people have said. Luckily, when told, "I really can't comment or discuss this, for confidentiality reasons"—those who inquired understood, as they were granted the same respect.

Furthermore, at times she encountered several cases of what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 33) term "power asymmetry in qualitative interviews," in particular a "manipulative agenda" and "counter control." By "manipulative agenda," however, Kvale and Brinkmann refer to the interviewer following a hidden agenda; in this research, in at least one blatant instance (there may have been others that the researcher did not pick up on), an *interviewee* appeared to have a hidden agenda, almost begging the researcher, who was an "insider" at the school, to solve the school's problems. The impression given was that since she was researching the parent/school relationship, perhaps she could be the "savior." She was even offered the position of head of PTA by the current head. Or, in other instances, the interviewees asked that the interviewer share with them specific findings concerning school activities, so they could be

implemented in their schools (they were told that this could happen, that the information would be made public, but at the end). In other instances, "counter control" was experienced, with more than one interviewee (non academics) suggesting how the research should be better carried out and pointing to experimental flaws (all in good nature, to be sure), essentially flipping the dominant personality in the interview.

On several occasions the researcher asked herself whether what she was feeling was what the interviewees were trying to describe—for example, a feeling of belonging (the researcher indeed felt she had a more active role in the school as a parent, due to the research involvement), an attempt to raise the child's status in the school (the researcher wondered whether her child was treated differently due to the research), closeness to the principal and influence (in this case, the researcher had very ambivalent feelings and actually felt alienated—leading her to wonder whether other parents, who could not be located to interview, felt similarly). Most blatantly, at one point in the research, the researcher felt that her "gatekeeper" at one of the schools was not being fully forthright in informing her of parent-school developments, meetings and activities—causing the researcher to wonder if what she was feeling as a researcher was what some parents feel as parents, left out, deceived, deprived of the whole truth (i.e., the claimed transparency was not the case at all), and to a certain extent, helpless in this realm. The researcher felt that information was being withheld from her, as researcher as well as parent.

The researcher grappled with these blurred borders and the challenges of these parallel paths throughout.

At the local level
Subtle political-motivated challenges for the researcher were clearly sensed, particularly when interviewing municipality figureheads and school principals. It was, with these interviews, hard to decipher what was said, what was meant, and what was hidden. One wonders what hidden agenda the mayor of the city may

have had, for example, when agreeing to be interviewed. Some of these personalities with superior status were indeed more open than others, but the researcher was keenly aware of her multiple roles of researcher/mother/friend/citizen. And of course, the anxiety level rose when entering into such an interview setting (the researcher, for example, had pre-existing opinions, not related to the research, about these personalities—and had to be conscious about what *she* was saying too), thus adding to the challenge. The biggest challenges for the interviewer in these settings were to exude self confidence and professionalism; to maintain neutrality; and to define for herself, then separate, her various roles. In order to exude self confidence, for example, the researcher prepared herself a bit better for these interviews, making sure to arrive well in advance, to have backup recording options and writing paraphernalia, and to consider the most appropriate dress (modest, for example, when interviewing principals of religious schools); in order to maintain neutrality and define the various roles, the researcher was fully forthcoming with the interviewees, explaining her various roles and admitting that separating among them is indeed a challenge and an integral part of the research and ultimate findings. Full honest disclosure was stressed.

Research Paradigm

"Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). Qualitative data describes, and tells a story (Patton, 2002). This study attempts to find out how parents interpret their volunteer activities at the school, how they construct their particular world of volunteering, and what meaning they attribute to this important aspect of their lives. It also explores the cultures of the four schools and as such, the stories of the various schools, with particular focus on their cultures, will be told. Four schools have been chosen for this "instrumental collective case study" (Stake, 1995, p. 3).

"The qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the

issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). Baxter and Jack proceed to quote Yin (2003) as saying that a case study approach should be used when "(a) the focus of the study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context" (p. 545). In order to explore the parent volunteer in the school, the case study would seem to be the best approach, especially according to this definition: the researcher would like to see how and why the parents carry out their volunteer activities (or, don't—in the case of parents who choose not to volunteer, or cannot volunteer for whatever reason); to observe, and not influence or interfere in any way, their activities; to study the phenomenon of parent involvement in the school from the perspective of the parent; and with voluntarism in the school as well as the school itself, the phenomenon as well as the context.

Furthermore, the choice of the case study seems most natural for this type of inquiry since, "In our quest for understanding we need not seek out only the different and the dramatic. We can learn from both ordinary and non-ordinary cases" (Cohen & Court, 2003, p. 286). This study looks at ordinary as well as extra-ordinary parents and schools in terms of parent involvement. At times the parents view themselves as taking dramatic actions; at times they see their involvement as anything but special. In all instances, to be sure, they do stand out from the general parent population pool—because they volunteer. This study describes how parents view their motives and involvement and places them in the perspective of the school culture and community.

Each school is defined as a bounded case, forming the collective case study. "Once you have determined what your case will be, you will have to consider what your case will NOT be" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 546). This study explores four schools, each characterized by its unique student and parent population. It does not and could not explore schools in general, Israeli schools in general, or even religious Israeli or American schools in general. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of a case study is to shed

light on a phenomenon, "particularization, not generalization" (Stake, 1995, p. 7), and this study, by looking at four schools, attempts to contribute to understanding the phenomenon of parent volunteerism in schools.

Methods of Data Collection and Research Procedure

In qualitative research, "The researcher becomes the main research instrument as he or she observes, asks questions, and interacts with research participants" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Indeed, the researcher became known (or better known) at the schools, due to her presence. Patton (2002, p. 4) elaborates by saying, "Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents. Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge. The data from observations consists of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experiences. Document analysis includes studying excerpts, quotations, or entire passage from organizational, clinical, or program records; memoranda and correspondence; official publications and reports; personal diaries; and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys." This study followed these methods of data collection to observe, inquire and interact; the goal was not to attain "objectivity" but rather, "trustworthiness and authenticity" (Patton, 2002, p. 51).

Once the boundaries, goals, and objectives of this case study were defined, it was clear that the main focus of the research would be on the interview—hearing primarily what the parents themselves had to say about their volunteer activities and about the schools in general and the culture in particular (the latter proving to most to be too difficult to define). In addition, it was anticipated and indeed discovered to be the case, that observations and documents would supply very rich background information on the school culture, and confirm what had been reported by the interviewees.

Cases selected

The four schools chosen for this study were "purposefully selected" (Creswell, 2009, p. 178), following the results of the original pilot study. After the pilot study was

completed and it was decided to proceed further, the researcher approached several principals at various Israeli schools in various cities, which were similar in ideology and student/parent population to the pilot school, hoping to attain authorization to use those schools as case studies. This task was not as easy as anticipated—some principals refused, for various reasons (subsequently, when hearing about refusals, on more than one occasion the researcher was told, "Oh I know him/her—had I known I could have easily gotten you into the school!"), and it was ultimately decided not to pursue other schools for logistical reasons. In Israel, preference was given to elementary schools but in the end, the second Israeli school, a middle/high school, was chosen due to what appeared to be a rich parent involvement culture. The researcher decided that, based on the school's image and history, much could be learned from the setting, even though it was not an elementary school as was the original school.

It became apparent very early on in the data collection, however, that this school did not live up to the expectations of a school with a rich parent involvement culture, but it was decided to continue researching this setting, considering it what Corbin and Strauss (2008) call a "negative case"—"the negative case is a case that does not fit the pattern….Looking for the negative case provides for a fuller exploration of the dimensions of a concept. It adds richness to explanation and points out that life is not exact and that there are always exceptions to points of view" (p. 84). Findings were disappointing, frustrating, not as expected, but a lot could be learned nonetheless.

The two Israeli schools are situated near the researcher's home town (and as mentioned, her children attend or attended the schools). As such she was privy to much background information even before proper data collection began.

Many American schools would have successfully answered to the criteria of "Religious Zionist," like the Israeli schools, but only two schools could ultimately be chosen. It was decided that for an ethnographic case study, two ideologically similar Israeli and American schools would be chosen, hopefully offering rich data. The goal was to arrive at thick descriptions, not to carry out a large compare/contrast quantitative study. The schools that were ultimately chosen were largely chosen due to ease of access, both

geographically and in terms of key personalities. Due to the physical distance, the researcher had to feel confident that she would merit sufficient access to the school's daily activities and succeed in attaining a sufficient number of parents to interview. As Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 145) write: "researchers have to be practical. There are times when a researcher has to…or must collect data during a restricted time period." The researcher knew that she would have limited time at the American schools, which factored heavily in the decision to choose the specific two schools. The schools were K-12, as with many American Jewish schools.

Though it might have been ideal to study four exclusively elementary schools, due to the similar ideologies and rich parent involvement cultures (or image of such), these four schools were chosen even though they varied in terms of student age. It may be interesting to note that several interviewees at both the American and Israeli schools referred to the other school chosen, as a frame of reference—unaware that the other school too was being studied. This confirmed the researcher's hunch that her choice of schools, despite the shortcomings mentioned above, was a wise choice.

For more details regarding the four schools see the section "The Context."

The research population

Merriam (2009, p. 77) explains that, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned." She proceeds to add Patton's (2002) view, as saying that one must choose "information rich" cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry (p. 77). Furthermore, Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe "theoretical sampling" (p. 144) as a method of data collection that is responsive to the data, not necessarily established at the outset of the study. This study proceeded according to these approaches not just in terms of choice of schools but also, interviewees.

At the outset, it was decided that interviews from approximately ten interviewees would be carried out at each of the four schools. The appropriate number of interviews is a

common question when designing a qualitative study and typically the accepted answer is "Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 113). Indeed, in three of the four schools approximately ten interviews took place, and a few city dignitaries were also interviewed, at which point the interviewer felt that she could proceed with analyzing the data with an acceptable amount of confidence; "saturation" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 145) had been reached. But at one school the researcher was hard-pressed to find ten parent interviewees, volunteers or non-volunteers. This was believed to be as strong a component of the data as the interviews themselves. In addition, at that same school one administrator quipped when phoned the day before to confirm the interview, "I can give you ten minutes, fifteen tops." It was decided that this little bit of information supplied more data than an interview would, so that particular interview was not rescheduled.

Kvale devotes sections of his books to the interview subject, mentioning that some subjects may appear to be better than others and how, yet also admitting that the ideal interview subject does not exist (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 165), as well as to the challenges of interviewing subjects across cultures (Kvale, 2007, p. 68). Indeed, the researcher interviewed a wide range of personalities, from the highly educated to the uneducated, from the very rich to the working class, from political dignitaries (indeed Kvale, 2007, p. 70, discusses interviewing "elites" and the resulting power asymmetry) to modest parents, to name just a few types—and learned from all interviews, even the short ones from people who could not find words to elaborate (this, also from highly educated professionals). Mention was made of this in the "Context" section, regarding the particular parents at the particular schools. The researcher was equally surprised at times, in fact, at the insight provided from those least expected. And she learned perhaps most, specifically about the school and parent culture, from the parents who claimed they were not very involved. The manner in which interviews were set up, where the interviewees chose to hold the interview, how many times they had to be rescheduled, who was suggested as further potential interviewees—were as telling, or more, at times, than the actual content of the interviews.

Overall, interviews at the Israeli schools and municipality took place over a period of two years (not including the earlier interviews for the pilot study, two years earlier). The earlier interviewees were chosen largely by virtue of the fact that they belonged to the group of parents who stood out the most, meaning they were the parents who were the most visible, and whom the researcher believed had the most to say—especially at the onset. Hence it was most natural and logical to start with them, as it was the easiest to make the initial contact with them. The principal at one school would not allow the researcher to post in the weekly school newsletter that she was interested in interviewing parents for her research, so the researcher was left to her own resources. Once interviews were scheduled, however, the interviewees easily made themselves available to meet with the researcher. The process started out smoothly (e.g., meetings were held on time, recoding device worked, no interruptions) and provided ample information with which to delve deeper. As interviews progressed, names of other parents were repeatedly mentioned, and the list of parents snowballed. This "snowball sampling" (Merriam, 2009, p. 79) was carried out in parallel to the researcher's attempts to locate other parents via theoretical sampling, who might not have been singled out by those already interviewed. In the second Israeli school, as mentioned above, finding interviewees by any methods was a challenge. What proved to be insightful at that school was finding parents who had wanted to volunteer but were thwarted for various reasons, a phenomenon not stressed at the other schools. The researcher had a very hard time in all schools locating parents who emphatically chose not to volunteer, and indeed this would be a very interesting and important topic of research for the future, but was pleasantly surprised for research purposes, to discover a sub group of parents at that one school who wanted to volunteer but were prevented from doing such (ironically, at the school that needed the most help).

Interviews at the American schools were carried out over a concentrated two week period when the researcher was on site, with the exception of one interview that took place months earlier when an administrator was in Israel and graciously agreed to be interviewed locally. He was in Israel to participate in an alumni event, which the researcher also participated in, as researcher as well as alumnus. In the case of one school, the pool of potential interviewees was chosen by the researcher's "gate keeper,"

the PTA head. Indeed, when interviewees were interviewed, many mentioned the names of the others as parents who should be interviewed (showing that the PTA head's choice was good, and not particularly biased to serve any hidden agendas). At the other school the researcher received a few potential names from an administrator—but was largely left on her own to find and schedule other potential interviewees. While in America, the recording device stopped functioning properly a few times, but after the first such instance the researcher was prepared for this potential glitch so no data was subsequently lost (and best efforts were made to repeat what was said the first time this happened).

The researcher's reception at the various schools is worthy of mention here. At one Israeli school the researcher almost always felt a chilly reception from the principal, though she enjoyed enthusiastic cooperation and transparency from all PTA heads. At the other Israeli school, transparency was claimed, but the researcher was largely dependent on the one dominant PTA head, who it was felt was not fully honest and perhaps even withheld information. The principal at that school seemed very willing to help, and open, but in terms of the parent population, this posed a challenge. Sensing the challenges and sensitivities at that school, the researcher also didn't want to burden the principal too much, preferring, despite the clear disadvantages, to turn to the PTA head when help was needed. At one American school the researcher felt full openness, experienced a very helpful principal, and could fully trust the PTA head who exceeded all expectations in terms of setting up interviews, arranging schedules etc. The warmth that the researcher personally felt could also be felt in the overall school culture. At the other American school the researcher had to use her decades old insider connections in order to access certain people, and best schedule her two week stay. Most correspondences went via one administrator so if anything was delayed, the process stopped. The stiffness that the researcher personally felt could also be felt in the overall school culture.

The following is a very basic description of the interviewees:

Zion School (in addition to ten interviews from pilot study)—two fathers, four mothers, three administrators

Gibor School—two fathers, five mothers, one administrator

Elite School—one father, six mothers, four administrators

Wave School—no fathers, 8 mothers, three administrators

Israel municipality—two influential heads of the department of education and the mayor

Interviews

The researcher agrees with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009, p. 84) assertion that the qualitative research interview is closer to a craft than a method, that it "cannot be reduced to methodological rules." Nonetheless, basic guidelines were followed, based on the existing literature as well as personal experience and conclusions. The researcher discovered that Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009, p. 12 and 102) seven stages of an interview inquiry indeed followed the natural progression of her research: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying, reporting. The first stage, thematizing (defined as "developing a conceptual and theoretical understanding of the phenomena to be investigated in order to establish a base to which new knowledge will be added and integrated" p. 106) was facilitated by the pilot research that had been carried out at one school, a year before this research began.

The interviews very much conformed to Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009, p. 28) twelve aspects of qualitative research interviews, with the researcher making a special effort at qualified (as defined in Kvale, 2007, p. 12) or deliberate naiveté, "The interviewer exhibits openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having readymade categories and schemes of interpretation." Elton Mayo's 1930s method of interviewing (as described in Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 45) inspired the interviews—with special effort expended towards trying to listen and not talk, paying attention to what

the interviewee both wants to say and doesn't want to say, and clarification. Regardless, the researcher tried to adapt herself to the styles of her interviewees and as such, some interviews proved to be more like conversations, some ping-pong questions and answers, and some almost monologues.

Many scholars recommend various types of questions to be most appropriately asked in various interview settings, especially the semi-structured interview which was the method deemed most appropriate for this research setting. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 135) sum up nine types of interview questions and indeed, this research generally followed this pattern: introductory questions (e.g., tell me what parent involvement means to you), follow-up questions (e.g., and how did this differ from the other school?), probing questions (e.g., can you give me an example of that particular activity?), specifying questions (e.g., what was your role?), direct questions (e.g., how did you first get involved and why?), indirect questions (e.g., how do you think the school would look without parent involvement?), structuring questions (e.g., thank you that was interesting and informative; let's return to the current situation at your current school), silence, interpreting questions (e.g., so are you saying that the parents help to build the school culture but have no say in curriculum issues?).

Kvale (2007, p. 80) offers six quality criteria for an interview. These are offered as guidelines, and largely follow logical intuition. Of the forty or so interviews carried out for this research, most succeeded in the following: "the meaning of what is said is interpreted, verified and reported by the time the tape recorder is turned off."

"The semi-structured life-world interview seeks to obtain descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomenon; it will have a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as some suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is openness to changes of sequences and forms of questions in order to follow up the specific answers given and the stories told by the subjects" (Kvale, 2007, p. 51). Whereas questions were prepared at the outset, it was clearly confirmed that "A researcher cannot possibly know all of the questions to ask when beginning a study. It is only through interaction with data that relevant

questions emerge" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 216). This referred to the interview questions as well as research questions.

Creswell (2009, p. 183) recommends that the researcher take notes during interviews. The researcher came to the conclusion that note taking made her as well as her interviewees on the whole more self conscious, so she chose to adapt a more conversation style interview—with notes being jotted down only in very rare circumstances (typically to remind her to ask a question or follow up on an idea). The researcher felt that at times, potential data may have been lost since thoughts were not written down immediately in real time and hence forgotten, but she felt it more important to maintain a natural conversational stream, that might have been more detrimentally harmed had notes been taken.

In time, the researcher learned not to turn off the recorder prematurely, as, indeed, Corbin and Strauss (2008) warn, "participants often offer some of the most interesting data as soon as the tape recorder has been turned off" (p. 28). In such cases, notes were jotted down immediately afterwards, but in later interviews, indeed, the recorder was left running until the interviewees were well out the door.

> *The semi-structured interview*
> The interview style deemed best suited to the needs of this study was the semi-structured interview. As Merriam (2009, p. 90) points out, "This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic." Indeed, this format left leeway to be flexible when the respondents carried the discussion to areas the researcher had not anticipated; it allowed the parents to answer in their own words, according to their own values and life philosophies, unhampered by rigid restrictions of a formal survey/questionnaire yet within the boundaries of the current research parameters; and it provided new areas to explore with later interviewees.

Patton's (2002) six recommended categories for discussion were also followed: experience, opinions and values, feelings, epistemological outlook, how they sense the environment, and basic demographics. Each interview was conducted around an outline of questions, but the overall nature of the interview was semi-structured, and there was a conscious attempt on the researcher's part to maintain "empathic neutrality" (Patton, p. 53). Some Israeli interviews were held at the researcher's home, some at the interviewee's, some at the interviewees' work places, and one at a café; it was quickly learned that interviews at cafés pose their own challenges in terms of quality of recording, so they were strongly discouraged for subsequent settings. The American interviews took place almost exclusively in the two schools, in quiet offices, rooms or work spaces (at times, it was necessary to move in the middle of an interview), with a few being carried out at the volunteer's homes. The American interviewees received small trinkets/souvenirs at the end of the interview, as a token of appreciation for their time and flexibility. Only the Americans were given little gifts since they had to adapt their schedules in order to be able to meet with the researcher on her tight, limited schedule, hence there was a higher level of gratitude. In addition, it was felt that this was the cultural norm. In both countries, the researcher felt that gifts were not expected. Interviews were carried out from as early as 8 AM to as late as 10 PM.

In all cases, after explaining what and why this topic was being explored, and promising confidentiality/anonymity, it was stressed that the interview/discussion would be semi-structured, meaning that there were prepared questions, but that it was much more important to hear what *they* had to say, how and when. In almost all cases, demographic questions were asked first (with sensitivity as to when it might not be appropriate to open up with personal questions, or ask them at all), to get the conversation going, and these questions slowly led into the purpose of the research. At that point it was more often than not, unnecessary to revert to the list of prepared questions as the interviewees were so thorough and open that they tended to cover almost all topics un-prompted. Yet in some cases, less verbal interviewees had to be prompted, at

times leading to "ping pong" interviews. Luckily most were not like this. Most supplied more information than had been anticipated, and none expressed any objection to the recording device or to signing the consent form.

After most (albeit not all, to be sure) interviews it was felt that the topic was discussed rather completely, meaning sufficiently covered—but all interviewees were fully willing to share more, should the need arise. At times, they only opened up towards the end (in one case, upon getting ready to wind down it was discovered that the most important and interesting monologue was yet to come!). All interviewees received an email thanking them, within a few hours.

Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible after the actual interview took place. Some interviews that were carried out in the English language were transcribed word for word by the researcher; some were transcribed word for word by paid assistants. In the latter case, the interviewer subsequently reviewed the entire interview from start to finish, making any necessary corrections. All Hebrew interviews were translated and transcribed directly to the English by the researcher only. Stress was placed on meaning, as best understood by the fully bilingual researcher, not literal word-for-word translation. These transcriptions proved much more time consuming as energy was expended on making sure that the true meaning of what was said, was typed into the English language. In all cases, note was taken of pauses, hesitations, extreme emotional replies, interruptions, distractions, and the like.

Participant observations

No prior defined "observational protocol" as recommended by Creswell (2009, p. 181) was deemed necessary. At each observation (almost all observations were planned ahead of time, though some were spontaneous, with the researcher finding herself at a ripe opportunity), the researcher had to quickly assess the setting and based on this quick analysis, decide whether it would be most appropriate and effective to type in notes on her laptop, pull out her field notebook, or very unobtrusively jot down impressions, to be elaborated upon later, in a small note pad or even cell phone.

Conscious effort was made to distinguish between true observations and researcher analysis—a skill that became easier with time. Indeed, reflection took place during the observation while writing notes, while reviewing the notes immediately afterwards, and while analyzing the findings.

"Observation makes it possible to record behavior as it is happening . . . . [it] is the best technique to use when an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the topic under study" (Merriam, 2009, p. 119). The researcher not only learned from the observations, but by and large, enjoyed them.

Clearly, observations were also a very important component of the research. They varied in nature/definition between "participant as observer" and "observer as participant" (Merriam, 2009, p. 124)—and at times led to researcher discomfort (see section above, Observer/Participant and Insider/Outsider challenges). One of the first observations was as an invited parent, with parents seated with their children, watching a play that included heavy parent participation—though many other parents pulled out their cameras, the researcher, in her double role, felt like a spy. And when the head of the PTA invited the researcher to a general meeting that was held one evening, she did not want to introduce the researcher as such, since the researcher had every right to be sitting in on the meeting, as a parent. The researcher did indeed voice her opinions at that meeting, as a mother. All in all, the impression was that all who were fully cognizant of the multiple roles (the principal, in the last case, for example) were fine with this, as their words and actions (e.g., body language) did not indicate otherwise. In this particular case they may simply have been proud of their accomplishments and more than happy to be seen as good material for a study (this too was inferred from their comments and willingness to share their ideas and thoughts).

It was important to be present at these activities and meetings in order to confirm (or question) what had been heard at the interviews, and also to be exposed to other aspects that may not have been brought up in the one-on-one interview setting. It was also an excellent way to meet other parents and see if the demographics and culture indeed

matched the descriptions that had been heard at the interviews. Some cultural details
were picked up only via observations.

As mentioned, observations took place at the Israeli schools over a period of
approximately two years; close to two dozen scheduled observations took place at each
of the Israeli schools (many more chance observations by virtue of parental presence).
Observations at the American schools took place over a concentrated two week period,
with one observed meeting via Skype. The schools' newsletters, though considered
documents from a research methods perspective, also added indirect observational data
in the form of attached pictures and video clips. All observations were documented by
the researcher herself, firsthand, contributing to "strong data" (Miles & Huberman,
1994, in Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2009, p. 241).

Documents

Documents and artifacts (the latter as defined by LeCompte & Preissle, 1993 in
Merriam, 2009) relating to parent involvement were identified. Some were collected
actively via the researcher and some emailed periodically from the schools, as the
researcher's email was added to the schools' mailing distribution lists. Hundreds of such
documents were collected. As with the observations, they largely served to confirm
what the parents had described and were instrumental in defining the context, cultural
and otherwise. In addition, documents on parent involvement from the Israeli Ministry
of Education and municipality were collected, from guidelines to popular "research"
publications. To be sure, none of these official documents added a rich or deep
understanding of the research grounding the phenomenon of parent involvement *with
these particular parents at these particular schools*—but they did show that the topic is
discussed at the governmental and local grassroots level.

Research procedure: Summary

The specifics of the two years of data collection were detailed above. Patton's (2002, p.
436) explanation, "While earlier stages of fieldwork tend to be generative and emergent,
following wherever the data lead, later stages bring closure by moving toward
confirmatory data collection….Recording and tracking analytical insights that occur

during data collection are part of fieldwork *and* the beginning of qualitative analysis"—proved to be the case in this study too. As more interviews and observations took place, a clearer picture emerged until the researcher felt that it was time to cease the active pursuit of data and progress with a more in-depth analytic process. Due to the continuing constant flow of emails, however, and physical presence at the two Israeli schools as a parent, data continued to be collected all the while. Indeed, it largely served to confirm what had already been seen.

Validity and Reliability

Reflexivity

It is most important to be aware that the researcher's emotions can be, and are, conveyed to participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 31). In addition, "The relationship between researcher and interviewees is influenced by many factors, always affecting the interview" (Weiner-Levy, 2009, p. 735). And, the researcher was keenly aware of potential researcher bias, be it active or passive (see Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2009, p. 236). As such, after each interview and observation the researcher took a few moments to reflect not only on what was said and how it was said—but how she felt about what just transpired and how it might affect the write-up. These thoughts were written down and when necessary, discussed with the advisor. Note was taken to improve subsequent interview and observation scenarios.

Validity and reliability

What is the purpose of this study? Clearly, it would be presumptuous—and wrong—to assume or even suggest that the findings of these very bounded and limited settings can or should be applied to all parents and school settings (external validity). And as with most qualitative studies, it would also be inaccurate to expect the results to be replicated (reliability). However, "While one cannot generalize from single cases or very small samples, one can learn from them—and learn a great deal, often opening up new territory for further research…" (Patton, 2002, p. 46). The burden of proof for transferability is

being left less with this researcher than with whoever would like to make an application elsewhere (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Merriam, 2009).

That said, it is legitimate, and would be expected, to claim that the findings are consistent and have internal validity, meaning, that the results are dependable. This is what makes the research worthwhile. And in order to ensure this, a few methods were carried out: triangulation, audit trail, and member checking.

"Triangulation of data sources, data types or researchers is a primary strategy that can be used and would support the principle in case study research that the phenomenon be viewed and explored from multiple perspectives" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556). This study employed interviews, observations, and documents in order to view the phenomenon of parent involvement from multiple perspectives. Data was collected throughout the process—and several times, observations confirmed what had been said previously at interviews (e.g., specific school activities), then follow-up documents confirmed the observations (e.g., documents sent home, and newsletters to the parents, both before and after the event).

Further, Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2009) describe Halpern's (1983) six classes of audit trail records, and Merriam (2009) describes the importance of an audit trail, which was also kept for the purpose of this study—a log of how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made. These were reviewed several times. The researcher's diary, as well as advisor meetings of course, served as a periodic anchor, to keep the flow of the research on track. And whereas peer debriefing was not a major component of the research, the researcher's advisor regularly served as "'devil's advocate', a person who keeps the researcher 'honest'" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308 in Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2009, p. 244).

Finally, although not a major aspect of the research procedure, throughout the study there were, to be sure, member checks—"the researchers' interpretations of

the data are shared with the participants, and the participants have the opportunity to discuss and clarify the interpretation, and contribute new or additional perspectives on the issue under study" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556). Clarifications were made formally, during the interview, in follow-up phone calls as well as informally, upon chance meetings and follow-up discussions.

But even before the triangulation, audit trail, and member checking, the researcher made sure to carry out what Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2009, p. 239) term "prolonged engagement" and "persistent observation"—conducting the study for a sufficient amount of time in order to hear the "voice," providing scope, and being able to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant observations, providing depth, respectively.

Analysis

Analyzing qualitative data is a craft, it includes the "art of analysis" (Patton, 2002, p. 513), with many proposed, and effective, methods. Corbin and Strauss (2008) very clearly state that there are no rights and wrongs about analysis, there are no set rules or procedures that must be followed, and that one must follow one's instincts and trust oneself in making the right decisions when embarking on this intuitive task (p. 71). Nonetheless, they suggest the following, which was found to be largely helpful and relevant for this particular study: "The first step in any analysis is to read materials from beginning to end....When doing that first reading, analysts should resist the urge to write in the margins, underline, or take notes. The idea behind the first reading is to enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen to what they are telling us" (p. 163). This approach indeed helped to define and conceptualize the context, before delving into the arduous and detailed task of coding and categorizing into major and sub categories.

As with all qualitative research, collection of data and analysis proceeded simultaneously. While analyzing the interviews, the goal was to uncover larger themes, not analyze the intricacies, or textual analysis. Coding helped "consolidating, reducing and interpreting" the data until categories/themes surfaced (Merriam, 2009, p. 175).

This procedure was refined and revised throughout the entire data collecting and analyzing process. As this study is multiple case, analysis was carried out within-case then cross-case, with the attempt to build abstractions across cases, "The inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of your findings" (p. 205). The researcher of course integrated interview analysis with observational analysis and document analysis.

After considering the existing literature and proven methods, as well as methodology used in the pilot study, in the end, the in-depth process of analysis proceeded as follows: The researcher re-read all materials, in several long intensive sittings, in the attempt to get a broad picture of the data and extract major themes (note that all the while, observations were still taking place and small adjustments had to be made, especially with regard to dramatic developments towards the end of the school year at the Israeli high school, discussed in more detail in the Context chapter). With those themes in mind she then revisited the 550 pages of interviews, extracting some 50 pages of quotes most relevant to the themes at hand. Context and individual settings and personalities were taken into consideration when extracting quotes, in order to maintain an accurate context. After another close inspection, these 50 pages were again narrowed down to 11 pages of quotes—quotes that the researcher felt were best for use in the body of this paper. After a closer look at all of the data, it was discovered that the original themes/categories did not in fact best represent the data, so they were reformulated. Three major themes were discovered and developed.

The process of narrowing down 550 single space pages consisting of some 40 interviews, dozens of observations, and hundreds of documents, is a daunting—and frustrating—task, and of course left the researcher with the fear, suspicion, and concern that something was left out, neglected, or forgotten. Hopefully, by revisiting the data so many times, this was minimized.

Ethical Concerns

As this study deals with a school, and a school means children, the issue of ethics on several levels was keenly felt. In fact, when first approached, one Israeli principal was not willing to discuss anything substantial until she received the OK from her supervisor (this, as well as Ministry of Education chief scientist approval, were secured). She did, however, agree without hesitation that the parents could be approached freely. Some parents in fact asked if they had the principal's approval to speak openly. They were told yes. In the case of the American schools, no Ministry of Education chief scientist approval was necessary, as in the case of the Israeli schools. The principal was merely approached and in all cases, agreed enthusiastically to fully participate.

Before each interview the parent was explained about the purpose of the study, that it is being supervised and under the auspices of a university, and that all standards of confidentiality apply. Some parents said, "Oh, so I will be Parent A"—to which it was explained that this is not necessarily the case, that the data would be analyzed and all cases discussed together. This is a small community, with some of the Israeli school parents even having studied at the American schools featured in this research, so the need to maintain discretion was keenly felt.

In each case the interviewees were shown the recording device, which was placed in clear view during the interview, and they were asked for their permission to be recorded. They did not object. In a few cases, towards the end, when conversations evolved into personal discussions about particular teachers, the recording device was turned off, and the discussion was not documented. All interviewees signed official consent forms (even the Americans, even though this was an Israeli Ministry of Education requirement).

One particular ethical issue arose from the research: at first, it was questioned as to whether the researcher can become involved at the school as a parent volunteer herself while she is doing research, but then the question arose as to whether it is ethical for the researcher to not become involved as a parent in one of the schools, knowing now what she does and how much intervention is needed. Is it ethical for the researcher to keep

her child in the school, knowing what she does about the shortcomings at the school (including an abusive teacher)? For further elaboration see above, in the section "Observer/participant and insider/outside challenges." These doubts and others were never satisfactorily resolved—in fact, they worsened at the end of the second year of research, as the principal at one school was fired, parents lobbied the municipality, and the researcher found herself wondering whether she could, or should, now become an active participant, or remain a passive observer—and left open questions, and issues.

Summary

This chapter opened with a description of the researcher and some background leading to this particular research topic. In this light, challenges, ethical and others, were explored. The research paradigm, as well as specific research methods, were also presented, both from their theoretical as well as practical aspects. Finally, after describing how data was collected, the method of data analysis, including mention of reliability/validity and ethical issues, was discussed.

The Context: Four Schools

Four schools were studied for the purpose of this collective case study. Since "Keeping findings in context is a cardinal principle of qualitative research" (Patton, 2002, p. 563) because "Context not only grounds concepts, but also minimizes the chances of distorting meaning and/or misrepresenting intent" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 57), each of these four schools will be described in detail, at the outset, for the reader. Clearly, much more could be said about each of the schools, but the researcher focused on what she felt would be most important for the purposes of this research and understanding the findings. Precise descriptions of the schools were avoided, and some facts were disguised, in order to attempt to maintain discretion. The reason for choosing these four schools can be seen in the methodology section.

In describing each school, six main topics were chosen as vantage points: the school's history, the physical structure of the school, the principal, the population, the parent organization, and the school culture (as gleaned from observations, interviews and school documents). The two Israeli schools will be described first, then the two American schools.

Zion School

The Zion school served as the original pilot study school and it was very quickly designated as a very rich "lab" for the topic under study. As such, active research at this school continued for an additional two years and it merited the longest observation period. Admittedly, it is hard not to see this school, the first one described here, as the "frame of reference" for the other schools.

History

The Zion school is a *mamlachti dati* (public religious) elementary school, grades one through six. It is considered one of the largest elementary school in the city; some claim that it also houses the largest in-school ulpan (center for intensive study of Hebrew) in the country. It is known as a school that specializes in absorbing new immigrants, and many parents choose to move to this particular city, for the school. In addition to the

45

ulpan, it includes three other tracks—special education, a track for gifted children, and the regular school. It fully follows the directives of the Israeli Ministry of Education.

There are roughly 40 children per class, three classes per grade; the school was successful in opening up a fourth class for a few grades, and they have closer to thirty children per class. Boys and girls learn together in mixed classes (this is no longer taken for granted in public religious schools—some separate the classes from a young age) and the atmosphere is *torani* (very traditional, religious). Those who would like extra religious studies, are offered this opportunity (e.g., *kitat rav*, the rabbi's class). Despite the religious nature, girls do sing and dance at school assembly performances—yet there is sensitivity to more stringent religious observance such as specific *kashrut* needs of students and staff. The different classes are designated simply by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4 (not names like at one American school, below). Recently, attempts have been made to initiate joint activities with the nearby public secular school (e.g. similar physical symbols at the two schools, inviting the secular school to holiday related performances at Zion).

As with most schools, there are excellent teachers and less capable teachers. Unfortunately, due to tenure issues, those teachers remain year after year. At least one major school administrative figure is a graduate of the school.

The school is known for rich parent involvement, and financial assistance. There is a weekly emailed newsletter, prepared by the parents, reviewed by the principal, and signed by the parent leadership heads and the principal.

Physical structure
The Zion school is located in an upper middle to upper-upper middle class section of the city, just off of a large highway. It is located on a large lot (by urban standards) surrounded by private residential units and apartment blocks and a public park that is used exclusively by the younger grades of the school during school hours. To reach the school from the main street (there are two less used "back entrances"), children must pass the park and walk about a hundred meters to reach the actual school. On the way

they pass a cement playground/basketball/soccer court and gym. There are two guard stations, one at the entrance to the park off of the main street, and one at the entrance to the actual school yard. The guard, who moves depending on whether the park is "open to the public" or not, makes sure that only authorized people enter the school (e.g., suppliers, teachers, parents with a reason to be at the school such as a meeting), and most importantly, that no children leave without written permission. The park includes tall trees (attesting to the age of the city), low bushes, a few benches, and only a few playground facilities for the children. A small section has rubber tiles, there is a sand box, but the remainder is cement.

Until a year ago, in addition to the large gym that serves the community also and local sports teams, the school included two main buildings. A new third building, for the younger grades, was planned and built in the past few years, with much parent involvement and municipality support. In fact, the parents initiated the project, drew up the plans, and supplied part of the funding. Parents have commented that it looks American. This has enabled the increased expansion of the school in terms of number of students enrolled. There are also a few caravans on the campus that serve various purposes such as the afternoon program (at this school, the "*zaharonit*" is not considered part of the formal Ministry of Education school day but rather, a municipality service). One feels that every centimeter of the campus is utilized; the afternoon program has even taken a small patch of land to grow plants and herbs.

Parents have also contributed to a new computer room, enabled the renovation of the rest rooms, and donated a few smartboards. However, students and parents complain about the cleanliness of the rest rooms (budget for cleaning help is very limited, and attempts to educate the children to maintain order have been partially successful at best—indeed, as the day progresses, the smells emanating from the rest rooms increase), and there have been complaints also that teachers do not know how to properly utilize the expensive smartboards, due to lack of sufficient professional development. The large LCD at the entrance to the school is useful, but not always updated.

The main office where the secretarial staff sit, is situated in the main, original, building, and the principal's office is located here too, set off to the side with a door. The office is always bustling—with children, teachers and visitors. It is, in general, a warm and inviting place—though very busy! The teachers' lounge is the next door over. It includes all basic amenities—mailboxes, fridge, coffee machine, microwave, large rectangular desk in the middle with chairs. There are educational posters and a large whiteboard with up-to-date scheduling announcements posted.

The school library has recently been renovated and is cheery and calm. Bookcases line the perimeter of the room and there are a few tables and chairs plus child-friendly couches in the corners. It is a happy place, and parents are encouraged to donate books—and are thanked. The library is named after a fallen alumnus of the school and there is a memorial corner. There are two other memorial corners, elsewhere in the school, with religious source books, named after teachers who tragically passed away.

The entire school is lighted with fluorescent lights, though all classrooms have large windows; each class has an a/c unit, though they do not always work; and all doors have safety accordions to prevent fingers from being injured. Though not a daily occurrence, theft is at times an issue, and children are instructed not to bring valuables to the school, or leave them unattended.

Principal

The current principal is in her seventh year; the vice principal has held her position for about 25 years. Both are religious women and speak with reverence about the other. There is a long, heated, history regarding the previous "three failed" school principals at this school but it would appear by wide ranging consent that the current principal is the most successful and least controversial (which does not mean, of course, that she is beyond criticism). She benefits from very strong municipal support, in addition to a strong, supportive parent lobby.

The principal has been described as tough, with clear borders, but loving. From her first year at the school, she has recruited the parents to help, and seems to have a knack for

directing parent skills to constructive avenues. She is at every parent meeting, and while she knows how to delegate responsibility, it is clear that she is "running the show." Scheduling the principal for an interview, however, was not easy, and the researcher did not feel any warmth at the interview, nor had she ever felt any particular warmth in the past, though many parents had mentioned this characteristic prominently.

The principal's office is small but tidy. It includes a CCTV of the school grounds just above her desk, a sliding screen for communication with the secretaries, a table with room for about six chairs, and little chairs for children to feel at home should they find themselves in her office. There are a few personal artifacts on her desk, but not many. Only a select few have her direct email address and phone number; access to the principal is via the secretaries.

Population

It has been said that this school has the largest population of *olim* (new immigrants), old and new, in terms of percentage, in the country. In the playground one hears English and Hebrew equally, with a fair amount of French and a smattering of Spanish. Russian is almost never heard. Many families are of high socio economic status, many of middle class, yet there are also students who benefit from much needed financial aid—done in a very confidential, covert manner. There are students who are bussed in from neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic status, and they seem, at least to the observer, to be well accepted and adjusted. Comments have been made, however, that afternoon playdates tend not to cross the socio-economic, geographic (other side of town) or country of origin borders, reflecting some amount of segregation, though the school is aware of the gaps and attempts to build bridges. When the school talks of "community," they are generally referring to the school community, not the community at large.

Students come from religious backgrounds of all different types—Ashkenazi, Sephardic, Yemenite, Ethiopian, etc.—with a few secular students. One sees all types of *kippot* (skullcaps) at the school, crocheted, black, satin, big and small. All boys must wear *kippot* and *tzitzit* (fringed garment worn by religious boys and men) and all girls must wear skirts to the knee. There is a uniform school shirt with the school logo ironed

on. Children can choose from a variety of colors, but the logo must be there. Unlike the children, not all parents arrive modestly dressed to the school, and this is an issue of contention for the more observant.

Parents by and large belong to one of the many neighborhood synagogues, and that also tends to forms groups, since children see their friends at synagogue and by nature, bond with them. The religious population in the city invites each other over for Shabbat meals, further strengthening bonds but again, alienating those who do not live in the immediate vicinity or those who do not come from the same cultural comfort zone. Many involved parents belong to one particular synagogue, a synagogue known for its rich volunteer activity. To be sure, there is "cross pollination," but likes tend to be attracted to likes—and the school, as mentioned above, does try to break this natural inclination.

There are approximately 700 students and 70 teachers at the school.

Parent organization

Zion has a very rich, strong, influential, involved, effective, dedicated parent organization. In the past, it had been headed by men and women alike; this year three women head the *hanhagat horim* (parent leadership), as it is called at this school. The principal works very closely with the heads of the *hanhagat horim*, and all have only good words to say about each other. When the principal first came to the school, however, she made it very clear at the outset that there are two areas where the parents are not invited (which does not mean that they cannot voice their opinions—there is just no formal committee dealing with these issues): curriculum and criticism. Apparently, those two issues had been areas of contention in the past, and had disrupted the smooth operation of the school.

In general, the heads of the *hanhagat horim* have had a two year tenure, but this is by no means written in any by-laws; some have been one year and some longer. In general, after two years most simply burn out.

The parent body is very powerful. They succeeded, not only in building a new school building, but in reducing class size for one entering first grade. This is a major accomplishment for a school which is limited by Ministry of Education regulations, but somehow this goal was achieved, thanks to a strong lobby and principal support. Not all classes enjoy this status however.

How is the parent leadership selected? At the first class meeting/orientation of the year, the class teacher will, typically at the end of the orientation, ask who wants to be class parent. Some parents avert their eyes or duck under the table, hoping not to be "volunteered"—yet others jump at the opportunity. In years past, parents tended to dread this responsibility, yet, as this research shows, times are changing. These class representatives then attend, at some later date some evening, a school-wide *hanhagat horim* meeting. At this meeting (self selection usually begins here, with less than full attendance), the past heads and principal speak, committee heads are chosen, and a tentative work plan is set, with future meetings set and activities planned. This past year, the committee approach was actually changed to "activity based"—instead of committees planning activities, the activities were decided at the outset with parents chosen to work directly with the assigned teachers, and asked to recruit other parents to the specific activities. Class parents therefore, now only work directly with the class teacher for class-specific needs while other parents can volunteer for school activities, per their interests. If a parent has a new idea, they are encouraged to voice their opinion and come forward—many activities have come about this way. Additionally, the school has learned how to ask parents for help, in a very effective manner. At the end of the first meeting, the new heads of the *hanhagat horim* are voted in by the other parents present. Very often, the incumbent recommends someone, or adds someone.

As expected, there is a strong consistent core of involved parents, and each year new parents join and/or leave. The general impression is that Israelis tend to volunteer less than Americans, though the researcher has not necessarily come to that conclusion. There are both men and women on the *hanhagat horim*.

Culture

Zion is a very rich school, with a thirty year history. Older parents with children who attended the school over seven years ago may remember a physically smaller, less transparent/communicative school, with poor lighting, dreary flooring and a contentious parent leadership. They will also remember several principals; the current principal has been building the school for over six years. The first noteworthy change upon entry of the new, current principal, was regarding the physical appearance of the school. She understood the importance of a "happy environment" and made sure that the lighting was immediately improved, walls and doors painted, and floors made brighter. When one enters one is indeed greeted by these improvements (granted, most would not remember the dreary halls of years past) as well as creative artwork done by the children, posters reflecting the religious Zionist values of the school—and the high energy level of the 700 students. As mentioned above, all children must wear the school logo on their t-shirts and/or sweatshirt, and dress is modest, yet modern. Children may not wear nailpolish.

The current school is clearly built upon its history, most prominently the story of "the fire" which pervades the school culture. Over a dozen years ago, a child was accidentally set ablaze during a school event. This proved to be traumatic not only for those present, but for all to come. Apparently, since then it was decided that no match is to be lit at any school events. Indeed, this past year for a Hanuka play, the researcher noticed that a small candle had indeed been lit, and asked a third grader if she had ever seen that before. The third grader proceeded to tell the researcher about the past tragedy that they had discussed in class, and that yes, the school had consciously made an exception this time. Other tragedies that have become part of the school culture are, as mentioned above, the fallen soldier and young teachers who tragically passed away.

Zion is a school though, that does not dwell on the past but builds for the future. It is constantly developing. The curriculum includes not only Ministry of Education-dictated class work but enrichment opportunities such as a talent show, science fair, and seasonal plays initiated by the parent body (e.g. Hanuka play). These have become part of the

school curriculum. The school also holds many competitions—student body elections, talent show, reading competitions, and the like.

A lot of energy has been and continues to be expended on building trust among the entire population of the school—teachers, student, parents—utilizing not only the talented parent body but also the professional support staff such as the school psychologist and specialists. The principal likes to refer to the school as a family education center (*beit hinuch k'mishpacha*) and often refers to the school as The Zion Family. Indeed, at almost any time of the day one will see parents at the school—and not only to take home a sick child or scold a misbehaving one!

School ceremonies include yearly siddur (prayer book) and *chumash* (bible) plays to commemorate the children receiving these books for the first time, graduation parties and *lag b'omer* holiday class get-togethers—to name only a few. These activities have increased over the years and imbibe the values of the dual curriculum at the school, secular as well a religious. Fun (e.g., cotton candy) and religious commitment (e.g., religious musical entertainment) go hand-in-hand at the school. At the end of all ceremonies, both the *Hatikva* (Israeli national anthem) and *Ani Maamin* (popular religious song espousing Maimonides's belief in one God) are sung. Prayers follow the Ashkenazi tradition, as the majority of the school's population is Ashkenazi.

Gibor School

Whereas qualitative research is not primarily directed toward comparing and contrasting, it is very hard not to view Gibor, located in the same city as Zion, above, with the same spectacles. Indeed, at times this is justified: "Although the use of control groups is commonly associated with quantitative research, there are occasions where comparisons in qualitative research are justified…multisite studies can be extremely enlightening. Qualitative findings also can be compared with the extant literature, as well as with the researcher's experience and knowledge base." (Onwuebgbuzie & Leech, 2006). The two schools are totally different, however; the researcher worked to view this as a separate case, and at this point the reader is encouraged to do the same.

History

Gibor is a public religious middle/high school, grades seven through twelve, with approximately 300 students. The second year of the research corresponded with the first year that the school extends all the way to the twelfth, as it is only in its sixth year. They graduated their first class. Some grades have two classes, and some have three, depending on that year's enrollment; anticipated enrollment for the year following the research period is very low—only one class. Class size is small, relative to other Israeli public schools, 20-30 children per class.

The history of the school precedes the actual school's establishment, by many years. Located in a city known for its high socio economic and largely modern religious population, parents "fought" for the establishment of a public religious high school for boys for many years. For years there has existed a public religious high school for girls and two private religious high schools for boys—but the boys' schools are selective, meaning, for years, many boys were left with no religious high school to attend. Interestingly, several of the parents who fought for the establishment of this school decided in the end NOT to send their boys to Gibor once it was established.

Gibor has serious image problems. From the outset, the school had obstacles. First of all, it does not have a building of its own (more below). But more problematic is the mindset of the population that prefers to choose selective schools over public education, causing the most serious marketing issue. Whereas the school has very strong support from the municipality that was the instrumental body in the eventual establishment of the school, the researcher was informed by parents that other political parties are still eager, and trying, to see it fail. With this backdrop, the school has however made impressive strides—it offers a wide range of subjects for the Bagrut matriculation exams, and has seen success in this area. Many parents with whom one speaks, speak very favorably of the school. But it is struggling.

The school works very closely with the municipality, is included in all public high school activities, is now offering academic incentives to attract excellent students, and most agree the school "has potential"—but they have not yet made their mark, and they need help. As one parent mentioned, the fact that the school has no prior history can

work to its advantage, yet that does not seem, to date, to be the case. The general feeling among the parents and students is downtrodden, as if they are the "leftovers" who couldn't get in to any other school. Gibor is not yet considered a school of choice.

Physical structure

As mentioned above, the school does not have its own campus yet. Since its founding, it has been located in a small old public municipality campus of basic buildings. A second story of small classrooms has been added to the buildings, to make room for the incoming seventh graders. It was constructed quickly, and meant to be temporary. Flaws, and ensuing student injuries, have resulted. Gibor is located in a neighborhood known for its low socioeconomic population, sandwiched in between low residential houses and public institutions. The local synagogue serves the upper grades during school hours. A plot of land has, however, been slotted for the construction of the new school, scheduled to begin within half a year of the decision. The parent body was very involved in this decision and indeed insisted that the school be constructed in a central location (although the school will be physically smaller), and not on the outskirts of the city, as planned. Most parent involvement energies are being expended on the new school building as well as the marketing.

The current school buildings, where the research took place, are crowded. The parent body tried unsuccessfully to annex the nearby playground and tennis court so the students would at least have some space during recess. The basketball court was even dismantled recently when it was discovered to be dangerous. But the children seem resilient and resourceful—the researcher saw them inventing creative ball games during recess despite the limitations.

Due to parent pressure on the municipality and the fact that the school is physically isolated from any sources of food for the children (indeed, pizza deliveries at all hours had become a problem), a school cafeteria ("kiosk") was established, open only during class breaks. It is rumored that the owner "subsidizes" the food for children who cannot pay. Many children, however, bring food from home.

When one approaches the school one is greeted by the guard, who always inquires about the purpose of the visit, before allowing entry. He is always pleasant. The first impression upon entering is that the school is in general kept clean and tidy. One senses that it is old and "makeshift." There are three small artificial turf areas for the boys to play ball, and several ping pong tables scattered about the campus (classroom tables have been used for this too). Upon entering the main building, one sees a hanging LCD TV with important announcements, a corner in memory of the fallen soldier for whom the school is named, a microwave for the students, secretaries' offices, principal's office, and teacher lounge. Hallways are plastered with religious Zionist posters and student artwork. It is evident that thought was put into these decorations, which are static—they do not change. Walls are white, yellow, or light green; doors are brown. Outdoor sinks have cups for ritual hand washing and all classrooms have air conditioners.

The principal's office is relatively large, with a big white scheduling board. The door is usually open.

The teacher's lounge has the basics—cubbyholes, fridge, sink, microwave, large conference table with chairs around the perimeter. The plastic tablecloth is clean. Parent meetings take place here.

Theft is a problem, as it is in all high schools in this city. Cell phones remain in pockets and wallets, in the classroom lockers.

Principal

The school has had two principals, with the current one in his third year (he was in his second and third years of tenure for the research period). The parents had a strong say in who would be appointed to this position by the municipality, both the head principal and more recently, the new middle school principal. There seem to be mixed feelings about the previous principal, but he showed up and was warmly welcomed at a school event.

The principal's door is almost always open, physically and figuratively, unless he is in the middle of a meeting and even then students and staff feel comfortable interrupting; he gives out his telephone number freely. He is a warm man, and does not appear forceful. One gets the impression that he keeps a watchful eye from the side, intervening only when necessary. It would appear that the students and staff respect him. One also gets the impression, however, that he is hard pressed when it comes to the parent body. The parent-school-principal dynamic does not seem healthy, or smooth, though all parties have expressed only the best intentions. In one particular instance, the principal was asked his opinion, perhaps even put on the spot, about the ideal location for the school—knowing that the municipality disagreed with the parents. He is caught in between his employer (the municipality) and the parents (the people, and children, he has to deal with on a daily basis). The principal was more than willing to allow the researcher to research the school and has always been helpful as necessary.

Unfortunately, just as the second year of research came to a close, on the last day of school, the researcher received an email message from the head of the PTA that he had resigned his position, and that the assistant principal would also be leaving. Apparently, this same declaration was made at a heated municipality meeting a week earlier, in the presence of high ranking municipality figureheads and about a dozen parents; no one at that time tried to convince him to change his mind. The students and teachers had circulated a petition afterwards, supporting him. A week later over two dozen parents convened one evening at a parent's home, in the presence of the head of the education department in the municipality, in an attempt to reinstate the principal (the teachers, who were also invited, were strictly forbidden by the supervisor from attending). After a very heated two and a half hour meeting it was clear that the decision was final; the municipality left no option for the principal to change his mind as he was being fired. This decision leaves the school with much uncertainty regarding the coming school year.

Population

Since Gibor is a public school, the student body of roughly 300 is heterogeneous, though most students do come from religious backgrounds, albeit of varying degrees. Prayers are Sephardic, reflecting the predominant student body. One sees all types of *kippot*, including, as one parent termed, "Kippa Kotel"—a makeshift *kippa* placed on the head only when asked. The boys are required to don *kippot* and are strongly encouraged to wear *tzitzit*.

Mostly Hebrew is heard in the courtyard, with a smattering of French and some English. There are a few Ethiopians, who live in the neighborhood. Some twenty percent of the students are old and new *olim*, and the school offers ulpan to those who need it.

As expected with a middle/high school, parents are not generally seen on campus, they are not a daily presence. Furthermore, the general impression is that the parent body is more scattered than in the lower grades in terms of affiliation to local synagogues, most probably because the school is a "feeder" school from all neighborhoods in the city as well as some nearby cities (as opposed to the community nature of elementary schools).

There is a mix of male and female teachers, with most male teachers being moderate religious Zionist, though anecdotes have hinted that some border on radical religious. The school rabbi is a tall and thin young and modern, warm personality with whom the children can identify.

Parent organization

The researcher chose this particular school because she was led to believe based on years of personal experience that the school had a rich parent involvement culture. For example, it is an accepted practice that sixth graders and their parents are invited to the homes of current students at various schools, for an informational evening, what is called a "*chug bayit*"—Gibor, like the other schools, held these evenings. Parents spoke openly and enthusiastically about the school. However, it became apparent that these were largely isolated activities, that rich parent involvement was a misconception, that the heavy involvement was more related to the establishment of the school and not the

current dynamic—but the decision was made to proceed as planned, hoping to learn from this phenomenon too.

When interviewed, the principal mentioned that he was warned about the parents in the city, that they "butt in too much." Despite this, he accepted the position of principal at Gibor, cooperated fully with the research, and claims to experience an acceptable balance of parent involvement. He reported that there is a "dominant core group" of parent volunteers, and indeed, to be sure, there is a parent organization at the school, the *vaad horim* (parent committee). What was discovered however, is that the committee is largely based on the activities of one parent, who was very instrumental in the establishment of the school. She has children in the school.

The *vaad horim* meets periodically. As with most schools, they meet at the beginning of the year but subsequent attendance wanes with time. Each class has a representative or two, mostly mothers but there are also a few fathers. The involved fathers all wear *kippot*; most of the women wear pants (considered a declaration of moderate religious observance—the more traditional schools frown upon this, expecting skirts only) and only a few cover their hair (the more religious). There seems to be no fixed protocol for these meetings, which occur in the evenings—some include all parent representatives, some not, some include the principal, some not, some invite the principal for part of the meeting. The entire agenda rarely gets covered. There is no set schedule of meetings. In general, the parent body focuses its attention on fixing problems (e.g., marketing of the school), not building up new strengths (e.g., supplementary school activities). The body language and tone of voice experienced at these meetings is often threatening, confrontational, negative, and angry.

Although active parent involvement is "disappointing," many parents feel very strongly about the school—especially those who were instrumental in its establishment. The predominant feeling is one of wanting to help, but not knowing what to do. A common complaint is that no one wants to head the *vaad horim*, except for the one active mother mentioned above, who also expresses frustration at the situation. About one month before the end of the second school year of research she sent an email to all PTA

members asking to be replaced; no one offered. A few parents have expressed the desire to help out, but felt that their attempts to offer were not accepted. Some have given up trying. Sentiments have been expressed that the PTA does not properly represent the true parent body. The researcher indeed sensed selective reporting to the parents, as her husband was officially on the PTA and did not always receive the same correspondences that she did, as a researcher. Political blocks were sensed. Interestingly enough, at the parent meeting mentioned above, many more parents than had come to the PTA meetings, showed up, claiming that they had never been informed of the school's developments.

It was very hard to find suitable parents to interview for the research and more often than not, scheduled interviews were changed and/or cancelled.

Culture
When asked, interviewees were hard pressed to define Gibor's school culture, with one parent explaining, "The school doesn't have a culture yet" and another saying, "The school has no culture, it is in survival mentality." Indeed, less than six years old, the school has not had a chance to fully cultivate rituals, symbols, traditions and beliefs— but nonetheless one can get an idea of "how things are done around here" (a common definition of culture).

To be sure, the anxiety surrounding the uncertainty of the school's path and its questionable future permeate the atmosphere, though the staff clearly work their hardest at building a feeling of security and camaraderie. The school bell, while not a Jewish song, is cheery (it was once "Singing in the Rain" and has been recently changed to another secular song). At the most basic level, the students and staff spend their day in a temporary edifice, not knowing what their school will ultimately look like. There is a culture of temporary and of "question marks" (a father's definition).

Cushioning the school's essence, however, serving as a constant reminder as to the ultimate goal of the school and the education it offers, is the soldier after whom the school is named. His picture greets everyone who enters the school. The school stresses

Jewish and Zionist values, and heroism. Their yearly assembly, attended by municipal dignitaries, espouses these values, and the school has "adopted" his battalion.

That said, and despite the skepticism expressed by interviewed staff and parents, the researcher was nonetheless able to clearly identify some indicators that a culture is indeed developing at the school, albeit slowly. For example, transparency and communication is very important at the teacher-parent-student level and there are several checks and balances for making sure that all parties are informed of grades, tests, behavior, and activities (note that at the parent meeting above, complaints regarding transparency were voiced, particularly with regard to the finances of the school and PTA funds). Updates are often mass emailed by the school secretary and several attempts have been made to establish a weekly newsletter, with limited success. Community service is a value, with the school offering the revered "*Teudat Bagrut Hevratit*" (social matriculation certificate) and with students encouraged to volunteer at the local old age home and school for children with disabilities. In addition, the value of Jewish learning, above and beyond the school requirements, is encouraged, with parent-child learning evenings. Other social activities are formally scheduled into the school year for each grade, with a teacher assigned specifically to this programming task. Maintaining discipline is, however, clearly a challenge with this population.

All students are expected to come to school in the school uniform (a shirt with the school logo and shorts to the knee or pants) and at the end of assemblies, two songs are sung: the *Hatikva* (Israeli national anthem) and *Ani Maamin* (popular religious song espousing Maimonides's belief in one God). The school has three flagpoles: the school flag, the city flag and the Israeli flag.

This school of the four studied, could be considered a "negative case," (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 84); a "deviant case" (Lareau, 2003, p. 259); or an "outlier," and indeed provided "extremely valuable insights to the underlying phenomena" (Onweugbuzie & Leech, 2007, p. 242).

Elite School

Just as it is tempting to compare the two Israeli schools chosen for this research, it is equally if not more tempting to compare the two American schools with the two Israeli schools. One must understand that the basic and underlying premise and structures are so different, that making such a comparison would be unfair to this multiple case study. In order to best glean conclusions, the contexts of each school must be understood according to its own individual culture in general and parent involvement culture in particular.

It should be taken into consideration, however, that Israeli schools are governed by the Israeli Ministry of Education; these private American schools are primarily governed by local boards of education, which include parents (Wertheimer, 2007, p. 213 discusses the isolated nature of the various Jewish day schools). The research focuses on the aspects of parent involvement NOT included in this governance aspect of the school. In addition, the America schools are "K-12," meaning, unlike the Israeli school system that has a clear demarcation between kindergartens, elementary schools, middle and high schools, the two American schools researched included all grades. The research focused primarily on grades 1-8, with some overlap to K and HS, due to the natural continuum.

History

Elite has a very long history, being one of the oldest Jewish day schools on the east coast of America, and well into the second half of its first century. It is a well respected institution and other schools are often compared to it. As an administrator described, "Elite is a coeducational nursery through 12th grade, essentially a prep school, that emphasizes first and foremost the idea of *menschlichkeit* (values), academic rigor and excellence, a love for *yahadut* (Judaism) and for the State and people of Israel." Many parents try very hard to admit their children into the kindergarten, so that they will be assured a spot in the school. It is very competitive and is known for its high academic standards. Some courses are tracked. The school just began a Hebrew immersion program, where Judaic studies are taught in Hebrew. Classes are named after Israeli themes (e.g. class 2 *degel*, class 2 *sefer*). The school stresses academically both

religious and secular studies, with the curriculum being left up largely to the educators at the school.

The school offers adult education classes and its culture of parent involvement has markedly increased in the past ten years or so, since the placement of a younger administrator at the helm. A lot of energy is expended on setting tight limits regarding the place of the parent in the school, and the school prides itself on its policy of transparency. A new system of automated phone calls to update parents has recently been instituted. In addition, the school has a strong alumni organization that considerably increased in its activity throughout the two years of research. The school is linked to a very large, influential, established, local synagogue, that serves to a large extent as the school community (most especially in the lower grades—upper grade students come from many communities, some as far as an hour's drive away, or more). The school considers itself elite and parents typically feel that since they pay a lot, they deserve to get a lot. The word entitlement can be heard in the daily vocabulary.

Physical structure

Due to its large size, the school occupies very prominently three buildings all in very close proximity to each other (for the purposes of this section, details of all buildings will be described together, unless mentioned otherwise). It is clearly a presence in the community. A recent flood necessitated the immediate relocation of one of the buildings—a major group effort made possible thanks to school-initiated, vastly increased, previously atypical, very specific, parent involvement. The school prides itself on the transparency in reporting to the parent body, at all stages of this crisis, and they believe that because of this they were able to continue with the school year and all activities, despite the sudden challenge. This crisis will clearly go down in the annals of the school's history.

One senses the grandeur of the school. It is clean, neat and well lit with fluorescent lighting. Copious uniformed custodial support staff is felt everywhere (they even put away the siddurim after prayers, and neatly fold, stack, then store the prayer shawls). When a visitor enters the school building, s/he must present him/herself to the guard,

who inspects the visitor's ID card, writes down the visitor's details including reason for and person visiting, then the visitor must wear a prominent personalized "visitor" sticker throughout the entire visit. The various guards at the different buildings have slightly different procedures, with one guard interrogating the researcher each time she arrived, to the other guard smiling from the second visit on, and offering a cup of coffee. At the latter building, the guard greeted each and every child arriving at school in the morning, by name.

The schools have LCD TV screens to display announcements and set the school environment (e.g., Israel pictures around Israel Independence Day). Walls are decorated in a very neat an orderly way, with the children's artwork. These displays are theme related, on both religious and secular topics. In many rooms donor recognition dedication plaques can be seen, in addition to the large wall of benefactor names near the entrance of the school. Each classroom has a USA and Israeli flag. The walls and floors are colorful and bright, with each level a different pastel theme. All signs in the school are in English, Hebrew, and Braille. Classrooms include a clock and an emergency phone near the door, with emergency instructions clearly displayed. Labs are very well equipped, and the school also has an impressive library, computer labs, nurse's station, guidance offices, and the like. Recess takes place on a rubberized patio, accessible via staircase or elevator. Washing stations outside of the restrooms include several ritual washing cups, for the ease of use of the students. All is neat and orderly.

Principal

The two principals included in this study sit in large, impressive, carpeted offices with windows, within the main administrative offices of the school. Both were very cooperative and generously shared their thoughts with the researcher about PI at the school, a value they hold in high regard (though one principal made a special point of mentioning that she refuses to discuss menus with the parent reps. More about the food culture later.) They clearly made their presence felt throughout the school day—the elementary grade principal said he greets parents/children in the morning about 65% of the time (the head of activities, 95% of the time), and both could be seen at various intervals throughout the day actively observing what was going on in the school. Their

energy levels are high. In the morning, the principal says over the PA system, the American "Pledge of Allegiance" as well as the Prayer for the State of Israel. Both principals have been at the school for several years.

Population

The school has a reputation for being elitist. Some of the students are third generation at the school, and some teachers as well as administrators were themselves students at the school. Some parents commented that it is hard to break into this "clique." Though the school is very conscious of the various socio-economic backgrounds of the families, and some 30% are indeed reported to be at the school on scholarships, the school clearly has a reputation of including a very rich, influential parent body (as well as donor base). Most families have at least three children, some many more. Discussion regarding the issue of gifts for teachers occupies a large percentage of parent-administration meetings, for this reason.

Some children arrive by themselves (particularly in the upper grades, of course), some take a bus, some are brought by their parents, and some are escorted by nannies. Conscious of the busy early morning presence of all of these personalities, the elementary school principal made a point of mentioning that he "structured drop-off and pick-up to enable the parents to have face-time with the teachers." Indeed it is a busy time of day, but once the bell rings, everyone finds their place! Comments were made however, that some parents do not respect the school's religious nature, and appear in immodest dress, despite the sign requesting fathers to wear a *kippa* and women to dress appropriately. The children also have a basic dress code, which is enforced.

Cognizant of the varying religious backgrounds of the students and their families, the school offers an Ashkenazi as well as a smaller Sepharadi *minyan* (prayer groups)—both have very liberal *mehitzot* (religiously dictated separation for men and women). They struggle however with the issue of *kashrut* observance at the home, for example during play dates and birthday parties. As a policy, the school will not and does not interfere with the families' observance, but they do strongly encourage mutual respect when children get together.

Students in the upper grades come from nineteen "feeder schools," making the school largely a commuter school. As such, as mentioned above, the concept of "community" is different in the upper grades. The issue of status in terms of who was accepted to the selective school for high school and who simply proceeded from the lower grades, was not explored, though it can be assumed that a line of demarcation does exist. The elementary school offers "push in pull out" for children with special needs.

The school boasts some few hundred alumni currently living in Israel. As a Zionist school, this is a source of pride. Some past staff members and administrators have also made aliya throughout the years. The school encourages its 12th graders to take a "gap year" in Israel before proceeding to college. It is assumed that all students will go to college.

The lower grades have roughly twenty children in each class, with three to four classes per grade. The staff talk to the children like adults, respectfully. Many teachers are Israeli, and Hebrew can be heard as well as seen all over the school.

The researcher found the parent body on a whole to be extremely intelligent, literate, verbal, and open. They were very willing to be interviewed (perhaps due to the novelty of meeting an Israeli researcher who came specially to meet them) and were able not only to discuss their experiences and feelings about PI, but were by and large able to discuss the school culture—a concept that was in general harder for the Israeli parents to grasp. Staff however, on more than one occasion mentioned the phenomenon of "helicopter" parenting (e.g. the food offered at the school is currently a very hot topic and widely discussed). Many parents are very much a part of the school life, and it has been suggested that they feel a sense of entitlement since they pay so much tuition.

Parent organization
The parent organization is a very large and structured, clearly defined body at the school, led by a long time, effective and respected administrator who is not the school principal. Any issues or ideas that parents may have are brought up with this

administrator, not the principal. There are two basic branches—that which serves as per grade parent representation, and the group whose main purpose is fundraising via programming. One senses a bit of a status gap between the two groups, with the fundraising branch being the more "prestigious" one. The heads of these two branches, as well as the grade reps, are chosen by the administration every two years. A comment was made by an administrator that some parents are "over obsessed in their kids lives," and as such, they would prefer that they not head the committees. In addition, parents are emphatically not allowed to be school vendors or sport coaches, due to the concern that it may lead to favoritism. There have been instances where parent chaperone privileges had to be raffled off, due to such high demand to accompany the class on field trips. "Safety patrol" is considered a parent responsibility and all parents are expected to participate as needed. Most, if not all involved, are mothers.

As would be expected, most (but not all) PI takes place in the lower grades, to grade 6. The representatives meet on a regular basis about six times a year, in the mornings. Some parents arrive in corporate dress, others in gym clothes—depending on where they will be going next. Some meetings open with a *dvar torah* (short pre-prepared discussion on the weekly Torah reading). All discussion is nothing less than civil and respectful, carried out in a most professional manner, whatever the topic. Coffee (regular, decaf, no fat milk, lo fat milk, soy milk, etc.) and muffins (a culinary tradition at the school), prepared and carted in by the custodial staff, are standard fare at these meetings. The principal mentioned very astutely that the school culture is the domain of the parents, not the curriculum. The meetings discuss activities that the parents lead, for the purpose of fundraising (e.g., book fair, annual dinner) and class issues (e.g., hygiene, social issues).

Culture

Elite calls itself the "Elite family"—and not just because of the large percentage of second and third generation students. Many have said, "When you cut yourself you bleed Elite." Another catch-phrase is "at Elite we go the extra mile," and "Elite is best"; perhaps the reputation for elitism is, at least in part, true. One parent interviewed however, refuted this reputation for being "rich, snooty, obnoxious, cold." That said,

certain values are ingrained in the very essence of the school, and appear in almost all correspondences and ceremonies: academic excellence, activism, love for Israel, Jewish identity, *chesed* (goodness/kindness), advocacy for social justice.

Fundraising for the school is part of the school culture, with goals posters proudly placed at the entrance to the school. In addition to the already high tuition, parents are expected to donate additional funds too, and activities are planned to facilitate this: book fair, annual dinner, commercial purchase partnerships, to name a few.

The school has a tight set of rules: if a student arrives even a minute late, s/he must get a "late pass"; children wear basic uniforms, with a "lax day" once a month; the Hebrew immersion culture is enforced, even at assemblies; proper behavior is strictly enforced, always; decorum is felt, especially at assemblies; religious rituals such as the blessing after eating is said in unison, for all to join in.

Cleanliness is a value. The issue of illness and germs comes up time and again in grade representation meetings, there are alcohol rub dispensers all over the school, restrooms are spotless and equipped with soap and paper towels. One rarely sees any food being eaten outside of the lunchroom and classrooms, with the exception of the teacher's proverbial cup of coffee. This is a cultural norm in the area.

One senses a very closed, calm, orderly, happy, protective environment. No child is ever seen alone. One phenomenon that stands out very clearly to the outside observer, is that the children are constantly being told what to do, how to do it, where to do it, how to behave, etc. One senses that the children are not left with much room for personal expression. They know what is expected of them. Then again, the decorum at the school is admirable.

Food also seems to occupy a large slice of the collective energies, and plays a prominent role in the school culture. On more than one occasion, by more than one person, the researcher was warmly offered coffee and even lunch at the school. As mentioned above, the proverbial cup of coffee is a given to be seen in the hands of visiting parents

and teachers alike. For special days, the staff even gets ice coffee. And the options reflect the local cultural acceptance of individual preferences and needs: regular coffee, decaf, various fat percentages for the milk, soy milk. With the coffee, as mentioned above, come the proverbial muffins that everyone has associated with the school. Many a parent meeting revolves around the nutritional breakdown, and kids' personal preferences of course, of the breakfasts and lunches offered to the children (for allergy and *kashrut* reasons, no food is allowed in to the school)—one major argument broke out when the "new" generation wanted to do away with a traditional, albeit unhealthy, Friday lunch—something unthinkable to the second and third generation parents! However, as mentioned above, one principal put her foot down at one point and refused to discuss menus anymore. Low sugar cereal and whole wheat bread yes, sushi no. Teachers have well-organized lunchroom duty, and disposable dishes are the norm.

The school environment and culture is one of appreciation, following the generations old mantra *menschlichkeit*. And the administration is very cognizant of the fact that parents especially need and deserve to be thanked. A conscious effort is spent on manners, proper behavior and speech.

Several ceremonies and rituals have become a prominent part of the school culture: *oneg* Shabbat (school wide assembly to welcome in the Sabbath, just before dismissal on Fridays), which has evolved into a "standing room only" event; 8th grade graduation trip to Israel; Israel Independence Day Hebrew song school-wide competition; basketball team; certain Hebrew songs that are sung at every assembly, to name but a few. After every assembly the school anthem is sung, in English as well as in Hebrew.

The researcher was accepted very warmly at the school, she sensed full transparency, and that nothing was being hidden from her—yet she was not particularly assisted in setting up interviews and felt lost at times (in the other American school the head of the PTA effectively took on a secretarial position for the researcher, setting up meetings and making scheduled Excel sheets). The lack of space was clearly felt, as interview locations had to be improvised, with more or less success depending on the time of day. The researcher often found her "office space" to be the school entrance lobby.

The school publishes a few online newsletters, geared towards various populations at the school, to keep everyone abreast of what is the latest news at the school—alumni, parents, general distribution. There does not seem to be any regular schedule for these newsletters. These newsletters generally announce what is ahead to come, and clearly serve to promote the school.

Wave School

As mentioned above, it is very hard not to compare the various schools, as it is only natural to see similarities and differences in the two American schools and the two Israeli schools vis-à-vis the two American schools. Attempt is being made to describe each individually, but some comparisons are inevitable.

History

Wave is a modern Orthodox fully co-ed school with a very solid long standing reputation of nearly half a century; some say it competes with Elite. In fact, on more than one occasion, the researcher was asked by someone at Wave, what is the name of the other school being researched. Not wanting to divulge these details, the inquirer said, "Oh, it must be Elite, you don't have to answer."

Wave is located in a high socio economic neighborhood and is a "feeder school" for a lot of neighboring communities. The area is mainly rural and most families are house owners (though there are some apartment complexes in the area). Tuition includes a mandatory built-in scholarship fund. There is no one synagogue affiliated with the school, though the local Conservative as well as Orthodox synagogues share good relationships with the school. Many parents try to get their children into the school for kindergarten so that they will not have to compete to get in for the higher grades. A high school opened up in the past decade, and it is considered highly competitive. The high school (grades 9-12) is located next door and the school is viewed as a K-12 continuum, with some activities done jointly (e.g., school fundraising auction).

The school experienced a twofold population growth since the 1980s, and the crowding is felt, despite a physical building expansion. The school includes some 900 students. It is very Zionist in philosophy, though the language of instruction is English. The school boasts that it looks at the "whole child," and that the school is a community. One does indeed sense the warmth, from the first moment.

Physical structure

Wave is located in a beautiful floral rural setting, overlooking a calm natural backdrop. It is most conducive to religious spirituality, physically set away from other distractions. One gets a feel for the school not only immediately upon entering the school, but even before, while approaching the campus. There is a large parking lot of some 70 spots, at the entrance to the school. The school is what could best be described as "*heimish*" (homey)—kids are typically lying on the floor doing homework or playing with friends, balls are bouncing, jackets are strewn. The school benefits from abundant natural lighting, though there are electric lights too of course.

Upon entering the school one sees a small security counter. After introducing oneself and the reason for the visit, and signing oneself in, the guard gives the visitor a reusable generic visitor badge to wear around the neck. Security seems casual and lax, though the counter is always properly manned. No one is viewed suspiciously, and the environment is welcoming.

In the center of the school entrance is a synagogue, with the girls seated in the outer perimeter slightly higher than the boys. No matter where one sits, one has perfect visibility.

The school is unique in that it has not only traditional classrooms and doors but also, open learning areas. The business office and the principal's office are only separated by glass partitions. There is a constant hum of learning, not dissimilar from what one would hear in a yeshiva. There are about 25 students in each class, and the classes are designated by numbers. There are three to four classes per grade. Students' artwork is displayed, often clumsily, on whatever walls there are, mobile dividers, easels, and even

clotheslines. Disorder, disarray and mess are the norm. But learning goes on, that is apparent.

The school has a gym where many activities take place, a lunchroom (which smelled less than appealing to this researcher), beautiful carpeted library in the center of the school that can be seen from almost any spot in the school, and a large artificial turf playground outside surrounding three sides of the school. Restrooms are old and less than clean, but included ritual hand washing cups. The school is built on many levels, so the open staircase runs through the center of the school. One of the school rituals is sliding down the banister!

Every morning the principal greets the children over the PA system with some humor and a blessing. The school bell is a calming, gentle ding dong.

The entrance to the school has a large LCD TV screen for announcements or to show promotional school movies (the security chief, an Israeli, is also in charge of the audiovisual department)—but old bulky TVs and pull down screens for projectors can also be found in use at the school. The gym has an Israeli as well as American flag. Due to the special architecture of the school, a handicapped elevator was installed, but non-handicapped students can at times be seen "sneaking" a ride.

Principal

The principal was himself a student at the school. He has been in this position for close to ten years. It appears that he is well liked, by the children as well as the staff and parents. Apparently, "everything goes through the principal," in the words of a parent, "he has that kind of global sense of the school." The sentiment is that he does have the last word, but the impression was not made that this is due to micromanaging but rather, being able to run the ship, and run it well. He himself reported that the hierarchy is intentionally not very clear, and indeed one feels that yes, he is at the helm, but that he is open to partners. The researcher was warmly accepted with open arms and on more than one occasion, offered his office for interviews (since there is scarcely a quiet corner at the school).

Population

"This is a big second generation school," said one parent, with another parent offering, "we want to give back to the school." Indeed, one sees many family names repetitively. The school is very heterogeneous, with some families more observant than others. On any given morning one will see mothers with head coverings and skirts (very religious), others with modest dress, and some immodestly dressed, which is considered a problem by some. Most fathers will be seen with *kippot*, but an uncovered head is not unheard of. The majority come from Ashkenazi backgrounds but there are Sephardim too (though all pray together). The daily excitement begins with the famous yellow school buses doing the drop-off ritual (it is almost like a choreographed dance), as well as various carpools and a few au pairs walking with their charges. Some parents will escort their kids to their classrooms, then proceed to their own classrooms, as they are teachers at the school, a well known phenomenon at the school (and other Jewish schools, see Pomson, p. 103, in Wertheimer, 2007) and part of the culture per one of the parents. Teachers get free tuition for their children.

Wave is very much of a self-supporting community, with parent friendships made via the volunteering culture at the school, and parents being directly incorporated in the classroom via programs such as Learning to Look. Teachers are "pampered" with gourmet coffee, albeit with lowfat milk only.

Custodial support staff are located primarily in the kitchen area and are not a particularly strong presence in the school, though they are clearly there, and working. It would appear that at this school, there is a bit more of a "DIY" culture, yet not as strong as in the Israeli schools, which have a real shortage of support manpower. The support staff at Wave wear sweatshirts with some sort of Wave logo.

The parents interviewed were on the whole very literate and verbal, highly educated, and had no problems expressing themselves and their thoughts. By and large they were able to verbalize a description of the strong school culture. As mentioned above, the researcher was warmly accepted at the school and benefited from much assistance in

setting up interviews and finding conducive locations to hold the interviews. Most families at the school have at least three children.

Parent organization

The work of the parent organization at this school is highly valued. As the principal mentioned, "they provide a lot of services." Indeed, part of the activities they can offer are covered by a budget which comes from mandatory dues that every family must pay. But they also run fundraisers and bring in a considerable amount of income to the school (e.g., cookbook, auction, dinner). The head of the parent organization is chosen by the administration for two years, and there are committees that work on the various school activities. In addition, there are grade representatives for dealing with grade-relevant issues. Concerted effort is expended at trying to get high school parents more involved. Most parent volunteers are also active in their local synagogues. Several parents mentioned that the school also has an "education committee," but that is a totally different category of involvement, and not directly included in this research. There seems to be a shroud of secrecy regarding who is involved in this board, that most parents are not privy to this information.

Culture

As with the other American school, the expression "I bleed Wave. I grew up here" was heard on more than one occasion. Wave would appear to truly be a way of life for some, if not many, families. On the flip side, however, new arrivals sometimes feel alienated since they do not come with a rich understanding of "how things are done around here." And comments have been made that there is a sentiment of "in crowd and out crowd." But conscious effort is made to absorb the new families, at least by some. School allegiance is strongly felt, even after graduation.

As mentioned above, the overarching culture at the school is one of disorder, warmth, and even chaos. It is known that kids at times arrive late for school, assemblies aren't on time, and that emails often need to be sent twice due to disorganization. The school food culture is also less than ideal, with junk food seen in abundance during recess, sugared cereals offered for breakfast, and unappealing lunches offered to the children. But no

one seems to be complaining about that, or the dirty bathrooms. As one parent said, "It's a fun place. Kids are happy here."—and that seems to be the prevalent culture.

Other cultural rituals include, as mentioned above, school bus arrival/dismissal, the principal's morning greeting, and sliding down the banisters—as well as school-wide prayers said in unison on important occasions (truly remarkable and inspirational, and not only to the first time observer), a basic dress code, excitement over national ball games, blessings at meals sung in unison, the integration of girls in prayer wherever permissible, and donut Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations. And clearly, just the school's open architecture is very telling for the school's overall culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999).

A lot goes on all at once at this school but the cacophony, the uber-hum, is rather one of a joy of learning. One senses the love of children.

The school sends out a long, colorful newsletter every week, full of pictures and quotes of the children and how they spent their past week. To be sure, upcoming events are also included in this publication, it is informative too, but the focus seems to be the children and their experiences. This is also an ideal forum to announce the upcoming adult education offerings, and to offer congratulations and condolences (the school has a very strong built-in support system for families in crisis).

Transparency is a value at the school, and the parents as well as administration were more than eager to share their thoughts with the researcher—some could not even be scheduled. When the researcher walked around the school observing, some teachers and parents politely inquired, but in a very open and non-paranoid manner. However, no one offered lunch!

Summary

A lot can be learned from all four schools researched. But before analyzing the data, it is most crucial to understand the context, to put the findings in perspective. An old and established school is very different from a new and growing one; a parent body with a strong financial footing is very different from one struggling to make ends meet, or one

with a mixed population; a school where the parents' presence is welcomed and de rigueur is totally different from one where they are viewed as unwelcome and perhaps even threatening; and a school whose overall culture is based on open transparency and a welcoming acceptance is different than one based on suspicion and lack of trust—to name just a few differences. Of interest to this study is where the parent volunteer fits in to this setting: do they form the school culture, or alternatively, does the school culture influence their volunteering activities and the culture of parent volunteerism at the school, and if so, how and why? Is there a successful model of PI, why is it successful and what does it look like?

Findings

Four schools were studied over the span of approximately two years for the purpose of this research (see Context for detailed description of each school). Approximately ten semi-structured interviews were carried out with personalities at each of the four schools; close to two dozen scheduled observations took place at each of the Israeli schools (and additional spontaneous observations by virtue of chance presence as a parent) with two concentrated weeks at each of the American schools devoted to intensive observations; and hundreds of documents were collected and studied, from all schools throughout this period (see Methodology for elaboration).

The following is a description of the findings, as seen through the eyes and experiences of the researcher who focused her attention on learning about the particular school cultures, parent volunteerism at those schools, and the interplay between the two. Each school will not be presented individually but rather, related themes that were discovered throughout the two years, will be discussed. It may be interesting to note that on several occasions, interviewees from both the American and Israeli schools referred to the other local school as a frame of reference, incognizant of the fact that the other school was indeed also the subject of this study. Where relevant to the understanding, a brief description of the interviewee and/or scenario will be offered.

Three major themes will be presented and discussed, along with related sub-themes:

1.   Who is the parent volunteer
2.   Structural dynamics: power, politics, and partnership
3.   Parents as agents of socialization, informal education, and culture

Who Is the Parent Volunteer

In discussing theories of volunteering, Wilson (2000) states "many volunteers clearly have a stake in their volunteer work: Parents are more likely to join the PTA when their children enter school" (p.222).

This research initially stemmed from a curiosity surrounding the concept and phenomenon of volunteerism, specifically, parent volunteerism in the school. As more and more interviews were held at the four schools, the researcher sensed that the focus of the study was evolving equally into an exploration into school culture as influenced by parent volunteerism, not merely parent volunteerism as the focus of the study, with school culture merely featuring as the backdrop. Nonetheless, as the parent volunteer was the main player in this study, the Findings section will open with an analytic description of who tends to volunteer (e.g., Gee, 2011, proposes that parents with many children in the school tend to become more involved), why (e.g., Cohen & Cohen, 1997, mention the possibility that parents use PI as a springboard for political activity), and how (e.g., Lareau's, 2003, "concerted cultivation"). The next section will delve deeper into the actual dynamics of the school volunteering experience.

The volunteering personality

It is important to reiterate at the outset of this discussion on who volunteers, that interviews were held with volunteers; no interviews were held with parents who did not consider themselves part of the volunteering community at the school. Some parents were more involved than others, but no parents who made a conscious decision for whatever reason not to volunteer, were interviewed. This remains an important untapped population that should be studied in the future.

One parent from the elementary level Zion School in Israel offered an analysis of parents from various countries of origin, vis-à-vis involvement in the school. This parent, Leah, a highly educated professional, had herself been on the board of a large American school until she moved to Israel only a few years ago, and was now applying her knowledge and experience in a new setting. She herself articulated a major reason the researcher decided to study schools in both Israel and the USA:

> …first of all, you have Israeli parents going, "Get out of the school, let the teachers do their job, what are you doing in the school?"… the French approach to education is totally different than what we came from and what Israelis come from. They see the school as discipliner …. So you have very frustrated parents

who have emigrated here from France saying "My kids have lost control. I moved to Israel and my kids are lunatics." You have these North Americans coming and saying – which I often think about how amazing it is to actually use it as almost a microcosm of Israeli society, you know, a school like Zion. You have these North Americans coming to say, "We are going to come and improve things. We are going to come and improve things," except they are totally disassociated from their Israeli counterparts who are struggling for everyday food, you know, life.

The researcher had in fact found an American predominance in her pilot study at Zion and hence decided to look into some of their communities of origin, by researching two American schools. She discovered over the span of the two years of research that plenty of Israelis were also involved, despite the strong American reputation, which was even shared by the vice principal Idit at Zion: "I think I told you that the Anglo Saxons are very very strong with this…. I can point out that Americans give a lot….. So it led to motivation for the Israelis to be more involved." Perhaps this tradition dates back to what Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out in his 1835 book, *Democracy in America*, that Americans join voluntary associations (as discussed in Henslin, 2001, p. 183-5). The Israeli mayor of the city where that school is located, narrowed down the population not only to nationality, but to religious devotion: "Religious parents, their involvement in education comes from their need to be sure that their kids will keep tradition like them. As a result, many times we see a stronger involvement….easier to recruit them."

In profiling the parent volunteer, however, other factors of course arose.

Many shared the following thought, in one way or another, as articulated by Liron, a volunteer at the Wave School in America: "I think people need to feel involved…. I don't think people realize what a great feeling it is when you do volunteer work that you're doing something just for the good." Or, as Ayala, the head of the PTA at the large American Elite School stated, stressing the importance of involvement (not necessarily the good feeling it imparts): "I feel that community involvement is very important…. I've always been involved in community." Ayala, in fact, believes so

strongly in voluntarism that she sees everyone as a potential volunteer: "In life there are two types of people. There are people who volunteer and there are people who don't, and the people who don't it's not necessarily because they don't want to but because they just don't know how…" Others, however, believe that some parents at American schools with high tuition fees, feel no need to volunteer at the school, citing feelings of entitlement (more on this later): "There's a lot of entitlement that kind of pervades you know, parent personalities and attitudes."

The issue of time was also an underlying theme for many interviewed, regardless of the "feel good" result of volunteering or the communal necessity—some linked it to prioritization, and some to the simple calculation that not everyone is free (emotionally or otherwise) to devote themselves to these activities. One, Adi, an American doctor with a child at the Wave School, considers volunteering an "economic luxury":

> there's a difference if you work or don't work. ….because so many events
> happen during school hours….So I sometimes wonder [how does this]
> volunteering work, does it acknowledge sort of the parent body that a lot of
> women like, work and do we give them opportunities to like really volunteer?
> …. And in a certain way I feel like volunteering and being involved is a luxury,
> it's an economic luxury

Others interviewed also brought up the time/work factor, some of the opinion that working parents volunteer more, and some of the opposite opinion:

> I have the privilege of staying home so I have much more time for this kind of
> stuff [volunteering] than he [husband] does.

> You want something done, ask a busy person.

> I always go to my friends who are busy, because I think they're capable and
> qualified, and not all of my friends get involved because it is a thankless
> job….And I think a lot of people think education is an entitlement. So I pay my
> tuition, that should entitle me to everything.

I think there are a lot of very well educated parents, parents who could have had careers and maybe did have careers, and feel that they're not working full time or they're not working, and this is a good way to spend their time.

I don't feel the plight of the working mother is respected at all [in terms of volunteer opportunities offered at the school].

…so I see two types of volunteers. I think there are the people who like volunteering is sort of like what their job is, and they spend a ton of time in the school doing stuff. And they do sort of like the unglamorous work… And then I think there are parental volunteers who again like work full time and try to find like a project to sort of be involved with doesn't require having to be here during school hours. You know, that they can do after hours, and I think those people tend to not do the dirty work of volunteering…. so that's how I sort of see like two sets of volunteers.

And some identified that if one is overburdened with other more basic life needs, they cannot be emotionally or physically free to volunteer, agreeing in effect, with Maslow's (1954) theory of the hierarchy of needs:

They [the volunteering parents] are not burdened by the issue of day to day bread earning. They don't even think about it. They are free for other things. (This comment made by a vice principal at the Israeli Zion School which has a large population of privileged families.)

…my guess is that if you're really struggling to make ends meet, you don't have time for the school…. What I suspect is you know, there is a time aspect to this you know, if you're spending all your energy trying to make ends meet, you're not going to have spare energy. (Comment by a father at Zion, linking time and energy.)

81

I was never involved….we were struggling and I was never in the right set of mind…. But I always kept in mind that that's what I want to do, I want to be in a position that I want to give my time. (This parent, also from Zion, indeed became involved once his financial situation cleared up.)

For some, such as Avital, an American parent at the Wave School, volunteering is at the root of their identities: "… that's how my husband and I met, we met both volunteering." And many, such as Naomi from the Elite School, who, along with her husband, has a long history at this American school, shared the thought that they wish this value to be passed on to their children: "it's actually a perfect marriage. Between what I teach them at school and what I teach them at home."

Finally, several interviewees grouped various explanations to start to explain the phenomenon of parent involvement. A vice principal at the Wave School offered the following general parent profile: "Somebody who doesn't work out of the home, and therefore has extra time to help. Somebody who's just a very passionate [said with passion] person or has strong organizational skills. And somebody also perhaps who has a strong spiritual propensity, and he would therefore be in very close contact with the school, trying to generate ideas….I think that [positive relationships at the school] promotes more parent involvement because they're happy to be in the building… volunteer mean different things from different people… 'I want to volunteer for a project' and that means two very different things to two people which is just real life."

A parent at the Wave School offered three basic reasons why she personally volunteers: "one reason is because I want to know where my kids are. Meaning, that I want to know what their experience is [Machter, 2001, proposes this as one of many motivations leading to PI]. I want to understand it…. I want to, umm, understand who's, who are the people that are shaping their lives…. The other reason is, umm, for my own need to look at myself in the mirror, to feel that I'm doing something good… And then, just something social. You know, I definitely made some good friends that way….It's fun."

And a very involved PTA head at the Wave School summarized nicely how she sees the population of parent volunteers:

> Sometimes you have people who have had somebody finish the high school and gets to the last child and says oh my god this is my last opportunity to be involved in my child's school and I've never been involved and I want to be involved. Sometimes you have first time parents in early childhood who say I don't know anybody and this is how I want to meet people. Some people do it for social reasons, some people do it out of curiosity of how actually does the school work…. But I know that some people just want to be part of the community, and this is their community. I mean their kids socialize with other kids in the class, they want to know who the parents are. They want to see the parents, they want to see who the kids are, you know? And sometimes it's not enough just to see them at pick up or drop off, you know you wanna, I think that a lot of people do it, and this they have verbalized, because they sometimes feel that they can get a better in with the administration like oh you know.

Many of these ideas will in fact be discussed below in more detail.

ROI, Return on Investment

The section above on the volunteering personality discussed issues such as the need to feel and be involved, and the time factor/challenge. This section will try to show that some parents become involved in their children's school in order to achieve personal goals for themselves and/or their children—what is known in the business world as Return on Investment (ROI). Wilson (2000, p. 215) sees nothing wrong with this, and still considers the activity volunteering, "Volunteering means any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization. This definition does not preclude volunteers from benefiting from their work."

Marshall, Hamrick and Goodman (2009, p. 42) call this parent the "super parent": "'super parents', a small group of parents who volunteer actively at school, whose efforts are appreciated by teachers, and who expect that their children will therefore get

more attention from teachers and a better education." Some parents at the schools
researched for this study spoke very openly and unabashedly about this.

> Idan, a European parent at the Israeli Zion School who is married to an
> American, has a child who was struggling a bit at school: "I started being
> involved mainly because I thought maybe if I'm on the class committee, I can be
> more in touch with the teacher, so then I can help my son in that way…. so I feel
> that I give but I feel also that I get a lot back from it…. so I do feel that it's give
> and give, it's a win win scenario." (He also cited another father who was not
> interviewed for this study, who shared this sentiment.)

> Tal, an Israeli from that same school, refers to her youngest child: "It was
> important for the sake of my girl to be involved in the class. For her it lifted
> her…lifted her socially."

> Ruth, the long time PTA head at the Israeli middle/high Gibor School: "I wanted
> to change things from within educationally and I saw there was no one to talk
> to."

> Hila, of The Wave School, when asked why do you volunteer: "Some of it's
> altruistic, and some of it's not… it gives back to me in a lot of ways… …. it's
> not scary for me to go to an administrator….. volunteering is another way of
> partnering …. I feel, like this is the time in my life to do it."

Levana from the Gibor School, in contrast to Idan of the Zion School, above, offered a
unique perspective, actually pointing out that parents of children who present challenges
to the school administration may in fact choose not to be involved, to keep a low
profile. She overcame this fear: "I think that being involved in the school definitely
helps with the way they treat your child…You will also find that 99.9% of the parents
on any committee of the schools have kids with no problems. They are there in a, in a
position of power that they don't have anything to worry about except what party
should we do and what fundraiser should we do. Parents with kids with problems are

embarrassed to volunteer and are embarrassed to be on the committee and they feel that they don't have the right to say anything." Saginer (2002, p. 92) carries this thought one step further, proposing that some of these parents may be afraid that their involvement will call attention to other problems at home, potentially hurting their child, and may even revive negative feelings the parent had about their schooling. Alternatively, Levana suggests, these parents may not be involved since they are too bogged down with their personal problems: "…well my loyalty is really first to my child, and second to the school. So maybe it's happening at Gibor like that, because most of the parents are more worried on an individual basis for their kids and so they don't have the time or energy to worry about the school."

Others see potential political or personal gain:

> Elisheva of Elite, an academic in the field of education herself, who offered in her interview some insightful analyses: "there are people who use it as a way to help them develop more leadership skill, or get that leadership skill…."

> Tikva, a personality at the Israeli municipality, with years of experience dealing with parents and schools: "There are parents who see participation in the PTA as something political. They participate because they want their voice heard… Then there are parents who have kids with special needs who want to be in a place of policy making. They are worried about their own children. There are parents who have it in their blood. "

Some want to keep a close eye on what is going on at the school (Domina, 2005, p. 235), from a perspective other than occasional exposure as parent to one of hundreds of children in the school:

> Yigal, an American, skeptical father from Zion: "And the fun part about this job has been the way we reveal the fundamental brokenness of the way school has operated."

Irit, an Israeli parent at Gibor whose actual participation waned as her child neared graduation age: "Why I do this? Because I appreciate, really, when I started it was for egotistical reasons to overlook and make sure everything is OK."

David, father (rare phenomenon in the USA) at Elite: "…. you can eyeball the kids."

Liron from Wave: "But if you're volunteering, you meet more people in the administration let's say…. [...] then I feel like I'm more able to ever bring something up that's needed."

Many parents wanted to be good role models for their children:

Tal from Zion: "it is important to show the kids that parents are interested and that it is important to them."

Ayala from Elite: "I think that I'm basically modeling for my kids."

Adi from Wave: "I think it's a good model for my kids…. *osek betzarchei tzibur be-emuna* [be dedicated to public service] that we just, that you help out your community."

Eliana from Wave: "…in my mind that is the prime reason to be involved in school, because your child sees that you are engaged in his or her life."

And some are just grateful, and feel the need to give back in order to show their gratitude (this sentiment was shared by scholarship recipients at the American schools—contrast this to the feeling of entitlement also felt at these schools, with the resultant lack of PI, but by parents paying huge tuition sums):

> Elisheva from Elite: "part of my involvement is connected to the feeling of gratitude… I get paid by the Jewish community so I also want to contribute as well of my own."

In summary, some parents expressed personal gain, ROI, by being involved—special attention given to their children, the chance to work on personal leadership skills, a way to keep an eye on what is going on at the school and in the child's life, role modeling for the child, and even as a way to pay back a feeling of debt to the community. The next section will discuss the importance of recruiting parents, in the case of parents who were not so strongly motivated by personal incentives as those discussed above.

Importance of recruiting

As mentioned above, not all parents actively step forward to volunteer at the school—but many will gladly become involved if simply approached. In fact, the concept of recruiting parents to volunteer was a recurring theme at all schools researched. There were basically four main ideas: willingness to become involved if approached, challenges of approaching others to become involved, feeling of frustration at not being approached, and the need to approach others.

Many, many parents expressed the willingness, even eagerness, to become involved if only asked: "If they ask me to do something I never say no." Some parents said in a tongue and cheek manner that they do not know how to say no when approached ("Well, that first time, though I got volunteered, and I didn't realize that you could say 'no'" and "people on the committees are people who haven't learned to say no yet.") — yet others were more than happy to be approached and asked. Some, who clearly did not know how to take initiative, waited to be asked and then jumped at the task or tasks at hand. It should be noted, however, that the tendency—whether currently true or not—to "glue your eyes to the floor" at the first class meeting in September when class parents are chosen in the Israeli schools, was mentioned more than once. The researcher, based on personal experience, doubts the current accuracy of these statements at the particular school studied.

Several women expressed the feeling that approaching others to volunteer is uncomfortable, especially for women. One career woman, Ariella, from Wave, expressed the following: "I think it's hard for women to ask people to do things, and especially you know, this school is a lot of high power, professionals, a lot of women with graduate degrees, there's this like I've got to do it myself, I've got to prove it, I've got to carry it." Another mother at that school added, "People don't feel comfortable soliciting, which is part of the reason [there aren't as many volunteers as they need]." Recruiting other parents is crucial, however, and will be discussed again later.

Some parents even expressed the desire to be recruited, since they sincerely wanted to help out but didn't know how. They offered the administration and PTA head their assistance, and waited to be called on a specific task, but were left bitter and frustrated when never approached. As Levana at Gibor said, speaking not only for herself, "The people that do want to be involved don't feel like anything is being asked of them." The school with that parent—who had been involved but is frustrated at not being called upon for more tasks despite her expressed willingness—desperately needs additional assistance (this sentiment was expressed several times by staff and parents alike at PTA meetings), parents are waiting to be called upon, and in the end all remain dry—the parents (who want to help), the school (that needs the extra hands) and the administration (who could use the help if only they knew how and when to properly solicit those willing parents).

So the need to recruit is clearly felt as necessary, even if the methods are not always successful. As Atara the principal at Zion noted, "The parents very much help to recruit other parents" and American parents at both American schools stressed, "It's part of the succession plan. You gotta recruit people" and "the best chance you have of getting the new people is getting new people to want to, like to reach out to them."

Once parents are successfully recruited, how long will they continue volunteering? This will be explored next.

Sustainability

Opinions regarding sustainability—how long parents typically volunteer—vary
depending on whom you ask (e.g., principal, parent, municipality officials). The general
consensus however at all schools was that in terms of leadership (head of PTA), two
years is the ideal, for example:

> I think two years is enough because you just need fresh blood and it's time to
> move on.

> We work in 2 year terms in order to recycle and get more people involved and
> we don't want volunteerism that can also lend itself to monopolies or [laughs] it
> can lend itself to hierarchies that are not good.

> We need new blood.

Whereas it was not uncommon to meet parents who were involved for years (and give
the impression that they will continue to be involved), the contrary phenomenon was
also found—burn out: "But you burn out really fast as a parent volunteer. Because it's a
constant battle." A father from Zion even expressed sarcasm: "it's a two-year term or
sentence, depending on how you think of it."

And very often, the same people put in the lion's share of involvement, year after year:

> I think that what ends up happening is that a few people end up doing a shitload
> of work.

> …you very often find the same people helping over and over again.

> [An American administrator at Elite was asked, Do you see the same parents?]
> Of course!

It should be noted that at the American schools there is turnover at least at the leadership level, every two years. At Zion, the leadership tends to change hands every two to three years but the core volunteer population has remained rather static over the past few years (with new parents, to be sure). At Gibor on the other hand, the head of the PTA has effectively not changed in six years, though she has tried to step down several times, and every year there is a challenge to get new parents involved—the administration is not reaching out, and the parents are not volunteering in significant numbers.

The teacher-parent

One interesting phenomenon encountered at all four schools is that of the teacher-parent: parent volunteers who are also teachers/educators, if not at that school then at other educational institutions. These interviewees came to the researcher via their role as involved parent, not teacher/educator. As one mother from Gibor, Tamar, said, "I come from the system" (she is a teacher, albeit not at that school) and as a principal at Elite suggested, "there's a lot to be said for an educator being the head of a [PTA]."

The role of teacher-parent also has significance in the case of programs that are led by adults who are parents, on the one hand, but who are professional teachers on the other. From a negative perspective, this led to unclear boundary issues, yet from a positive perspective, programs of this nature often started as supplementary activities but then became part of the school curriculum. On one occasion when the researcher asked the principal if teacher X, who is also a parent at the school (many Jewish schools in America have parents on staff, since, among other reasons, it often offers free tuition benefits for the children), is involved in any manner other than teaching, the principal replied that she spends enough time at the school—why would she want more? An Israeli teacher parent confirmed this sentiment, stating that she only chose to be involved at her son's school (which was not the school where she teaches) because the situation was so dire, and she felt she could no longer remain silent and uninvolved—but that she had never before been involved as a parent at her children's schools.

Additional reasons for volunteering (or not)

Other than the factors mentioned above, various other reasons for volunteering arose in interviews, many of which found no consensus but are worthy of mention here.

Parent

Some parents mentioned that their own parents were involved in volunteering activities (at the school, synagogue, etc.) when they were growing up, some not. Adi from Wave, "I grew up with parents who were very, very involved with my day school and I think that's that I grew up with that model" as opposed to Irit from Gibor, "I don't remember parents being on a vaad (committee). There wasn't the same awareness as now. Really not."

PI differs by grade

Almost all agree that PI varies by grade. Noam, a principal from Elite, phrased it nicely, "Most days I'm downstairs greeting them and smiling. It's a feature also of elementary school. Middle school, the parents don't expect to see the administration, high school the parents don't even expect to see the building. (laughs)"

Immigrants

Whereas the impression among both parents and staff alike at Zion was that the Anglo Saxon parents are disproportionately involved at the school (Liat of Zion: "Most who volunteer are either Americans or new immigrants who want to see what is happening with their kids."), the countering opinion (that of the mayor only, who may not have been able to see the broad picture, with limited day-to-day exposure at the school and PTA meetings and activities) was that they are too busy acclimating to be involved in anything else (see comment about Maslow's hierarchy, above).

Americans versus Israelis

As mentioned above, the impression at one of the Israeli schools is that the Americans are more involved than the Israelis, "Most are Americans. ….Israelis

don't last." Some parents and staff at the American schools had lived in Israel for a while but there did not seem to be any America/Israeli predominance in terms of volunteerism at these schools, at least not among those interviewed.

Number and age of children in the school

Some interviewed believed that younger parents tend to get involved, perhaps looking for a social outlet, some felt that the older parents get involved, as a "last chance"—some felt volunteerism wanes after second grade, some after the fourth. In short, there was no clear consensus in this regard. One administrator at Elite believes that it is "Most of the time the parents with multiple children in the school."

No consensus

Some agreed that there is simply no "typical profile" of the parent volunteer:

Talya, an Israeli municipality figurehead: [who volunteers? It is] "a norm of the city, culture of the city. I don't see any particular population."

Yasmin from Elite: "It's just, it's more about personality than I think the statistics or the profile of who is."

Fathers and PI

The issue of fathers was an interesting one in terms of the differences in the USA and Israel. In Israel it was not uncommon at all to see fathers involved—they were PTA heads, committee heads, and class parents. In the USA the researcher found one involved father to interview, and this was clearly an anomaly. When the issue was approached, the mothers interviewed found other, creative, ways to describe fathers' PI, such as in coaching teams and donating money (the issue of whether donating is considered volunteering is also discussed briefly, below).

Aviva from Wave: "Truth is that the men volunteer too. They volunteer in other ways. They volunteer as, umm, coaches"

Liat from Zion, referring to her husband for instance: "I don't know if you mean active volunteerism, this is passive volunteerism, that's what I call it. Same thing but he gets them money, he doesn't physically go and help."

Shumow and Miller (2001) discuss this, stating that fathers may be involved in their children's school, but perhaps behind the scene.

Giving back to the school

The issue of volunteering out of a sense of gratitude was mentioned briefly above but it deserves another mention here as a blatant reason for volunteering. A parent who feels good about the school—out of thanks for tuition assistance, due to long term family history at the school (these are more typical in the case of American schools), or whatever—will be more likely to give back, in the form of PI.

Eliana from Wave: "I think that [being on scholarship] leads to a feeling of gratitude to the school also."

Liron from Wave: "a lot of people grew up and went to [this school] and their kids are now here and they probably feel a big sense of appreciation and want to give back to the school."

Charity as a form of voluntarism

Some interviewees blurred the definitions of charity and voluntarism, leading the researcher to wonder if indeed the two concepts are linked. In fact, Freeman (1997) mentions, "Persons who donate to charity are roughly three times as likely to volunteer as persons who do not donate to charity" (p. 148). This research suggests that in the eyes of the parents and administration interviewed, these concepts are linked, though some value one more than the other:

Ruth, PTA head at Zion: "I think the easiest is to give money…. I think that isn't the point of volunteering—that's giving of your, yourself that takes of your energy."

Adi from Wave: "I don't have fifty thousand dollars to give to the school and this is something I can do."

Idit, vice principal at Zion: "We sit, dream, include the parents, and get things. Either donation, or architect, or whatever."

Volunteer activity is a job

In the course of this research it became very apparent that many parents take their volunteerism at the school very, very seriously. Many of the reasons why this happens were described above. A few articulated that some parents simply view this as their job, just as any salaried career worker would view their responsibilities. Yasmin from Elite expressed this sentiment in an encouraging manner, "There are a lot of moms who don't work… their job really is their child…." while another, Yigal from Zion, subtly expressed cynicism, "I think in general people involved are ahm, under-employed to some extent."

Summary: Volunteer types

The above sections presented an attempt to profile who is the parent volunteer and his/her experience at the four schools studied, from various angles and viewpoints, and in the perspective of the existing literature. The next chapter, the Discussion, will go one step further, and, taking into consideration existing theories and all of the findings above, will propose five basic "volunteer types" at these four Jewish schools studied— the uber volunteer leader, the recruitable volunteer, the per task volunteer, the will-not volunteer, and the frustrated volunteer.

First, however, the two sections below will present and analyze findings regarding the parent volunteer/school culture dynamics. The next section will delve into the dynamics

of the volunteer relationship at the school—power relations, politics and working in partnership. Afterwards, the parent as agent of socialization, informal education, and culture, will be explored.

Structural Dynamics: Power, Politics, and Partnership

Lightfoot (2004) examines the use of the term "parent involvement" and proposes at the outset that "the meanings of socially loaded terms such as parental involvement are multiple, and they are laden with power implications" (p. 92); Bernstein and Triger (2010) explore the complexities of the various forms of PI and the implications not in the school setting but in the legal setting; and Smrekar, Cohen-Vogel and Lee (2010) offer a typology of family-school relationships/partnership. The findings of this study touch upon all of these aspects and more (such as the Principal, which applies to all three categories), and are described below. Then, the next section will carry this exploration one step further, extending the findings regarding who is the parent volunteer and the dynamics involved, to their role as agents of socialization, informal education, and culture.

Sense of community, tradition and seniority

In both American schools there was a clear sense of lineage, of families with a long history of attendance at the school filling the more active PTA roles. Some were parents to third generation students. This is consistent with the literature, for example, Mustillo, Wilson and Lynch (2004) state, "Practitioners in the nonprofit sector often refer to children who adopt the volunteer habits of their parents as legacy volunteers. Families are an important conduit to volunteer work. Americans are twice as likely to volunteer if their parents volunteered …. Why people volunteer has been the subject of sociological curiosity for many years. Attention has mainly focused on the individual attributes of the volunteer. The results of our analysis confirm that volunteering runs in families, and that family units are important carriers of the volunteer tradition" (p. 531, 539). At times these families were also leaders of their communities (e.g., active in their local synagogues). The term "bleed" was heard at both schools, as in "I bleed [school name]. I grew up here." Nadav, the principal at Wave, was keenly aware of this dynamic, and expressed it as follows, "all of a sudden you've got all these new people that don't know

the Wave culture that was passed down from generation to generation and we have to be, you know, be aware of that…. There are certain things that have been happening, from time immemorial and every new administration tries to put their own mark." Note that Nadav himself also had a long history at the school—he was a student there himself.

In the Israeli schools, there was less of a feeling of multi-generational involvement, perhaps simply because the schools are younger. Some staff at Zion however had been students at the school. Many of the current parents, though, are also involved in their local synagogues. A "clique" of involved parents had formed however, at both schools, with the resultant challenges for those wanting to join in. When a new face tries to become involved, it is often met with ambivalent feelings (despite conscious attempts at recruiting new faces, as mentioned above), which will be discussed in the section on in-crowd/out-crowd, below.

Three of the four schools, therefore, had a clear parent volunteering presence (Gibor had a pronounced lack of presence). At the American schools one sensed in addition, a pronounced hierarchy based on lineage, or inter-generational seniority.

The principal is key, yet is limited

As commonly found in the literature, "The principal is the key individual in creating successful parent-school partnerships" (Rapp & Duncan, 2012, p. 4). A common theme that could be heard and felt throughout all four schools was the importance of the principal with regard to PI, with varying viewpoints coming from the parents as opposed to the principals themselves. In addition, the overall dynamic differs since principals at private USA schools are typically chosen by the Board of Directors (more often than not, parents); in Israel the ultimate appointment of a principal falls within the jurisdiction of the municipality. In the latter case, to be sure, the parents do have a say, if they voice their opinions to the municipality decision makers—but unlike in the USA private school scenario, the principal "answers to" the municipality, not the parents. This affects the overall dynamic, and of course the effectiveness of the principal.

For example, Aviva from Wave presents a fully trusting view of her principal, "…everything really has to go by [the principal]…but I think he [the principal] has that kind of global sense of the school" while Levana from the new struggling Gibor school, offers a more critical view of the principal's power, "he [principal] was of the attitude of let us teach, let us run the school, you're parents, you stay at home." Tamar, another parent at that school, is willing to grant the principal the benefit of the doubt, aware that he has a tough job, but stresses again how central he is: "Listen, it's very, very hard to work with parents—not every principal has it. A principal who has it, it's a benefit/plus. … You need someone who can make it happen. Again, it takes skill." Idit, a vice principal at the other Israeli school Zion (the one with the rich constructive PI culture) also expressed the importance of the principal: "[why is there so much PI at that school?] Well of course the principal! It is also teachers, but primarily the principal… The teachers are the class of the principal."

An interesting turn of events occurred just as the second year of data collection was coming to a close at the struggling, new Israeli school, Gibor (mentioned previously in the Context chapter). Though the students loved the principal Abraham (as expressed in parent meetings at the end of the school year, as well as the self report of the researcher's son who confirmed these expressions of support), and although the PTA outwardly claimed to be supporting him, the principal announced his termination, first at a very heated municipality meeting, then at the last day of school. The assistant principal will also be leaving, and the PTA head requested that other parents volunteer to head the PTA since she also wished to step down. She wrote in a text message to the PTA members that there were complaints that the existing PTA did not represent the full parent body. There were rumors too that teachers were leaving (this rumor died down). This was the only school of the four studied that did not seem to find a good parent/municipality/principal balance—and the tragic results were made abundantly clear. The researcher was skeptical from the outset regarding the true nature of the relationships between the PTA head and PTA members at the school (e.g., the husband of the researcher, who is on the PTA, did not receive the above text message, or others preceding it, making the researcher wonder if messages were sent selectively and not to all PTA members), and the principal. Indeed, these suspicions proved to be grounded,

with the result seen at the end of the year. Fullan (2002) sees these relationships as key, and perhaps a reason for the disintegration: "Third, I found that the single factor common to successful change is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups —especially with people different than themselves" (p.7). Zion, Elite, and Wave saw growth; Gibor did not.

Based on the interviews, it would appear that the principals themselves are aware of their importance in the PI equation. The principal at the Israeli school with an active, rich PI presence, Zion, appears keenly aware of her role: "The atmosphere was [before she arrived], it needed to be purified…. I had to make it clear that the parents are not the ones to decide what happens at the school, but the principal decides. ….And the message was, don't be afraid. To the teachers, don't be afraid. Let me deal with it, I will take the criticism, I will be the pipeline to pass it to you." Yet she knows her limitations: "because today I am here tomorrow I may not be, the *kehilla* [community] has to decide the identity of the school under the guidance of the principal…." This principal would agree with Gibton, Sabar and Goldring's (2000) findings that the principal (in this case, the research indeed took place in Israel) works with those around her: "The most interesting finding in our study, is the attempt of the principals of restructured schools to achieve some form of leadership outside of their schools—mainly vis-à-vis the immediate community. These schools place themselves not under, but rather side by side the main players on the educational field: the community, the parents, the authorities and other agencies…" (p. 206). Leah, a PTA head at Zion confers that that principal does understand the importance of PI and can make good use of parent talent: "There are parents in this community that she realizes, A are talented, B have time, C understand the importance of giving to the school so that their kids get, but everybody gets, of course everybody gets."

And the parents must join in this partnership, as a municipality figurehead stated at the end of a heated late night meeting at a parent's home with the attendance of over two dozen parents, after Abraham from Gibor was fired (see two paragraphs above and in

98

Context chapter—though the principal quit, he changed his mind only to be ultimately fired by the municipality): "Partnership is part of school culture, with parents not just PTA. There is not enough of a partnership culture at Gibor."

Yet there are challenges, among them maintaining balance, as vice principal Neta from Wave offered in a very open and honest way, "the challenge that I have is balancing the outreach and the in reach."

It is indeed a balancing act. Adi from Wave offered a paradox, articulating one specific challenge faced by the principal: "…you know he's doing a good job, because the old-timers feel like he changed too much about school culture and the new people like us… we feel not enough has changed quickly enough." We see from this quote how challenging yet important it is for the principal to balance his relationship with those who have been at the school for generations, as discussed in the above section on tradition, and newer volunteers.

This section focused on the principal, and how critical his/her role is—and we have seen three successful case studies of thriving functional schools, yet one example of a school, Gibor, that has not been able to form a healthy principal-parent relationship (and this, without even having to deal with the generational/tradition factor that exists at the American schools). This section also touched upon the role of the municipality and board of director, and the importance of this relationship and dynamic, which will be discussed in more detail next.

PTA-principal-municipality/board dynamic
As mentioned above, due to organizational differences in terms of power relations, the dynamic varies a bit between the American and Israel schools since the American principals need not answer to a municipality that hires them, and the Israeli schools need not answer to a parent-led Board of Directors (though we have seen how influential parents can be at the municipal level). Nonetheless, similar issues arose in all schools. Most especially, it is interesting to note that in Hebrew, the words for "involvement" (*meuravut*) and "over-involvement" or "meddling" (*hitarvut*) are very close, and based on the same root word. As such, the Israelis interviewed often very

clearly defined that distinction at the outset of the interview. In English, this distinction had to be verbalized in other ways—but the concept was still there, though not as blatantly expressed.

> Talya, a senior Israeli municipality figure in the education department: "[this is how she opened the interview] First of all we must distinguish between *meuravut* and *hitarvut*. Sometimes the borderline is very thin but very decisive …. but the border has to be made between *meuravut* and *hitarvut*…. *Hitarvut* is not right, not right."

> Maayan, Zion vice principal: "There is a big gap between *meuravut* and *hitarvut*." [also her first interview comment]

> Atara, principal at the same Israeli school: "In general, I think the thin line between *meuravut* and *hitarvut* does not exist….it depends on the approach with which the principal comes to the school. " [one of the first things she said]

> Idit, another vice principal at that Israeli school: "When there is a principal who does not know how to place limits and gives openings for the parents to go in too much, I call this not *meuravut* but *hitarvut* …. it's a matter of where you put the limits. "

> Abraham, principal at the other Israeli school, Gibor: "Because there is a difference between *meuravut* and *hitarvut*."

Talya then goes one step further, describing one specific risk of over involvement: "I think we have to be careful of meddling so as not to get to a situation where the principal needs to deal with dealing with parents more than being available to the kids." Abraham from Gibor claims to be keenly aware of this: "you need to find the perfect balance, bottom line. To work without parents is, I think, I big mistake, I think it is not correct, it is something that can help the school advance—on the other hand to reach a point where parents are found in everything….I really think we have a proper balance.

More PI, less PI." Proper balance seems to be the key term. Unfortunately in his case, as described above, there seems to have been a large gap between his theory and his practice. We are beginning to see that though he was able to understand and verbalize the difference, he was perhaps unable to internalize the ramifications and successfully control the situation, like the other principals.

What is not wanted from the parents? A few things. Tikva of the Israeli municipality, for example, warns, "We don't turn the parents into informants. The opposite. We want to work together… We aren't here on two sides, we are on the same side." In other words, most parties are interested in an open, trusting partnership, including transparency. This ideal is also expressed in Addi-Raccah and Arviv-Elyashiv (2008), "The interviews reveal that to reduce their own vulnerability, manage conflicts with parents, and improve their relations with them, teachers seem to adopt two major strategies: open communication and transparency, along with pleasing parents and favoritism" (p. 405):

> Yair, an administrator at Elite: "You need the partnership, to have that kind of back and forth…..Times have changed. Transparency is a big part of the way parents think of schools."

> Naomi, a parent from Elite: "…through open dialogue and communication…we'll partner with you and this is going to make the school a better place."

> Matan, Mayor of the city housing Elite and Gibor: "My philosophy is transparency—that the parents would be part of the management of the day to day of the school. This is not true everywhere."

> Abraham, principal at Gibor: "Often it is a matter of proper communication." [Again, note that parents at that school had complained that proper communication is lacking at that school—he seems to have the theory right, but has not succeeded in the day to day practice.]

Maayan, a vice principal at Zion, referring to the principal: "I think that she is building a system of trust."

And the other vice principal at that school, Idit, added "The most important thing, and I had conversations with [the principal] about this, was to restore faith in the school."

And that principal, Atara of Zion, agrees, and adds to this the importance of her working partner, the head/s of the PTA: "I think first and foremost it depends on who sits as the head of the PTA….And only if I see a PTA which desires to cooperate on the true and right side, I will cooperate. If not, I shut down and don't want to cooperate."

All parties must get along, and agree on the importance of getting along:

Liat, a PTA head at Zion: "I told [the other PTA head, a father], listen, I am interior ministry, you are external."

Liat, later on in the interview: "…but what makes me want to remain involved here, not as head, is the personality of the principal. I connect with it."

Idit, vice principal at Zion: "First of all it took time, but as soon as we had trust, the sky was the limit."

Principal Nadav of Wave: "… but I also feel like I hear the negative parts of it, which is you have these parents who are, who, who almost are obstacles."

Israeli mayor: "First of all, the relationship between the school and the parents is a tango." (This analogy was repeated more than once during the half hour interview.)

But the issue of power was also brought up, and this often presents challenges in the parent-school relationship/partnership:

> Ruth, the PTA head at the struggling Gibor School: "I think PI of this type needs parents with intelligence, with goals, parents who can commit and give up other things for this. Needs to happen from place of power. … Needs to be from a place of power. Meaning if a CEO comes and is willing to dedicate 5 minutes, 5 minutes, it means more than a woman who is willing to dedicate her entire life to the school."

> And Idan, a father at the other Israeli school, Zion: "[my wife] tells me that teachers listen to fathers more than to mothers" (This also brings up the issue of gender, which will not be directly discussed since it did not feature as prominently as other issues in this research. The findings of the pilot study touched upon this aspect.)

> Tamar, another active parent from Gibor: "He [principal] has to use his power. To make sure they know, are aware of, hear, the city reps, about what is going on. We [parents] initiate. It's not the same thing."

And what happens when the power boundaries are blurred? This too can happen, as in the case of a very involved parent who was instrumental from the early days before the school was even established. Levana, a very insightful parent at Gibor said: "She's [Ruth, the PTA head] more an employee of the school, than a parent in a way. Because she's not involved in actually hands-on making cookies for the kids. She's involved with the municipality meetings and bureaucracy. And if there's no connection with the parents, if there aren't any parent's committee meetings to even keep us updated, who's she representing?"

And often, the power boundaries are disguised, at least as viewed through the eyes of one parent at Elite: "…Elite is unique. It's not run by the parents. Except you feel that it's run by but it's really not. ….. I think [the head of the school and sister synagogue] is

one of the only rabbis who runs a community. Everywhere else, the community runs the rabbi."

Then there is the customer-service approach, regardless of power struggles underlying, which focuses on the product (the school) and the customer/consumer (the parent), as a municipality figureheads sees it: "I see PI a serious and meaningful resource in the school system and the school itself. Parents send their kids every day, and I believe they have to get a good, transparent service." Indeed, the issue of parent as consumer is addressed by Buras and Apple (2005), who review a book by Benveniste, Carnoy, and Rothstein (*All Else Equal: Are Public and Private Schools Different*, 2003): "One argument with which they engage is that private schools supposedly are apt to be more responsive to community concerns because they are motivated and disciplined by market forces, such as the enrollment or withdrawal of students by parental 'consumers'." [p. 551].) This study actually claims that family income, not public as opposed to private school, decides the level of responsiveness to parents. Indeed, concurring with this finding, in the current case study, the least successful model of partnership and cooperation was seen at the school with the overall lowest socioeconomic status, Gibor.

This section has demonstrated the importance not only of the principal, as discussed in the preceding section, but also the influence that the board of directors and/or municipality has on the culture of PI at the school. The section opened up with various descriptions of involvement (*meuravut*) and over-involvement/meddling (*hitarvut*), as viewed by parents as well as principals and other officials, and proceeded to stress the importance of trust as shown via transparency, and communication. The power component was also touched upon, specifically vis-à-vis involvement of mothers as opposed to fathers, and how the principal views his/her role. Finally, the notion of parent as consumer/customer was briefly discussed. In general, it is suggested that in this case study, Zion and Wave would appear to have a true open relationship among all the parties discussed, that the Elite school gives the impression of an open relationship but that criticism has suggested that perhaps this is a disguised impression, and that the Gibor school is rife with lack of trust, true communication and partnership.

The following sections go back to focusing on the parents themselves and their role in school culture.

Internal politics: the in-crowd/out-crowd

The dynamic of politics can be felt not only in the relationships between the PTA heads and the principal, as touched upon above, but also between involved parents themselves, as would be expected in any interpersonal relationships. The most commonly expressed theme among the Americans was the in-crowd/out-crowd feeling (at times linked to lineage, as discussed above), summed up very insightfully and with much thought and sensitivity by Eliana the PTA head at Wave: "there is like this sense of the in-crowd and the out- crowd sometimes….I know that there are people who really feel this in-crowd, out-crowd thing and really feel like there isn't room for people to volunteer… then there are people who would like to be volunteering and literally do not have the time. And then sometimes they feel resentful of people who do have the time." Another parent at Wave agrees: "I didn't go to Wave…I think a lot of the parent volunteers are parent volunteers in a leadership position, are insiders, not outsiders….The parent is mostly among insiders." And yet another parent who later was hired as staff, stated the same sentiment in different terms: "some people will sometimes feel it's like a clique, you know, if you're not part of the volunteer clique," and another parent at that school, Adi, went so far as to say that this phenomenon makes her feel uncomfortable: "There can be a lot of ego involved, and people are just not nice to each other. And that's shocking to me. That's the part I hate."

The term "parent clique" was indeed used by Pena (2000, as quoted by Henderson & Mapp, 2001, p. 45) as a factor that influenced PI.

Hannah from Zion, like Adi from Wave, also expressed lack of patience for some activities involving parents, most specifically the meetings, "A lot of the reason why I don't like doing this is because I can't stand those meetings…. I'm not interested in hearing people talk just for the sake of it, because they enjoy hearing themselves talking."

Furthermore, not all volunteers are created equal. Some volunteer activities are held in higher regard than others. As Ariella from Wave said, "I feel like the parents, like the PTA, is like its own parallel kind of leadership structure," and Noam a principal at Elite, was able to specify an example, "I think that there's a certain status to being one of the people working on the auction." This sentiment was expressed a few times when interviewing in the States (it was less verbalized in the Israeli schools), and reiterated by Posey-Maddox (2013), "Not all school-based parental involvement was viewed equally within the school context, as certain forms were granted more visibility and value than others" (p. 246).

It can be seen from this that parent volunteers can fall into categories based on status—seniority and lineage/generational link based, as discussed in the first section; power, based on gender and profession; as well as the description termed "in-crowd/out-crowd" (or clique) as described above. With all of these obstacles, how is it that parents still step forward to volunteer? The importance of recruitment, discussed next, is crucial.

Challenges and dynamics of recruiting parents

The issue of recruiting parents was also discussed in the section above, Who Is the Parent Volunteer. It is briefly revisited here, in light of the dynamics involved.

At Zion, there was disagreement between the principal and a mother, Hannah, regarding which comes first, the parent wanting to help, or the school admitting they need parental involvement and reaching out to the parent. Hannah claimed, "I don't think it was the school who said, we need parents. You know. I think it was parents who got in their faces and they realized that this is just helping the school," whereas the principal suggested that "the smart thing is to take the parents and turn them to where they can help." In any case, all schools—including the literature—agreed upon the importance of recruiting parents, "parents were more likely to participate in meetings, committees, and events when they received a personal invitation or had a relationship with the person asking" (Posey-Maddox, 2013, p. 256). As one principal at Elite said, "one of the items on the agenda at the [PTA] was how do we get more parents involved." Regarding how

one succeeds in this task, one American father at Gibor, Kalev, suggested, "it's easier to ask someone you know to volunteer than someone you don't know," while Ariella of Wave warned, "I think it's hard for a woman to ask for other people to do things." According to the literature, the school would appear to be a very natural place to recruit parents to volunteer, and succeed: "getting people involved in their community may be an important initial step in them making a commitment towards volunteering. This finding is consistent with research suggesting that people volunteer because they are in the contexts in which they are asked to do so" (Matsuba, *et al.*, 2007, p. 903).

All four schools, administration and parents alike, realized the importance of actively recruiting parents, with some succeeding more than others. Zion throughout the year offered a plethora of options for parents to become involved, as did Elite and Wave, whereas Gibor never seemed to follow through on their desire to pull in more parents— perhaps due to various factors such as politics, lack of cooperation with the principal, poor communication, and socioeconomic factors as discussed in previous sections above. Once parents are recruited, the level of involvement was another important theme encountered at these three schools and will be discussed next.

Who controls the level of PI
All would agree (or admit to it at least, to be politically correct) that parental involvement is important for the school, child, and/or parents themselves. The level, or degree, of PI at any particular school varies, however, as does the feeling of whether parents really do make a difference.

How the PTA and PTA head are chosen also varies per school. Goldring (1991) describes the scenario in Israel some 40 years ago: "Phitleson (1969) found that Israeli principals are directly involved in the selection process of parent committees (PTA), dictate to them a substantial amount of work directives, and even provide them with certain means and organizational authority. In many cases positions on parent committees are held by the same people over the course of many years" (p. 222). Today however, in the Israeli schools this is done in a more democratic fashion (in fact, officially the administration is not supposed to interfere with this "election" process) whereas in the American schools, this is still carried out via appointment from the

administration above. As David from Elite bluntly stated, "it's not very democratic." And another father, Kalev from Gibor, also expressed this concern, even though the process is meant to be fully democratic: "So the makeup of the PTA, the way the PTA is supposed to get formed, I was a little frustrated because it never really happened…. Democratic process didn't work so well." This latter school has effectively had the same head of PTA for six years.

Some parents were also frustrated at their effectiveness, feeling that they really do not make that much of a difference at the school. As Elisheva from Elite, an academic in the field of Jewish education herself, stated, "but I'm not sure how much we really effect change…. they always listen. The question is, what do they change as a result of this and that?" Later on, however, this parent, an educator herself, was one of the few to voice this opinion, in effect abdicating power to the authorities: "But I think that they think that they are the ones who are the professionals and they know what's best for our kids. And that may be true."

Certainly, PI is not encouraged or warmly welcomed in one area at one school, and this is made very clear: the academic aspects of the running of the school. Indeed, Addi-Raccah and Arviv-Elyashiv (2008), would agree: "The teachers in this study wanted parents to be involved in school but not to interfere in their professional domain." (p. 405). Buras and Apple (2005) concur: "Thus, at a private Jewish school, the principal acknowledges that 'one of his roles within the school is to fend off the "meddling" of parents in daily curricular matters'" (p. 554). "Meddling" was also discussed, above, in the section on the PTA-principal-municipality/board dynamic, albeit not directly in the context of curriculum. As Tikva, a municipality figure, mentioned when discussing the principal, "She opened the door and said, cooperate, do, but pedagogic issues are mine." That principal, Atara, sharpened this opinion, stating very clearly, "There was no situation where parents did an activity alone. It is not a school of parents. It is a school of teachers, children and parents….The responsibility, I take." Lareau and Muñoz (2012) would agree: "Researchers have also implicitly suggested that parents and educators are equal partners in this collaboration (Epstein, 2005). But the principal has more power than do parents; the relationship is not a partnership between equals" (p.

214). Atara continued, "I will want to hear criticism only from someone who has done, who has been involved." So this principal strongly encouraged PI, but in the areas she felt it belonged. Despite the tight restrictions and firm opinion of the principal, this school of all four exhibited a very rich culture of parent involvement at the school, a level of involvement that included much creativity emanating from the parents—but almost exclusively not in the formal pedagogic realm.

The PTA head at the other Israeli school Gibor also realized on her own that in order to criticize she must ally with the principal first, not only by participating as mentioned by the principal above, but also by proceeding in a politically sensitive manner, "If I went anti I would not have been able to succeed and achieve, need to be political, to flow with him and only then you can also criticize." Ayala the PTA head from Elite shared these sentiments: "I think it's a balancing act, as to how much the parents input actually helps, how much they listen to, how much difference we make….There are ways of expressing it privately and if you express it privately they're very happy to hear things, but sometimes people either say it either in a group setting, not a formal group setting, you know like a casual group setting and then incite other people….but they don't want to have a mentality of a gang mentality, you know ganging up on them."

Irit, a parent at Gibor, summed up this sensitive balance as follows: "Balance, and PTA helping the principal, not the PTA running the principal." Ironically, that school of the four struggled the most with the PTA-school-principal relationship. All other schools seemed, at least to the researcher, to have stuck a healthy, productive, working balance of PI with defined roles and expectations. The impression following interviews and observations, was that this was in large part due to successful cooperation between the principals and PTA leaders.

Partnership: Parent as messenger
The term partnership has already arisen several times. Epstein (2001 as only one example) discusses at great length the school-family-community partnerships; this study focuses more on the school-family (parent) ties. Specifically, the involvement of the PTA (and involved parents in general), is a way for the parent body to communicate to

the school staff, and for the school staff to communicate to the community of parents, thereby building a partnership. This is a generally shared sentiment, regardless of the school:

> So, it's a way for us to be the ears of the parents to bring it to the administration.

> …both ways. So helping the school communicate out to the parents, helping the parents communicate out to the school.

> …if you educate your parents about the issues and make it available and accessible for them to ask questions, then you are partnering.

> Neta, vice principal at Wave: "And I think that the more parents are involved, the more we can promote partnership and, you know, moving forward together."

Yair, a senior administrator from Elite, offered a very unique, practical, perspective. He felt that if school rules and regulations were disseminated by the parents themselves, if they were the messenger, they would be more easily accepted and enforced: "And it was a better statement [about dress code requirements, *kashrut* at kids' parties etc.] coming from the PTA than from the administration." His colleague at the other American school, Nadav of Wave, would agree: "they're almost a service organization, they provide a lot of services."

Shepard and Carlson (2003) discuss intervention programs at the school and the importance of PI, "Parents are more willing to participate when they are treated as useful resources rather than bad parents or the cause of their child's problems" (p. 653). Parents therefore are not only messengers, middlemen, but they are also valuable resources. But the administration must know how best to tap in to this resource. As Shepard and Carlson said, the key is knowing how to tap in to this resource, to view parents as a resource, as a potentially positive force. This research has demonstrated by studying the schools, that parents can not only be partners but a resource, a resource to

build the school culture. More on how to tap into the positive as opposed to the negative, follows below.

Focus on the positive vs. utilizing parent pressure to fix what is broken

Peterson (e.g., 2001, 2002) and Barth (2002) go to great lengths discussing positive as opposed to "toxic" (negative) cultures at schools. School culture will be discussed at greater length in the following section. It should be noted here though, that a very common, prominent theme that was expressed over and over again throughout the research, was parents focusing on the positive building up of the school culture as opposed to looking for and fixing flaws (negative aspects). Though not necessarily articulated in the broader context of school culture, the positive/negative theme was mentioned clearly in interviews and at times inferred via observations, at school activities as well as PTA meetings. At one school, Gibor, it appeared that the parents were focusing almost entirely on fixing what was broken, concentrating on the existing negative instead of finding and/or building up the positive; this school had the poorest culture of parent involvement and indeed, cooperation and partnership.

Parents and administration had the following to say about the positive building up of the school via parents:

> Liat, a parent from Zion with rich PI: "…You only add to the school, add the positive things, what the educational system can't give the school, the enrichment. … but the good things, which is the majority, is to try and enrich the school with activities that are missing. That in my opinion is where involvement is positive, not the negative that I all the time was afraid of…. I want to have only a positive influence, not negative."

> Talya, from the Israeli municipality: "Mentoring…. I'd like to see it more often, doing nice things. To encourage [the Hebrew word *lefargen* was used—this is a complimenting term, when one wants to say something nice about someone else, no strings attached] and strengthen. Not just when there are difficulties."

Elisheva, a parent from Elite, a Jewish educator herself: "As a parent, I would like to see more building up, rather than bashing…."

On the other hand, there were comments about the flip side, looking for negative aspects, and fixing flaws:

Yigal, a critical parent at the Israeli school with rich PI, Zion (his opinions were often more skeptical than the others): "so in trying to do something, you're highlighting what's not there in the school."

Tamar, a parent from Gibor, the Israeli school with a less than ideal culture of PI: "if it works, why get involved, they don't need me, but where there are difficulties, I feel I have to be a bit more involved." She later added, "to be on top of him [principal] all the time, talk with the supervisors, all the time to be on him. That mostly. To sit on his head. To ask to fix the social aspect of the school, to know where every shekel goes, to see the rationale, to sit on their head, an internal power of sorts. It doesn't come from a bad place, it comes from cooperation, all of the ideas. Offer help, not that it helps, but we try."

Kalev, a parent at the same school as Tamar, criticizing that negative approach: "they felt their goal was to rumpus the school about things it was doing wrong, as opposed to saying ok lets decide some things and have a positive influence on the school, help the administration get done what it needs to get done."

And the principal at that school, Abraham, had his take on what was going on, on the "fixing" as opposed to "positive" approach: "They [PTA] said, listen, it may seem that we are butting in to every detail but know that we were worried before and if we see there is someone leading the ship and we can be calm, we will step back. We don't want to drive the system crazy if we see things are lead properly, positively…. We have no reason to bother you for no reason."

In summary, the more successful, constructive cultures of PI can be seen in schools where parents come with a positive attitude of building—not looking for problems to fix. That approach has proven to fail, as seen at Gibor which is now faced with the task of finding a new principal, vice principal, and head of PTA. That school clearly suffers from a toxic culture. Had the parents spent the last two years building up positive aspects at the school that are lacking, in lieu of honing in on what needs to be fixed (and not letting the principal take control over those aspects), as at the other schools, one wonders how the school would appear. As opposed to the other three schools studied, Gibor clearly had an unhealthy power dynamic, with energy being expended more on politics than the proper running of the school, and no true balanced partnership.

Appreciation for volunteering

Having just discussed the importance of a positive approach, and as this research focuses on partnerships, on human relationships—that of the parent, principal/administration and ultimately, child—it would be most befitting to conclude this subsection with an important theme that was articulated in various ways by all types of interviewees: appreciation. Indeed, "Volunteers need recognition. They need to know that they are appreciated and that they make a difference…. Showing appreciation satisfies the volunteer's need for self-fulfillment and self-esteem" (Shin & Kleiner, 2003, p. 70).

The section above on who is the parent volunteer, mentions that one reason parents volunteer is to be good role models for their children, to teach their children the value of voluntarism. It may also be good modeling for the children to teach appreciation, as Ayala, the PTA head at Elite explained (albeit she refers to respect): "and I tell this to parents all the time, that if they treat the teachers and administrators with respect, they'll get the same."

Appreciation, from teachers as well as higher up administration, is very important, as Kalev from Gibor has pointed out: "It's hard to get the teachers in the school to recognize, wow there's something interesting the PTA wants to do, that has educational value and lets bring that in….. I think the staff and the administration of the school has

realized that there are good ideas that can come from the outside, they're not threatened by them….For the junior high and high schools at Gibor it was hard to get the teachers to really get that and really embrace that. We tried a few things like that and in the end, it was just a little bit too remote, that wasn't the area where, at least when I was involved, we weren't able to do anything."

Indeed, the PI partnership dynamics may be challenging, with teachers, principals, administrators and parents alike having ambivalent feelings about the roles involved. Tropper (2013, p. 144) comments about an envied "quiet" in the school when parents are not involved—but that this is a misconception and only a short term quiet, as their presence is very much needed in the long run. Reut a principal from the Elite School also expressed this honestly, "My life would be a heck of a lot easier if I didn't have PTA. [laughs]… somebody every once in a while does have to hold a mirror to your face." But almost all agree that it is necessary. And in order for it to continue, as Rivka at Wave states: "people wouldn't continue to volunteer if it was not a positive experience for them, if they were not getting positive feedback from the administration." In short, PI brings with it challenges for all, but is necessary and as such, must be appreciated.

Who is the parent volunteer has been discussed, as have the dynamics in the school-parent relationship; the next section will look at the parent's role in socialization, informal education, and school culture.

Parent as Agent of Socialization, Informal Education, and Culture
Many definitions of socialization, informal education, and culture have been offered. Lawrence Cremin distinguishes between education and socialization, defining education as "the deliberate, systematic and sustained effort to transmit, evoke or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills or sensibilities as well as any outcomes of that effort" (Cremin, 1977, quoted in Reimer, 2007, p. 12). Reimer (2007, p. 10) defines socialization as "the key mechanism by which groups sustain themselves and bind new members and transmit values and knowledge from one generation to the next. Jewish

socialization involves acquiring the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable one to be an active member of the Jewish community."

Informal education has often been described as "learning which occurs in daily experiences and interactions….imparts values, experiences, and attitudes," as opposed to formal education that "imparts knowledge, which is measured with relative ease and can be tested by quantitative methods" (Cohen, 2001, p. 358). Cohen, quoting Reuven Kahane, continues to mention that "one component of informality" (p. 361) is voluntarism. It is proposed that parents, through their volunteer activities, are a component of informal education in the formal school setting.

Informal education has typically been considered education offered outside of the school setting (e.g., camps, youth movements, see Reimer, 2007). This research has shown that parents can be an important factor in introducing informal education too, to the formal school setting.

Stolp (1994) quotes Paul E. Heckman (1993) as saying that school culture lies in "the commonly held beliefs of teachers, students, and principals." The researcher proposes to go one step further, showing that school culture also lies in the beliefs of the parents. In short, this research demonstrates that while they are not agents actively involved in the "deliberate" transmitting of knowledge, values and skills (the measurable role of the schools and hence, educators, per Cremin and Cohen)—parents are certainly major players in the process of socialization, informal education in the school setting, and the school's culture.

This section starts off with a seemingly insignificant aspect of school life and culture: food.

Food metaphors

Food in fact played an important role in the schools studied, and reflects upon their cultures. Food is often linked with culture: "Food and food behaviors are an integral part of every culture" (Pazzaglia & Williams, 2012) so it deserves a mention here. Though parents interviewed did discuss the issue of food, in this section, the findings related to the schools' food cultures rely primarily on researcher observations, as opposed to interviews as with the previous and following sections, since the phenomenon was so striking to the eye.

If the food cultures at the two American schools could be summarized, it would be "sushi and homemade cupcakes" versus "donuts." At the first school, Elite, sushi (often with wine), figured very prominently—at parent events and even as a student lunch request. Sushi is not a traditional Jewish food, and is considered very upper middle class and modern—fitting in very well with the sophisticated image the school is apparently trying to project. In-house homemade muffins are also a very important culinary image at that school (as opposed to store bought cookies, cakes, and the like), and come in many varieties to answer to the various personal preferences of the many parents (e.g., low fat, low sugar). Fruit, when served at school activities, is more than sufficiently accompanied by serving utensils and napkins—serving to properly teach and socialize the children in table manners, too. All food and drink are presented in a very palatable and artistic manner.

The other American school, Wave, is known for donuts, traditionally a more middle class image in terms of both price and availability. School lunches there were less thought-through and elaborate than at the other school (it seemed, at least to the researcher, that there was less of an obsession with proper nutrition and manners at that school), and were served in a practical manner—not displayed as elaborately as at Elite. It appeared that these varying food patterns reflected parent expectations and home behaviors, and as a result, the different cultures of the schools.

Food played a less central role at the Israeli schools since part of the school day does not include organized catered sit-down meals, as at the American schools. What is

worthy of mention, however, was the parent involvement in food policy at these schools.

At the Israeli elementary school, Zion, the first year of research had been designated as "health year" (the second year was designated "leadership") by the Israeli Ministry of Education. Healthy eating was encouraged at the school—and only healthy snacks were to be permitted in the classroom. Israeli grade school children do not typically eat lunch at school, so lunchrooms are rarely found in the schools—but a 10 AM snack is a given and most central part of the school day. In fact, it is called in Hebrew the "10 o'clock meal"—the term "snack" or "break" is not used. The first PTA meeting discussed this. Interestingly, though, by the second year of research, this theme seemed to have disappeared at the school—all of a sudden healthy eating was no longer a stated and stressed priority. Perhaps had the value really come from the home, and not just from the Ministry of Education, this practice would have continued into the second year via parent involvement.

At the Israeli middle/high school studied, Gibor, parents were concerned about their children's nutrition and they indeed saw to it that a "kiosk" was opened up on the school grounds with municipality approval. They even applied pressure to make sure the kiosk offered real food such as sandwiches, and not just snacks, since the high school day is longer, to mid afternoon, and not everyone brings food from home (or forgets). The school principal mentioned several times that this was at the initiation of the parents. No sushi, however…! When observing, one sees common snacks and beverages pulled from school bags during class breaks, often ethnic foods do appear, and the kiosk opens up. For a while, children had even ordered food from neighborhood eateries—pizza, etc.—but parents brought up this issue with the principal at a PTA meeting and it was decided that this practice, which led to a lack of decorum, was to cease.

In summary, the food seen at the four schools clearly represented the cultures of the clientele, as discussed by Pierre Bourdieu in Distinction (1984) and reflected the actions, requests and expectations of the parents—sushi for the Elite School, donuts for

the more down to earth Wave School, healthy food during healthy year at the Israeli elementary Zion School (which did not carry through to the second year as mentioned above), and standard Israeli "kiosk" offerings at the public Israeli Gibor high school.

School culture: Builders vs users (and destroyers!)

Principal Noam of Elite, with decades of experience, summed up two types of parents, as he sees it: "the builders and the users are different people…. And it's interesting to see in a place like this [75 year old school], parents who come in and are able to still see themselves and continue that terminology, to still see themselves as builders. There's always stuff to build. You just have to see it and understand how that works." Actually, another administer at that school, Yaffa, cited a case where parents can destroy the existing school culture, dismantling what has been built: "the parents who come to this building do not obey the dress code of the building and that's part of the school culture which is interesting." Indeed, parent volunteers can be seen as builders, no matter how old the school; non-volunteers can be termed the users.

At Charter schools, a relatively new phenomenon of only two decades, parents often are the ones responsible for the actual establishment and building of the school (this phenomenon is described in length in Nathan, 1996 and Peterson and Campbell, 2001). Similarly, though not a Charter school, Gibor was established due to parent activism and demand, and continues to be powered in large part by parental involvement (albeit not always of the positive and constructive type, as described numerous times above). That school was only four years old when the research began. So whereas the parents in the other three schools may have been instrumental in strengthening or reinforcing a solid generations/decades old school culture, still building, or slowly changing it—at Gibor the parents' role, via their involvement, with the staff, was to actually work on actively and purposefully building up a new school, and its culture.

Cognizant of this role of the parents in building up school culture, the researcher attempted to understand from those interviewed, how they themselves viewed the schools' cultures. Unfortunately most people interviewed had a hard time understanding the concept of school culture. As a result, most findings regarding the schools' cultures

(if any—one parent claimed her school did not have a culture, see parent comment below) emanated from observations and not interviews.

Parents who were or are teachers, however, did, as opposed to non-educator parents, have somewhat of an easier time articulating what is the school culture. For example, Ruth, the years-long head of the PTA at the fledgling and struggling Israeli Gibor high school (she was a teacher until she switched professions) said very simply, "The school doesn't yet have a culture….too early. … Can't talk about culture ... It is being built." Another PTA parent at that school, Tamar, a teacher herself at a different school, added to this idea, "the school hasn't found its place… Despite the fact that they do excellent work, in the micro level"—perhaps the micro level are the building blocks of what will develop later into a rich school culture, but currently—"[the school is] under 'survival' conditions…. There is no vision with anyone at the school to go forward. …. You can't do this from the outside." This parent/teacher was skeptical that parents could be instrumental in building the "vision." Levana confirmed this "survival" impression, saying, "I think that there isn't such a culture, because they're sort of living in a war mentality, a survival mentality." Note that a similar thought was expressed in the context of the parents themselves, the section on the volunteering personality above, that if they are too "burdened by the issue of day to day bread earning," they cannot be free "for other things": in the case of parents, volunteering; in the case of the school, culture building. Perhaps this school culture would best be termed a culture of survival.

Atara, the Israeli principal at the school with a very rich school culture, Zion, seemed to be able to see the big picture and grasp what is key: "You have to form a common language." Indeed, language is not simply spoken words but another way of saying "the way things are done around here," a common and popular definition of culture (Drennan, 1992). She understood the concept of school culture, and she also understood the importance of PI. The positive results were visibly apparent.

Yasmin, a parent at the well endowed American Elite School, however, had a skeptical view of how the parents—builder and/or user—really did influence the school. She believed that only a small percentage have the power, or right, to make change: "I don't

think the parent body really defines the school culture… because 30% of your population are on scholarship and the money is coming from somewhere, those who dole it think they have a need to have a say in school policy, just the culture of the school, and I think that could be a little tricky….” Her point is poignant but was not verbalized by many, and may be specific to that school. No doubt, though, it is a valid concern, one which is discussed by Posey-Maddox (2013) from the perspective not only of economic standing (“as parents who make large financial contributions or help to secure large grants may feel they are entitled to a greater say in matters of curriculum and instruction,” p. 255), but social class. Interestingly however, the above parent did not consider herself one of the more wealthy families at that school, yet she is involved.

It can be concluded that at Zion the parents are most involved in building up a rich school culture, nurtured by the principal’s support; at Gibor most would agree that the culture is one of “survival,” like many families who send their children to that school; at Elite there is the impression that parents are instrumental in building the school culture, though there is a quiet skeptical undercurrent hinting otherwise; at Wave parents are vibrant contributors to school culture, with the administration’s support.

Parents supplement what is lacking and build bridges
Parents' role as messengers was discussed in one of the section above. They also help in many other aspects of the school. At times they donate money, at times they give of their time, at times they serve as “ambassadors in the community at large” (terminology of principal Reut from Elite), bridging the gaps: “Many parents—particularly middle-class and upper-middle class parents—are helping to fill the gaps left by state and local governments through their fundraising, grant writing, and volunteerism in urban public schools” (Posey-Maddox, 2013, p. 235). In all cases, they are filling a void that is lacking, as principal Nadav of Wave stated, “they're almost a service organization, they provide a lot of services.” And further, “so if we know that there's something that a parent can contribute, we try very hard to take advantage of that opportunity because it's enriching, expansive and it creates a partnership that's so integral for a really healthy culture.”

Luckily, the parents themselves view their role similarly, albeit some in a better light than others. One American father at Zion, Yigal, was disgruntled and at times sarcastic throughout most of his interview, almost resenting that parents had to be so involved (yet he and his wife are nonetheless of the more involved parents in the community), "in a properly operating American Jewish school, this would be, these tasks would be performed by the school itself." Yet another parent from that school, Liat, also keenly aware of the school's shortcomings, was more forgiving, "Really enriching the school—seeing what the school doesn't have and is trying to get. To turn learning fun. To bring them more activities, more plays, and to teach, not that they are only having fun—behind it is a lot of learning. On the other hand, to be a medium between the parents and principal." Liat, a mother who had actually taught years ago at one of the schools researched in the States, expressed no bitter feelings at her role, "…It was amazing to see, how much they want to know more than the regular subjects. …. but most teachers at the school are not like that—so you need the parents!" She accepted that the school and the teachers could not do it all on their own—hence the importance of the parents' role in the school.

Another American father, Kalev, at the Israeli high school Gibor offered the following analysis of the importance of informal education: "I always say I probably learned more in elementary school outside of the classroom than in the classroom, it's true about camps I think also." Indeed, Cohen, Miller, Sheskin, and Torr (2011) confirm this statement, affirming via the results of their research, the importance of camps (one form of informal education) for experiencing a sense of community, peer interdependence and Jewish identity, among other things. It is interesting to note that Kalev's wife was also active at the Israeli elementary school Zion throughout the period that this research took place; he was actually interviewed as an involved parent at the struggling Gibor high school. One can assume that he is well aware of the differences between the two schools and judging by his above comment, was hoping to see his son be able to benefit from a more "positive experience" (his words) like he had as a child—incidentally, at Wave. (His involvement waned over the two years period, while his wife's remained the same, apparently due to professional commitments that demanded too much of his time).

So if parents can help with educating informally within the boundaries of the school, supplementing the teachers, can they also be instrumental in building the cultural aspects of the school? Kalev, the parent above, would most probably say yes, and they must—they must make sure that the gap is bridged between the teaching staff and student body: "I think there's a big gap between who the teachers are and who, at least in [the city], who the families and kids that are going to the schools." After all, as Irit, another parent at that school said, "It's the same Bagrut [matriculation exams] in the end"—so what makes each school unique and how? The school culture.

Tamar, another parent at that school, one who tended to step in when something went wrong and not necessarily just to supplement the school's needs with a positive building approach, hinted at another role of the parent: "We exposed the picture, they [municipality] were in shock." In this case, the parent was supplementing what she viewed as a democratic checks and balances.

In America too, the parents supplement school activities and build bridges. Principal Noam from Elite hinted at his gratitude for their contribution: "And then mostly, when you get past the class trips and the [PTA committees], mostly parent volunteers is for the events. For the book fair, for the auction, for the dinner. And mostly that has to do with [the main administrator's] side of things. The institutional advancement." They bring in funds. Yocheved, a parent at that same school, suggested, from her perspective, that parents can also see things that the busy overextended staff could not possibly be expected to see: "we noticed from being there every day what is going on with all of this [wasted] food [that was then donated to shelters]." And by donating the leftover food, the parents were also informally teaching about the value of charity and building a culture of personal responsibility, socializing the children.

Finally, at both American schools it was stressed over and over again that parents build bridges and act as ambassadors (a prestigious, respectable title): Eliana, PTA head at Wave, "Ariella has this great term, maybe she used it in her interview with you, about being parent ambassadors and I like really love that whole concept" and Elisheva, the

academic who is active at the other American school Elite, "So the [PTA] is set up to try to establish or build bridges between the administration and parents."

These schools do indeed seem to have formed a true partnership, with parents complementing what may be lacking from the school staff. Warren, Hong, Rubin and Uy (2009) explain why this works at these schools: "Horvat, Weininger, and Lareau (2003) showed that parents in middle-class communities can act powerfully in their children's schools because they have relationships with each other centered on the school, and they possess the education and other resources that give them the confidence to relate to teachers as equals. By contrast, they found that working-class parents are not typically connected to other parents at the same school, and these parents often lack the education and status to 'stand up' to school authorities as equals" (p. 2212). Note that this does not always work to the benefit of the children from lower socioeconomic families, as pointed out by Posey-Maddox, (2013.) Indeed, at Gibor this conflict was felt.

We see therefore that parents fill a substantial role with regard to school activities, as "ambassadors" as well as "service providers," "filling the gaps" and "building bridges," at both the heavily endowed American schools as well as the Israeli schools, and that this role is acknowledged and appreciated by the administrators. As mentioned before, three of the four schools seem to have struck a healthy balance, whereas one school, Gibor, has not.

PI improves school environment for students

The section above mentioned that parents bridge gaps and supplement school activities. But they do more than that; they help to build and influence the overall school environment, the "climate and ethos" (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Most parents and administration alike were very proud of their schools, and used analogies when referring to their school. Atara, the principal of Zion, consciously builds up the school with PI: "[I wanted] That the kids will know it is not the Zion School but the Zion Hotel." This principal also often refers to the Zion family, in similar fashion to a school described by Deal and Peterson (1991): "As they describe it: 'The teachers and the children and the

parents. It belongs to us. It is ours. You ask the teachers around here. This is like family to us'." (p. 134).

And similarly, Rivka of Wave said, "I think it would just feel like a school, as opposed to a community [without PI]" while Ayala of Elite said, "Elite is a culture. It's not just a school." This environment, regardless of the particular school or specific analogy, can be attributed to the parents, in the simple words of Maayan, a principal from Zion: "When the kids see parents coming to the school they smile and do, it only does good for the kids."

Not one person interviewed mentioned any reasons for parents not to be active or seen in the school, or that their presence influences the environment in a negative way.

PI socializes and builds community

It was mentioned above that parents are instrumental in the informal educational aspects of the school and of forming the school environment, especially when they are physically seen at the school. But PI also plays an important role in socializing the children and in building community—one of the goals of education hinted at by John Dewey, in the words of Lawrence A. Cremin (1989): "John Dewey liked to define the aim of education as growth….that the aim of education is not merely to make parents, or citizens, or workers…but ultimately to make human beings who will live life to the fullest, who will continually add to the quality and meaning of their existence and to their ability to direct that experience, and who will participate actively with their fellow human beings in the building of a good society" (p. 125).

Liat, who has seen schools in the USA and Israel, both as parent and teacher (and now, PTA in Zion) mentioned a fundamental difference in overall outlook, between American parents and Israeli parents: "Israelis, they only see their own kid. They don't care about anything else. The Americans see school as home… the school has to turn into something more than just learning." Perhaps because for American Jews, the school plays such a central role in socializing the children and becoming their and their families' community (as opposed to Israeli children, who can be socialized as Jews in

all of their daily interactions, and who live in Jewish communities)— stress is placed on the social aspects of education in addition to the pedagogic (which is left for the educational staff). American parents and administrators expressed this thought, of the parents' role in the social aspects of the school, in various ways:

> Eisheva from Elite: "the school needs to create the community and the parents help to make that happen."

> Ayala, PTA head at Elite: "I think that the only way you build a community is by having social events."

> Principal Reut from Elite: "…it's really more school culture that is their domain, or that is up for discussion rather than school curriculum."

> Hila from Wave: "And I think that having parent involvement [in the art appreciation classes] just strengthens that so that it's beyond what you're just teaching the kids. That you're creating a community here."

> Liron from Wave: "…it's not just like oh you send your kids to school there, you really feel like it's really a community and you're really part of it."

> Ariella from of Wave: "I think the parents have lots to do with the ruach [environment, climate] what happens outside of the classroom…. And the culture is really into the, like the school's really into it's culture, like it really prides itself on it's culture."

> Eliana PTA head of Wave: "So for me, this school's values are like exactly my values…. these are the values that I believe in so much and want my kids to have, so if this is our community, then that's the space we live in, even if we don't like actually live in this building, if we think that this is our community, then we have all of that."

Fisher (2007) refers exactly to this, that the purpose of PI should be to bridge the gap between values at home and at school. Eliana served as head of Wave's PTA, the perfect person based on Fisher's analysis, and Kalev's comment in the section on building bridges above, to lead the parent organization, to bridge between the parent body and the school. And Atara, Zion's principal, would also agree: "I believe in, my approach is, that the teachers are messengers, that the responsibility is the parents'…. So they hire the services of teachers to educate their kids. It is important to have a connection between what the home and school want." Simply put, even though parents drop off their children at the school in the morning, they must still be proactively involved in the education of their children, even to the extent of being decision makers—and the educational staff must view themselves as representatives, carrying out the needs of the parent body (though, according to Anderson and Minke, 2009, teachers do not always know exactly how to involve the parents).

Again, however, the parents' role and influence in the academics is limited:

> Liat from Zion: "So what is dependent on us is easy—we decide, we recruit we do. But what depends on [the principal], curriculum, is harder for us to influence. She listens, wants to help, but the system limits her a lot. It is hard."

> Naomi from Elite: "I think the philosophy is that the parents don't get involved in the curriculum of the school. That is left to the educators."

> Yair administrator at Elite: "So I think the place the parents are best involved is in the non-academic side of the school."

These sentiments, the approach and belief have apparently remained strong with the Americans now living in Israel and sending their children to Zion, because that school, as mentioned, enjoys a rich American PI culture. There are however pitfalls, as Levana, a South African mother at the Israeli high school with poor PI and a non-developed school culture, Gibor, has suggested, "That's the problem, if parents do start something culturally, it's going to be hard work in the beginning, because the kids won't want to

be involved…. they don't have that feeling that they want to be involved in anything at the school….So it's not just the parents, and it's not just the teachers and it's not just the kids." In other words, the entire school community must act as a community in order to build community, long term—and this applies to the elementary school level as well as the high school level (that, per Levana, may be more challenging).

PI activity becomes institutionalized

Parents at both an Israeli school as well as an American school distinguished between year-long "regular" projects, and "special" projects. Tal, an Israeli mother at Zion, was always willing to help out if asked (the importance of recruiting was discussed in sections above) and made a point of distinguishing between the two types of activities, "There were 'regular' activities, not 'special' activities." Rivka of Wave described something similar, referring to projects that do not take place all year long on a regular basis, "project based volunteering." Regular, or year based projects became with time, part of the school calendar (e.g., auction, end of year party), as opposed to the special projects that may or may not re-appear in subsequent years (e.g., various social gathering options for parents, implementing technological advances in the classes due to parent initiation). This applied to all schools.

Particularly noteworthy for the purposes of this research are "special" projects that begin as parent-initiated then become part of the school curriculum. These may be considered good examples of parent as decision maker as opposed to consumer, as discussed by Warren *et al.* (2009). It can also be seen as parent who actively invests in the child and school, as simply put by an involved father at an American school, "Parents, if they have no involvement, they have no investment." A very noteworthy example of this is the science fair at Zion. About five years ago a parent who had been a science teacher in the USA approached the school principal with the idea to incorporate research and ultimately a fun hands-on open-to-the-public science fair in the school science curriculum. Despite initial resistance (there were simply not enough hours in the school year) she did all the leg work and indeed, the science fair took off. The following year she received unofficial status as a teacher for this project, and was remunerated partially, with PTA funds. That mother is now working fulltime elsewhere, has nothing to do with the program anymore—and the school runs it fully on its own. What was a

parent initiative has turned into part of the school's official curriculum (for more details see Burstein, 2010). A similar model exists at one of the American schools, for art education.

As Yigal, an American parent at Zion said, "Successful volunteerism turns into traditional change." This has been demonstrated at three schools, with the fourth demonstrating what happen when volunteerism does not succeed.

PI socializes the parent

Up until now the focus has been on building a school culture for the benefit of the children. Parent voluntarism has traditionally had the goal of improving the school experience for the students. But by building community, the parents themselves are equally being socialized, and research often overlooks the impact school has on the parents of these children (discussed by Pomson in his article in Wertheimer, 2007). Parents and administrators interviewed were however keenly aware of the importance of the school for socializing the parents too.

> Elisheva from Elite: "sometimes I feel like these committees [at the school] do more for the people themselves than they do for the school. People need friendship, community, they need to feel like they're contributing in some way."

> Yair administrator at Elite: "…it's about creating social networking and groups for the parents. Some of the best friends come out of their volunteer experiences at the school…. Some people don't NEED the social grouping, I don't need that, so they don't get involved in Elite"

> Rivka from Wave: "I liked the part of getting to know a lot of different parents…."

> Yoni of Wave: "Because I think when your kids are younger, you're looking for a social network as well."

> Leah from Zion: "if you create a social group like a social network, that will bring one or two parents who want to do things together, their place to do things together is in the school."

Recent research however has shown that in some cases PI in fact creates new patterns of inequality in the school (Posey-Maddox, 2013). This was not expressed by anyone in the four schools studied for this research, but as mentioned above, no non-involved parents were interviewed, admittedly limiting the scope of parents interviewed.

An American administrator added another aspect, above and beyond socializing and being socialized. Yair of Elite hinted that by encouraging parent involvement, the school was giving the parent an opportunity to understand what really goes on at the school, with his or her own eyes—and will hopefully be more patient and tolerant as a result, "When parents are in a building and see and breathe the air of the building, figuratively and literally, it changes usually their whole vision….So I think parent volunteerism when managed properly has great impact on the school, and on the parent." Many principals and administrators tend to be "afraid" of PI; Yair took the transparency approach and claims that all parties benefit in the long run. He, without verbalizing it as such, was trying to open up the school to all parents, spreading social capital, regardless of class, and breaking the tendency of only those who share the same values, to become involved, a phenomenon discussed by Posey-Maddox (2013) and Warren *et al.* (2009). Again, as pointed out several times above, only Gibor seemed to have a fragmented school culture and PI body. The impression at the other three schools was that the parents were more or less a crystallized unit, an important puzzle piece fitting in well into the school.

Summary…happy v sad school with and without PI

The above three section were an attempt to share with the reader the main, most prominent findings of two years of research at two Israeli public and two American private Jewish schools, that included some 40 interviews, dozens of observations and hundreds of documents. Of course not all aspects could have possibly been described here, but an attempt was made to present the most salient points with regard to PI and

school culture, categorized as who is the parent volunteer; what are the dynamics of the PI relationship; and how parents can be seen as agents of socialization, informal education, and culture.

A few general comments about the role of parents in the school and school culture deserve mention of their own. For instance, several people interviewed stressed that parents, traditionally not considered part of the school population, are a felt presence at the school:

> Tal, an Israeli mother from Zion: "You feel the presence of parents in the school. You feel them."

> Mayor Matan: "I think school culture is very influenced by parents and parents are very influenced by the school culture."

And how would the school look without PI? A few parents tried to imagine, and shared their thoughts:

> Yigal, an American parent from Zion: "I think that the school would be much more soft without the parents involved."

> David, a father from Elite: "I think it would be a kind of a sad place. It would be, you know. I think that parents are, umm, parents are important in the culture of the school…."

Finally, as summed up by a disgruntled mother, Levana, an Anglo Saxon married to an Israeli, who has tried her best to become involved in the Israeli high school Gibor, realizing how important her involvement is, not only for her and her son, but for the school: "The school would survive without it [PI]. But if we wanted to develop a culture and develop a love for the school and make the school an interesting and exciting place for kids to come to, then you do need a parents committee. Because teachers are too busy teaching, it's not their job to make parties and events and stuff like that."

The Discussion will take these findings one step further, placing them in the context of existing theory and hopefully offering new explanations and perhaps even recommendations, regarding the PI-school culture dynamic.

Discussion

The above Findings section presented in an analytic fashion, the most salient points regarding parent involvement and school culture, which arose from two years of interviews, observations, and document analysis at the four schools included in this case study. The major themes were broadly organized into three areas: who is the parent volunteer; structural dynamics (power, politics, and partnership); and parents as agent of socialization, informal education, and culture. This chapter will elaborate on some points from each of these three areas, linking them to existing theory and offering new understandings as well as strengthening existing theory, specifically in the areas of volunteerism, leadership, and educational sociology.

Volunteer Types: A New Classification

The existing literature discusses different types of parent involvement/volunteerism. Epstein (1995), for example, has classified the phenomenon based on activities: parenting, communicating, volunteering, support for learning at home, participating in decision making, and collaborating with the community. Gur and Zalmanson-Levy (2005) also propose parent-school models, described as parent as observer, parent as resource, parent as learner, the committee (PTA), open communication (such as in the democratic school), and activist for change. And Fisher and Friedman (2009) have studied extensively the motivations for PI, summarizing their findings in general, as identification with the school and its values and awareness/activity.

Shin and Kleiner (2003) offers three general types of volunteers: spot (casual, for specific needs), formal (personal commitment with gratification) and pressured (required by employer or other entity). This section goes one step further, suggesting five basic "parent volunteer types" at schools, drawn from the four Jewish schools studied.

The Uber Volunteer Leader

The "Uber Volunteer Leader" is the mover and the shaker. As Yigal from the Israeli Zion school stated, "there's a couple of real parent leaders that have really made a difference in the school." This person will typically have a long history of volunteering in several settings (e.g., synagogue, charities, foundations) and often, parents who have also been community leaders. More often than not, the Uber Leader is well off in socio-economic terms. He or she may or may not fall into the "intensive parenting" category of Bernstein and Triger (2010), may or may not be considered "militant" (a derogatory description) as mentioned by Dayan (1999), and may or may not consider him/herself a "helicopter parent"—but what is for sure is that this person devotes inordinate amounts of time and energy to dedicated volunteerism at the school, and gets results. The Uber Volunteer takes it for granted that one must volunteer, and may assume that everyone wants to, just doesn't know how to. The school Uber Volunteers are known personalities at the school; they are mentioned a lot in interviews with other volunteers. The Israeli school system appears to assume that parents can and will be leaders, as some local PTAs are called *Hanhagat Horim*—translated as "parent leadership" (not parent committee or association). Leadership will be discussed in a later section.

The Recruitable Volunteer

Another dedicated category of parent volunteers can be termed the Recruitable Volunteer. As opposed to the Uber volunteer who is "active," this group can be considered "potential"—until called into action, at which time they step up to the plate. Ariella from the American Wave school has termed herself an "engaged participant." Others are willing to act, if just called upon: Tal, an Israeli parent from Zion, "If help is needed, they know they can turn to me." Others, like Ariella, have a less energetic outlook, but nonetheless help out when asked, "I have just fallen into the same trap that everyone else does, which is you do nothing until you're asked." The recruitable volunteer, as mentioned above, plays a very important role in the school and must be tapped appropriately in order to act. Sokolowski (1996) mentions the importance of recruiting others to volunteer: "People engage in philanthropic activities because they are induced by their friends, relatives or philanthropic activists, or because they are

recruited through networks of their organisational affiliations." (p. 274-5). Not all schools have succeeded in learning how to reach this population.

The Per Task Volunteer

Not everyone is a leader; not everyone wants to be a leader (Liat, a PTA head from Zion: "… some are leaders and there are those who have to be told what to do"). Similar to the Recruitable Volunteer, the Per Task Volunteer is ready to act, but not necessarily take initiative. They have stated their willingness to participate, and are waiting for a task. The Per Task Volunteer can state preferences, and is often limited, but again, plays a crucial role in the parent volunteer culture at the school, as Rivka from Wave explained: "there's that sort of more clerical type of volunteer, and then there's the hands-on programs which are going to be during the school day or right after school." As Yonit, a parent-turned-administrator at Wave stated, "I think there's an opportunity maybe to define different kinds of roles for volunteering. It doesn't always mean you have to be in school." The school needs all types of volunteers, leaders as well as participants, as Elisheva from Elite pointed out: "not everyone wants to take a leadership role…..though, they'll participate in it." Wilson and Musick (1997) categorized this type of activity as ad-hoc "helping" (as opposed to planned, longer term "volunteering"); this research proposes to elevate the activity at least in the school setting to a higher level, under the category of volunteering.

The Will-Not Volunteer

As mentioned in the Findings chapter, no "non involved parent volunteers" were interviewed for this research. They were however mentioned by several interviewees, more often than not in the context of parents who complain yet do nothing. This category of parent was a source of frustration and even anger for those parents who devoted much time and energy (sometimes money too) to the school:

> Ayala, Elite's PTA head: "I see a lot of parents complaining about things, but not that many trying to improve things"

Naom from Elite: "It really bugs me to sit around the Shabbos table and listen to people kvetch and moan and complain and they do nothing. They do nothing. They don't volunteer, they don't offer up creative solutions or suggestions. They just complain."

Hannah from Zion: "…it's very easy to sit back and complain about things, it's much harder to say, okay what can I do to make it better."

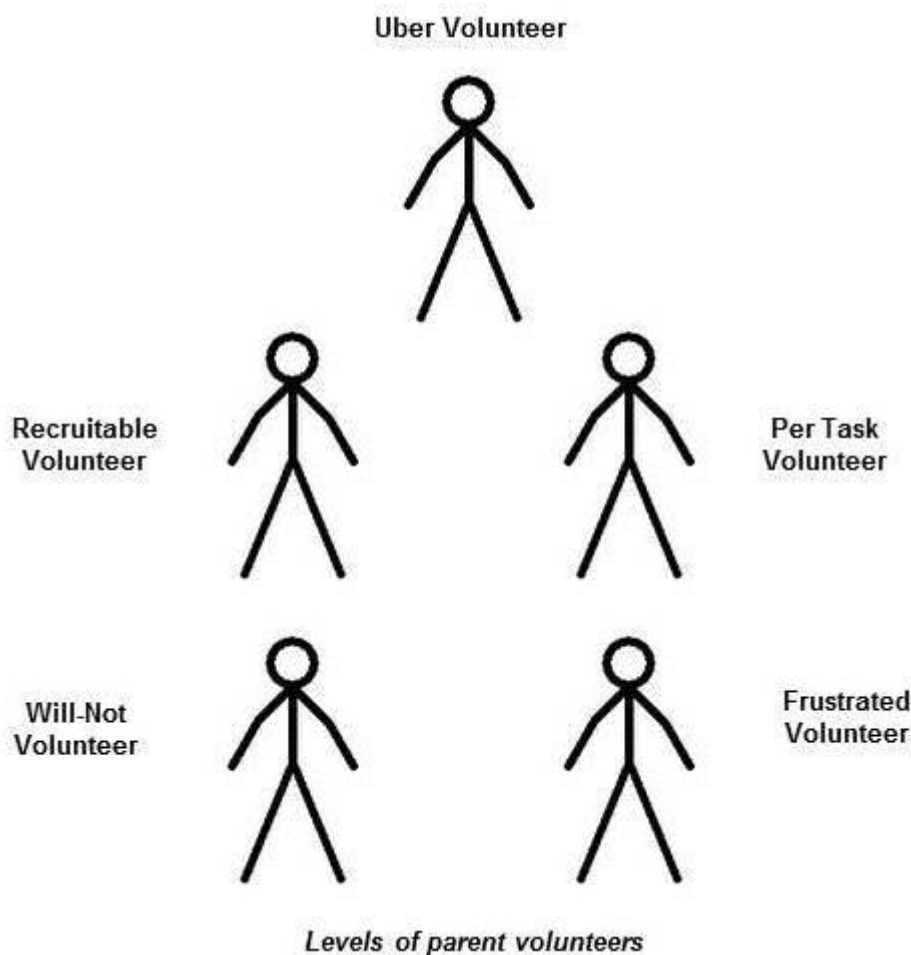Irit from Gibor: "If you do, you can complain; if you don't do, don't complain."

A sub-set of the Will-Not Volunteer includes parents too embarrassed to volunteer, as described by Levana in the Findings chapter above. They prefer to maintain a low profile, often due to embarrassment at their child's low achievement or behavioral issues. To be sure, there are other categories of the Will-Not Volunteer, but the above descriptions were the most prominent in these four schools.

The Frustrated Volunteer

The interviewer heard frustration expressed at times from current as well as past volunteers. Frustration emanated generally from one of two reasons: the desire to volunteer but the feeling that they were unwanted (not recruited for tasks/activities, or not part of the volunteer in-crowd, discussed in the Findings chapter), or the inability to fit scheduling into a busy day. In the latter case, mothers expressed frustration at the school for scheduling most activities during the school day, when they had to work. In some schools there was a very clear closed group of volunteers, which was often hard to penetrate—even though the school and those involved parents were aware of the challenge, as Levana analyzed: "I think there are a lot of parents that do want to, and are willing to, are either embarrassed for some reason or feel not good enough or that maybe they're not wanted." Some parents gave up trying.

This section proposed a new classification of volunteer types, viewed from a different perspective than existing models. Although it is based on findings from four Jewish

schools, it can perhaps also serve to enlighten the dynamics in other settings that include volunteer activity.

Uber Volunteer

Recruitable Volunteer

Per Task Volunteer

Will-Not Volunteer

Frustrated Volunteer

Levels of parent volunteers

The next section will concentrate on the role of leadership in the PI/school culture relationship.

Leadership: Principal, Parent, or Partnership

Two weeks before the 2013-14 school year was to open, *The Jewish Week*, a newspaper with a circulation of approximately 70,000 primarily to Jewish households in the New York area, published an article entitled "Parent Volunteers Are Day Schools' Untapped Resource." Though the parent interviewed for this article was not involved in this research, her words echoed what was found at the four schools that were studied: "I am a parent **leader** at my children's Jewish day school" (stress on the word "leader").

This research studied school culture. A very important finding was linked to the concept of leadership at the school. This is not surprising, considering Schein (1985): "What all this means is that one cannot separate the process of leadership from the process of building culture, that the very issues identified as the problems around which culture is eventually evolved or learned are the issues identified as leadership functions in most theories. One might go so far as to say that a unique function of 'leadership', as contrasted with 'management' or 'administration', is the *creation and management of culture*" (p. 171). This research has demonstrated the role of the *parent* in school leadership and in culture—which are indeed intertwined.

So how is it that the parents bring in culture (symbols, language, values, norms, material culture) to the school? They are leaders, with the principals. Partnership is key, as seen in the findings—the one school without a healthy partnership, Gibor, lacked culture according to most interviewed (according to the researcher, even a "toxic" culture). This was the school with a poorly defined culture, contentious partnership, and weak leadership (no one was willing to take over the role of head of PTA, and the principal was fired after three years). According to Schein, an argument can be made that the principal is an administrator—with the parents the true leaders. If the leadership is faulty, the culture cannot be built. At the other three schools, strong PTA leadership was witnessed, as were vibrant school cultures.

Fullan (2002) carries this thought further. He stresses the importance of relationships, or partnerships: "If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups —especially with people different than themselves…." (p. 7). All PTA heads interviewed expressed the importance of recruiting new parents to become involved—they were relationship builders. Again, when discussing leadership at the school the stress is not only on the principal, but the parent. "The organization cannot flourish (or at least not for long) by the actions of the top leader alone. The commitment necessary for sustainable improvement must be nurtured up close in the dailiness of organizational behavior, and for that to happen there needs to be many leaders around us" (p. 11). The school needs the parents.

This relationship is not equal however, though it is a partnership. The most successful schools understood this, and set limits. Lareau and Munoz (2012) agree: "Researchers have also implicitly suggested that parents and educators are equal partners in this collaboration (Epstein 2005). But the principal has more power than do parents; the relationship is not a partnership between equals. Educators also have different priorities than parents" (p. 214). As mentioned here already several times, the teachers need to impart knowledge; the parents need to contribute to the socialization aspect of education/schooling (more in the next section, below). Principals are leaders and parents are leaders, and through their successful partnership they can together attain the goals of education, the intellectual as well as social.

Peterson and Deal (1998) summarize this relationship well: "How do these strong cultures come about? School leaders—including principals, teachers, and often parents and community members—shape and maintain positive values and shared purpose. School leaders from every level are key to shaping school culture. Principals communicate core values in their everyday work. Teachers reinforce values in their actions and words. Parents bolster spirit when they visit school, participate in governance, and celebrate success. In the strongest schools, leadership comes from many sources" (p. 30). Indeed, strong cultures were demonstrated at three of the four schools studied, and the one with a weak culture lacked the leadership described here.

One school suffered from a lack of bolstered spirit and this may be due in part not only to faulty leadership, as described above, but to misdirected parental attention, to the negative as opposed to the positive. The interviewed parent in *The Jewish Week* article mentioned above continues to explain, "Part of what has made our parents' association successful is that we encourage parents to, instead of assuming the role of 'upset customer', become active 'problem solvers'." This finding too was very prominent in the four schools studied for this case study. Simply put, partnerships at the schools were much more productive, constructive and effective when parents looked to supplement activities where they could, and not fix what was broken. The schools with clearly defined roles benefited from the best, productive partnerships. It can be said that the

school with parent leadership that focused on looking for problems, instead of offering its skills in areas to improve the school culture, was not a positive environment.

The parent volunteer is not only a leader in the school, but is a force ensuring that socialization and education go hand in hand at the school. This will be discussed next.

Linking Education and Socialization: The Parent is the Binding Force

Over one hundred years ago Dewey (1897) said, "I believe that the school is primarily a social institution," and around that time, Emile Durkheim was one of the first thinkers to specifically link education and sociology. Indeed, Ottaway (1955) has said, "Durkheim might reasonably be considered the founder of educational sociology" (p. 223).

Most current research on PI in the school, however, focuses on the theories of another, more recent, French philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu, particularly his theories of social, human, and cultural capital. Cultural capital is often referred to when discussing education: "By cultural capital [Bourdieu] meant the knowledge, taste, and sensibilities, and the material possessions that together give a person the ability to lay claim to one or another kind of esteem or honor—that is, what Weber called status. Cultural capital in Bourdieu's account has two major sources—first, the habitus of family life and, second, education " (Hall, Neitz, & Battani, 2003, p. 47). Other forms of capital have been discussed by many researchers at great length in the context of PI (for example, Lee & Bowen, 2006 and Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001, to name only a few). It is widely agreed that parents bring these forms of capital to the schools, though there is some disagreement in the literature as to who chooses to "activate," to make use of, these forms of capital, and which forms of capital and from whom, the schools accept (Ballantine & Spade, 2001). In addition, there are those who have suggested that certain types of social capital, particularly "social connectedness" have actually been "eroding" in the United States since the 1950s (Putnam, 1995). In support of Bourdieu's theories, however, Wilson and Musick (1997) bring in Bourdieu's theories on human, social and cultural capital precisely to explain voluntarism. For example, Wilson and Musick write, bringing in Coleman: "While human capital is lodged in individuals, social capital comes from the relations among individuals" (p. 695). Wilson and Musick

140

however, disagree with Bourdieu's "narrow measure of cultural capital. We need to measure how the culture of benevolence is learned" (p. 697). Note that several parents interviewed for this research have stated that one of the reasons they volunteer at the school is to be good role models—to teach a culture of benevolence—to their children.

Though Bourdieu's theories have been extensively examined in the context of volunteerism as well as school culture and the forms of capital that parents bring with them to the school, this section will *not* focus primarily on Bourdieu, but rather, will open up a new dialogue based on Durkheim's earlier works which when re-examined, offer relevant and important explanations and understandings regarding the current findings at the four schools studied. It will look at the role of the parent in the school setting in a more basic and general way, offering a fresh understanding, when revisited, of Durkheim's theories dating to the early twentieth century (based on earlier lectures, his seminal book *Education and Sociology* was originally published in 1922, and *Moral Education* in 1925). "While sociologists of education are willing to pay tribute to Durkheim, few contemporary American educators seem to be aware of Durkheim's work on education" (Goldstein, 1976). As mentioned, much has been offered in the existing literature with regard to the forms of capital parents bring with them to the school; now, with Emile Durkheim as a backdrop, while considering the parent volunteers at the schools, their specific role in linking education and socialization will be explained (definitions of education and socialization were offered in the Findings chapter). As Durkheim (1973) stated almost a century ago, "if there is a country in which the role of the school is particularly important and necessary, it is ours....Indeed, with the exception of the school, there is no longer in this country any society intermediate between the family and the state-that is to say, a society that is not merely artificial or superficial" (p. 232). The role of the school of course remains important and necessary today too, and the relevance of his theories today too will be discussed below.

Durkheim (1956) states early on that "In order that there be education, there must be a generation of adults and one of youth, in interaction, and an influence exercised by the first on the second. It remains for us to define the nature of this influence" (p. 67). This research was an attempt to define, or explain, this influence. Note that Durkheim does

141

not say "teacher," but merely "adult," which would most probably include the parent, based on his later comments. A few pages after, he continues, "*We come then to the following formula: Education is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states which are demanded of him by both the political society as a whole and the special milieu for which he is specifically destined*…. It follows from the definition that precedes, that education consists of a methodical socialization of the young generation" (p. 71). Again, education includes socialization, and the findings of this research have shown how instrumental parents are in building school culture and the social aspects of education, while also building community (one sees the importance of the parents' role in building community in later research, e.g., Epstein 1995 and 2001). Durkheim, however, talks of a unidirectional influence, the adult/parent on the child/student; note that this study suggests that parents too can be socialized at the school as a result of the school culture, strengthening Pomson's writings (in Wertheimer, 2007).
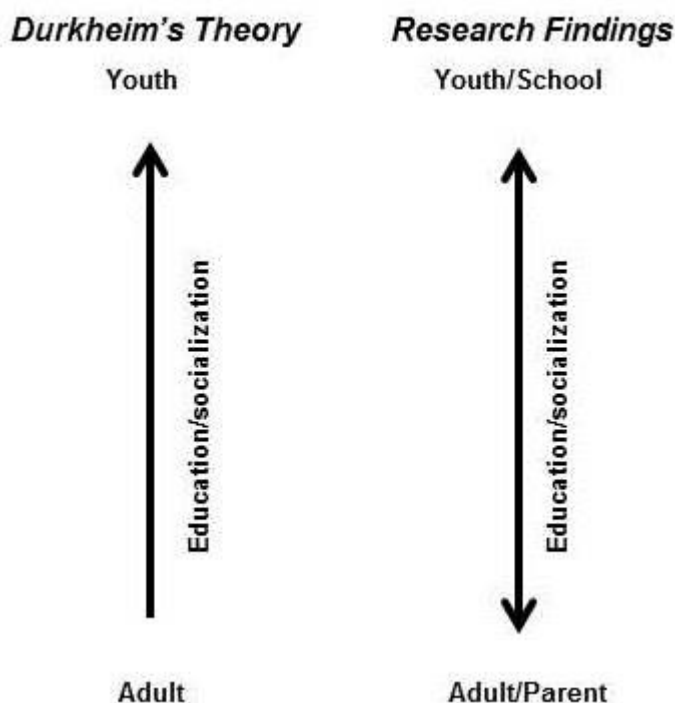
Durkheim (1956) continues, discussing the social function of the school for society, "If, as we have tried to establish, education has a collective function above all, if its object is to adapt the child to the social milieu in which he is destined to live, it is impossible that society should be uninterested in such a procedure...." (p. 79) Society in the individual case of a school could surely be defined as including the parent body. Durkheim discusses the role of the broader society in educating the child to fit into society at large; the findings of this research suggest that Durkheim's ideas can be applied in a similar manner, though at the school level, with "parent" being defined the local "society." Indeed, in the schools studied, we have seen how important socializing is to the school "society," in this case, parent body—as seen in activities ranging from parent encouraged food norms (e.g., sushi) to religious values (e.g., experiential biblical and historical enactments). Ultimately, the child will of course step out of the smaller school society and be a part of society at large, the society to which the parents belong and with which they share values, beliefs, and traditions—the culture, or habitus. "If the child, at this decisive time, is carried along in the current of social life, the changes are strong that he will remain oriented in this way throughout his life....This is what accounts for the tremendous social significance of the school today. And this is why the nation hopes for so much in the teacher. It is not simply because of the intellectual training that he can give. What many people feel strongly is that we have here an unexcelled opportunity to exert a kind of influence on the child which nothing else can replace." (Durkheim, 1973, p. 239). Durkheim's theory hints at the joint roles of the teacher and parent at educating ("intellectual training") and socializing the children; the research findings demonstrated the relevance of this collaboration, today.

Durkheim (1956) does finally directly mention the role of the parent in the same breath as the teacher: "But the child can know his duty only through his teachers or his parents; he can know what it is only through the manner in which they reveal it to him through their language and through their conduct. They must be, then, for him, duty incarnate and personified…. Education is the influence exerted on children by parents and teachers. This influence is always present and it is general…. all educational practices, whatever they may be, whatever differences there may be among them, have in common one essential characteristic: they all follow from the influence exercised by one

generation on the following generation with an eye to adapting the latter to the social milieu in which it is called upon to live" (p. 88, 91, 95). And, "Since, in the long run, one only learns to do by doing, we must multiply the opportunities in which the sentiments thus communicated to the child can manifest themselves in actions" (Durkheim, 1973, p. 229). This exemplifies the importance of school activities, which this research has shown, is often led by parents. Furthermore, in another work (*The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, 1912), Durkheim discusses "collective effervescence" (Lincoln & Guillot, 2005, p. 104). Though this theory was developed primarily to describe the evolution of religion, it is suggested that this may also be applied to describe the development of a specific school culture which involves rituals, beliefs, and traditions. This research has demonstrated how important parents are in this collective effervescence, building up the school culture. The research looked at the parents directly and the teachers indirectly—both working together. Durkheim did not specify the different roles, but by observing these four schools it is *suggested* that in the three more culturally rich school settings, where parents were involved in the social aspect of the schools' running, where the collective effervescence built up a school culture—the teachers could better concentrate on the educational aspects of the school's role. The one struggling school lacked a strong school culture and also struggled with a reputation for lower educational standards.
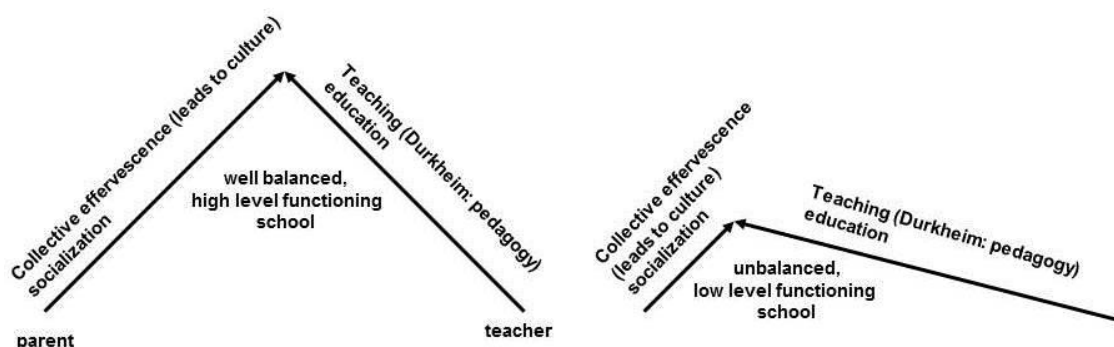
Though the school of the turn of the twentieth century undoubtedly looked very different from the modern school—especially the modern religious Zionist schools studied here—Durkheim was able to put his finger on a number of principles that apply today. Parents, principals and municipality heads interviewed stressed over and over again the importance of PI (albeit some were more successful in practice than others),

144

for bringing in fresh ideas and to serve as "checks and balances." Parents can see what goes on at the school from a different perspective, alerting authorities to safety hazards not seen by worn staff; and offering new educational technologies, methods and even creative architectural solutions to traditionally accepted overcrowding as seen at one school, to name a few. Durhkeim himself hints at this role: "Now, the only way to prevent education from falling under the yoke of habit and from degenerating into mechanical and immutable automatism is to keep it constantly adaptable by reflection" (p. 105). Several interviewees mentioned the importance of new PTA heads every two or so years, in order to keep new ideas flowing and to prevent "habit and degeneration." Durkheim offers another reason for the importance of PI: "The better we understand society, the better shall we be able to account for all that happens in that social microcosm that the school is" (p. 131). In other words, to understand the school one needs to understand the parents of that school who are living in the society. All are intricately connected.
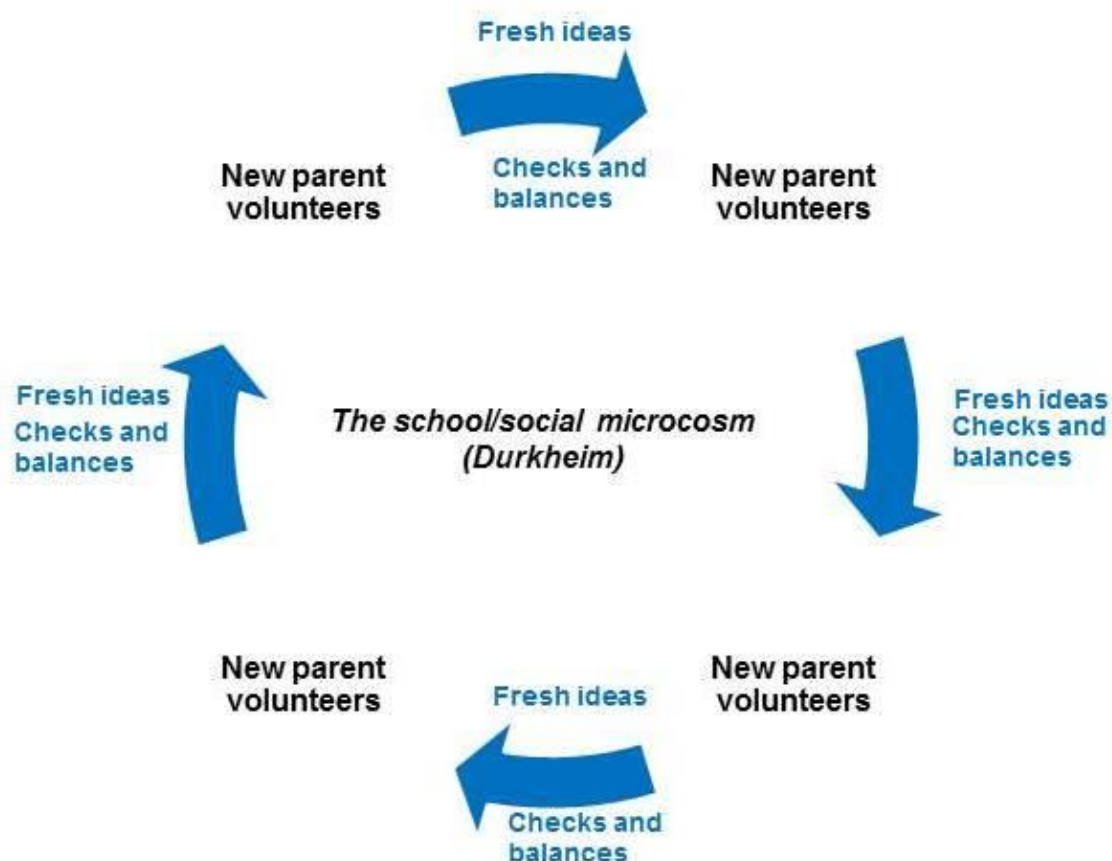
This section opened with a claim that few educators credit Durkheim for his contribution to education. Weininger & Lareau (n.d.) add to this sentiment, saying,

"Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital…is likely to be an important part of the discussions in theories of…the sociology of education in the future." This discussion was an attempt to open a new dialogue, to show how relevant the theories of two Frenchmen, Durkheim of the turn of the century and Bourdieu of more recently, are to the findings at two Israeli and American Jewish schools.

It can be seen that the theories offered by Bourdieu, more widely discussed in the current literature, especially in the context of PI and also volunteerism, and Durkheim, less prevalent in the current literature but discussed above in detail, offer various explanations for the dynamic between the parent volunteer and school culture. "There are two vehicles at our disposal: first, the school environment itself [facilitated by the parents]; secondly, that which is taught [led by the teachers]. … There is therefore a great distance between the moral state in which the child finds himself as he leaves the family and the one toward which he must strive. This road cannot be traveled in a single stage. Intermediaries are necessary [the role of the principal]" (Durkheim, 1973, p. 230); "It is especially the principal of the school who must insure this continuity. Not that he must do the entire job himself, in an authoritarian manner—just as the teacher does not have the entire job of fashioning the spirit of the classroom....In brief, the principal is responsible for the spirit and the moral unity of the school, and the teacher is responsible for the spirit and moral unity of the class." (p. 248). Though not articulated directly, Durkheim acknowledged the importance of the parent-teacher-principal partnership at the school.

Where Durkheim discusses collective effervescence—or, at the classroom level, collective experience, "its laws, its familiar precepts, its proverbs, and so" (Durkheim, 1973, p. 244)—Bourdieu offers "collective habitus" (Nash, 1990, p. 434), defined by Lee and Bowen (2006) as "'a system of dispositions' that results from social training and past experience" (p. 198). Both terms refer to the school's culture. And where Bourdieu labels what *parents* (adults, in Durkheim's description) bring with them to the school, namely the various forms of capital, most especially social and cultural, Durkheim earlier also stressed the importance of the *adult* generation, the *parents and the teachers*, specifically their language and conduct. Each refer to the unique role of

146

parents in the school. Current literature on school culture is rife with references to Bourdieu's forms of capital that parents bring to the school; this section was an attempt to give credit to Bourdieu's French predecessor, Emile Durkheim, considered by many as the father of sociology, who also had important insights with regard to the role of parents and school culture, laying important theoretical groundwork for what would later be further developed, but which has been largely forgotten and/or overlooked. His writings shed immense light on the findings of this research, its meaning, and hopefully, will continue to be an active player in the scholarly as well as practical dialogue surrounding school culture.

In summary, the specific findings of this research, a case study of four religious Jewish schools in both Israel and America, suggest the overarching importance of the parent— of parent involvement—for the cultural development of the school, the socialization of the students (as well as the parents), and indeed, the overall dynamic development of the school and its balanced functioning. Whether one uses the term habitus or effervescence, singles out parents at the school or merely alludes to them, it is apparent that the role of socialization at the school, in large part, is due to active parent involvement in all of its various forms, via the parent volunteer, in partnership with the school leadership and accompanied by educational scholarship.

148

Study Contributions and Recommendations for Future Research

Four schools were studied in depth over a two year period. The findings were analyzed qualitatively and discussed in the chapters above. New light has been shed in terms of theoretical contributions to the academic community, methodological insights are offered, and practical suggestions are presented.

Theoretical contributions

This research was carried out during the 2011-12 and 2012-13 academic years. Nonetheless, the findings were linked, among others, to classical thought dating back almost one hundred years prior, re-opening a dialogue with classical sociological literature, most specifically that of Emile Durkheim. It has been demonstrated that much of what was said by Durkheim about the French school and society, can be applied to current educational and sociological thought. It is hoped that this discussion with continue, and will be further intertwined with the more recent thought of another French philosopher also discussed above, Pierre Bourdieu, who also contributed to the sociology of education, albeit a few decades later. In addition, the findings here may shed additional light on various theories of organizational culture, such as that of Schein (1985).

Methodological insights

This research followed rather straightforward "textbook" qualitative research methods, i.e., the extensive use of semi-structured interviews, observations, and documents. It, however, raised many unanticipated challenges for the researcher, most specifically with regard to the insider/outsider dilemma, many issues that are not specifically addressed in the professional literature. Though there were very clear and indeed important advantages to carrying out research in schools where the researcher's children were currently studying—among them increased ease and frequency of access—several issues that had to be addressed, did arise, among them: Can (from an ethical perspective) data collection begin before official approval since the researcher is on site anyway? Are all observations at the school, even those emanating from participation as a parent, considered observations for research purposes, or only designated observations? What does the researcher do with information gleaned that may harm the

researcher's child—in other words, must confidentiality be maintained? What about information about questionable teachers, principals, and educational practices? When does the researcher's role end, e.g., once the researcher ceases to officially collect data, can the findings then be discussed with school administration in order to improve the school, or do the ethics of confidentiality still apply? Future researchers with similar scenarios would be advised to consider these challenges and dilemmas as well as others before proceeding with their research, and to be particularly aware of them throughout the study.

Practical suggestions

It is of course hoped that schools, principals, and parents will be able to learn from the findings of this research. Even Durkheim (1956) who considered himself a scientist, was aware of his role as a citizen and wanted his scientific work to find practical applications (p. 21). Although only four schools were studied, because they were documented in such depth, it is believed that the readers will be able to come to their own conclusions as to where specific scenarios and findings can be applied in other settings. For example, it was seen at one school that over-attention given to finding problems rather than investing in school-building activities for the children, was counterproductive and led in the long run to a major crisis both in terms of the school's management and the parent body. One can also learn from this research about effective parent-recruitment practices, as well as parent volunteer types and how to best manage this valuable resource. And principals may find a common voice with the other principals interviewed for this research, not only in terms of challenges and frustrations but also how parents can be an excellent support system for the school, if managed properly. There is of course no magic formula, but this research has shown how important PI is to school culture, which can be at times healthy but also at times, toxic.

Recommendations for future research

Many questions remain, and these questions open the door for further research. For example, as mentioned above, a dialogue on Durkheim's thoughts has been re-opened. It would be interesting to explore this classical sociologist further in light of contemporary society. From a methodological perspective, it would be interesting to

hear other experiences of researchers who find themselves with similar insider/outsider dilemmas, especially regarding the school system and particularly, the researcher's own children. In addition, as this is such a rich and growing field, the possibility of follow-up research from different angles, using quantitative (perhaps even longitudinal) and mixed-methods, should be considered. And finally, one voice was clearly missing throughout this study—that of the non-involved parent. In order to properly understand the school culture, more research must be done on the parent who chooses *not* to become involved in the school. As mentioned several times, this voice was clearly lacking.

152

References

Abrams, L. S., & Gibbs, J. T. (2002). Disrupting the logic of home–school relations: Parent involvement strategies and practices of inclusion and exclusion. *Urban Education, 37*(3), 384–407.

Ackerman, W. (2000). The Americanization of Israeli education. *Israel Studies, 5*(1), 228–243.

Addi-Raccah, A., & Arviv-Elyashiv, R. (2008). Parent empowerment and teacher professionalism: Teachers' perspective. *Urban Education, 43*(3), 394–415.

Alvesson, M. (2013). *Understanding organizational culture.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Anderson, K. J., & Minke, K. M. (2007). Parent involvement in education: Toward an understanding of parents' decision making. *The Journal of Educational Research, 100*(5), 311–323.

Ballantine, J. H., & Spade, J. Z. (2001). *Schools & society: A sociological approach to education*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Barth, R. (2002). The culture builder. *Educational Leadership, 59*(8), 6–11.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544–559.

Bernstein, G., & Triger, Z. (2010). Over parenting. *UC Davis Law Review, 44*(4), 1221–1279.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.

Buras, K. L., & Apple, M. W. (2005). School choice, neoliberal promises, and unpromising evidence. *Educational Policy 19*, 550–564.

Burstein, A. (2010). *Parent involvement in the school: A culture of ambivalence and contrasts, case study* (Unpublished master's-level thesis). Bar-Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel.

Carson, E. D. (1999). On defining and measuring volunteering in the United States and abroad. *Law and Contemporary Problems, 62*(4), 67–71.

Clary, E. G., & Snyder, M. (1999). The motivations to volunteer: Theoretical and practical considerations. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 8(*5), 156–159.

Cnaan, R. A., Handy, F., & Wadsworth, M. (1996). Defining who is a volunteer: Conceptual and empirical considerations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 25*(3), 364–383.

Cohen, E. (2001). A structural analysis of the R. Kahane code of informality: Elements toward a theory of informal education. *Sociological Inquiry, 71*(3), 357–380.

Cohen, A., & Court, D. (2003). Ethnography and case study: A comparative analysis. *Academic Exchange Quarterly, 7*(3), 283–287.

Cohen, S. M., Miller, R., Sheskin, I. M., & Torr, B. (2011). *Camp works: The long-term impact of Jewish overnight camp*. Retrieved from the Foundation for Jewish Camp website:

http://www.jewishcamp.org/sites/default/files/u5/NEW%20Camp_Works_for_Web
.pdf

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing ground theory.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cremin, L. A. (1989). *Popular education and its discontents.* New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

De Acosta, M. (1996). A foundational approach to preparing teachers for family and community involvement in children's education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 47*(1), 9–15.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1990).*The principal's role in shaping school culture.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (2009). *Shaping school culture: Pitfalls, paradoxes and promises.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Dekker, P., & Halman, L. (2003). Volunteering and values: An introduction. In P. Decker & L. Halman (Eds.), *The values of volunteering: Cross-cultural perspectives* (pp. 1–17). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

DeMoss, S. E., Vaughn, C., & Lagenbach, M. (1996). Parental perceptions of long-term involvement with their children's schooling. *NASSP Bulletin, 80*(583), 92–101.

Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed. *The School Journal, 54*(3), 77–80.

Domina, T. (2005). Leveling the home advantage: Assessing the effectiveness of

parental involvement in elementary school. *Sociology of Education, 78,* 233–249.

Drennan, D. (1992). *Transforming company culture*. London, United Kingdom:

McGraw-Hill.

Durkheim, E. (1956). *Education and sociology* (S. D. Fox, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: Free

Press.

Durkheim, E. (1973). *Moral education: A study in the theory and application of the

sociology of education* (E. K. Wilson, Ed., E. K. Wilson & H. Schnurer, Trans.).

New York, NY: Free Press.

Epstein, J. L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76*(9),

701–712.

Epstein, J. L. (2001). *School, family and community partnerships*. Boulder, CO:

Westview Press.

Erickson, F. (1987). Conceptions of school culture: An overview. *Educational

Administration Quarterly, 23*(4), 11–23.

Flynn, G., & Nolan, B. (2008). What do school principals think about current school-

family relationships? *NASSP Bulletin, 92*(3), 173–190.

Freeman, R. B. (1997). Working for nothing: The supply of volunteer labor. *Journal of

Labor Economics, 15*(1), 140–166.

Friedman, I. A. (2004). Organizational expectations of the novice teacher. *Social

Psychology of Education, 7*, 435–461.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M. (2002). *Principals as leaders in a culture of change.* Ontario Institute for

Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Retrieved

from

http://pil.numplus.com/fullan/Resources/Principals%20as%20Leaders%20in%20a

%20Culture%20of%20Change.pdf

Gee, L. K. (2011). The nature of giving time to your child's school. *Nonprofit and

Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *40*(3), 552–565.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Gibton, D., Sabar, N., & Goldring, E. B. (2000). How principals of autonomous schools

in Israel view implementation of decentralization and restructuring policy: Risks,

rights, and wrongs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 22*(2), 193–210.

Gillies, V., & Edwards, R. (2006). A qualitative analysis of parenting and social capital:

Comparing the work of Coleman and Bourdieu. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, *2*(2),

42–60.

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*.

New York, NY: Longman.

Goldring, E. B. (1991). Parents: Participants in an organizational framework.

International Journal of Educational Research, 15(2), 215–228.

Goldstein, M. A. (1976). Durkheim's sociology of education: Interpretations of social

change through education. *Educational Theory*, *26*, 289–297. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-

5446.1976.tb00737.x

Hall, J. R., Neitz, M. J., & Battani, M. (2003). *Sociology on culture*. London, United Kingdom: Routledge.

Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (2002). *A new wave of evidence. The impact of school, family, and community on student achievement. Annual synthesis*. Austin, TX: National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Henslin, J. M. (2001). *Sociology: A down-to-earth approach* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Hofstede, G. (1991). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. London, United Kingdom: McGraw-Hill.

Hoover-Dempsey, K.V., Walker, J. M. T., & Sandler, H. M. (2005). Parents' motivations for involvement in their children's education. In E. N. Patrikakou, R. P. Weissberg, S. Redding, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *School-family partnerships for children's success* (pp. 40–56). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Hoover-Dempsey, K. V, Walker, J. M. T., Sandler, H. M., Whetsel, D., Green, C. L., Wilkins, A. S., *et al.* (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal, 106*(2), 105–130.

Hoy, W. (1990). Organizational climate and culture: A conceptual analysis of the school workplace. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 1*(2), 149–168.

Jeynes, W. H. (2010). The salience of the subtle aspects of parental involvement and encouraging that involvement: Implications for school-based programs. *Teachers College Record 112*(3), 747–774.

Ji, C. S., & Koblinsky, S. A. (2009). Parent involvement in children's education: An

  exploratory study of urban, Chinese, and immigrant families. *Urban Education,*

  44(6), 687–709.

Keller, B. (2008). Scholars seek to channel parent involvement. *Education Week,*

  27(31), 1–17. Retrieved from

  http://teleparent.net/pdf/2008_Education_Week_Schools_Seek_to_Channel_Parent

  _Involvement.pdf

Kvale, S. (2007). Doing interviews. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage qualitative research kit*.

  Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative*

  research interviewing. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley, CA:

  University of California Press.

Lareau, A., & Muñoz, V. L. (2012). "You're Not Going to Call the Shots": Structural

  conflicts between the principal and PTO at a suburban public elementary school.

  Sociology of Education, 85(3), 201–218.

Lee, J.-S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the

  achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational*

  Research Journal 43(2), 193–218.

Lightfoot, D. (2004). "Some parents just don't care": Decoding the meanings of parental

  involvement in urban schools. *Urban Education, 39*(1), 91–107.

Lincoln, J. R., & Guillot, D. A. (2005). Durkheimian view of organizational culture. In

M. Korczynski, R. Hodson, & P. K. Edwards (Eds.), *Social theory at work* (pp. 88–

120). Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press.

Lopez, G. R., Scribner, J. D., & Mahitivanichcha, K. (2001). Redefining parental

involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American

Educational Research Journal, 38*(2), 253–288.

Mapp, K. L. (2002, April). *Having their say: Parents describe how and why they are

involved in their children's education.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the

American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Marshall, J. M., Hamrick, F. A., & Goodman, P. (2009). Principal considerations: Super

parent or super pain? *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 12*(4), 37–47.

Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality.* New York, NY: Harper.

Matsuba, M. K., Hart, D., & Atkins, R. (2007). Psychological and social-structural

influences on commitment to volunteering. *Journal of Research in Personality, 41,*

889–907.

Mattingly, D. J., Prislin, R., McKensie, T. L., Rodriguez, J. L., & Kayzar, B. (2002).

Evaluating evaluations: The case of parent involvement programs. *Review of

Educational Research, 72*(4), 549–576.

Matusov, E., & Rogoff, B. (2002). Newcomer and old-timers: Educational

philosophies-in-action of parent volunteers in a community of learners school.

Anthropology and Education Quarlerly, 33(4), 415–440.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Murray, M., Curran, E., & Zellers, D. (2008). Building parent/professional partnerships: An innovative approach for teacher education. *The Teacher Educator, 43*(2), 87–108.

Mustillo, S., Wilson, J., & Lynch, S. M. (2004). Legacy volunteering: A test of two theories of intergenerational transmission. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 66*, 530–541.

Nakagawa, K. (2000). Unthreading the ties that bind: Questioning the discourse of parent involvement. *Educational Policy, 14*(4), 443–472.

Nash, R. (1990). Bourdieu on education and social and cultural reproduction. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 11*(4), 431–447.

Nathan, J. (1996). *Charter schools: Creating hope and opportunity for American education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). Validity and qualitative research: An oxymoron? *Quality & Quantity, 41*, 233–249.

Ottaway, A. K. C. (1955). The educational sociology of Emile Durkheim. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *6*(3), 213–227.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pazzaglia, G., & Williams, C. (2012). Bring food and culture to the classroom. *Journal of School Health, 82*(12), 577–580.

Pena, D. C. (2000). Parent involvement: Influencing factors and implications. *The Journal of Educational Research, 94*(1), 42–54.

Peterson, K. D. (2001). The roar of complexity. *Journal of Staff Development, 22*(1), 18–21.

Peterson, K. D. (2002). Positive or negative. *Journal of Staff Development, 23*(3), 10–15.

Peterson, K. D., & Campbell, D. E. (Eds.). (2001). *Charters, vouchers, and public education*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Peterson, K. D., & Deal, T. E. (1998). How leaders influence the culture of schools. *Educational Leadership, 56*(1), 28–30.

Pomerantz, E. M., Moorman, E. A., & Litwack, S. D. (2007). The how, whom, and why of parents' involvement in children's academic lives: More is not always better. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(3), 373–410.

Posey-Madox, L. (2013). Professionalizing the PTO: Race, class, and shifting norms of parental engagement in a city public school. *American Journal of Education, 119*, 235–260.

Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy, 6*(1), 65–78.

Rapp, N., & Duncan, H. (2012). Multi-dimensional parental involvement in schools: A principal's guide. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation, 7*(1), 1–14. Retrieved from http://cnx.org/content/m42022/1.2/

Reimer, J. (2007). Beyond more Jews doing Jewish: Clarifying the goals of informal Jewish education. *Journal of Jewish Education*, *73*(1), 5–23.

Rubin Ross, R. (2012). Forms and patterns of parent participation at a Jewish and

    Catholic school. *Journal of Jewish Education, 78*(1), 5–33.

Sanders, M. G. (2008). How parent liaisons can help bridge the home-school gap. *The

    Journal of Educational Research, 101*(5), 287–298.

Schein, E. H. (1985). Organizational culture and leadership. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-

    Bass.

Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist, 45*(2), 109–119.

Schneider, B., Ehrhart, M. G., & Macey, W. H. (2012). Organizational climate and

    culture. *Annual review of psychology*, *64*, 361-388.

Schoen, L. T., & Teddlie, C. (2008). A new model of school culture: Response to a call

    for conceptual clarity. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 19*(2), 129–

    153.

Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2004). Getting students to school: Using family and

    community involvement to reduce chronic absenteeism. *The School Community

    Journal*, *14*(2), 39–56.

Shepard, J., & Carlson, J. S. (2003). An empirical evaluation of school-based prevention

    programs that involve parents. *Psychology in the Schools, 40*(6), 641–656.

Shin, S., & Kleiner, B. H. (2003). How to manage unpaid volunteers in organisations.

    Management Research News, 26(2/3/4), 63–71.

Shumow, L., & Miller, J. D. (2001). Parents' at-home and at-school academic

    involvement with young adolescents. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 21*(1), 68–91.

Smith, D. H. (1981). Altruism, volunteers, and volunteerism. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 10,* 21–36. Retrieved from http://nvs.sagepub.com/content/10/1/21

Smrekar, C., & Cohen-Vogel, L. (2001). The voices of parents: Rethinking the intersection of family and school. *Peabody Journal of Education, 76*(2), 75–100.

Smrekar, C. E., Cohen-Vogel, L., & Lee, J.-E. (2010). Mapping family-school relations in comprehensive school reform models and charter school designs: A call for a new research agenda. In S. Christenson & A. Reschly (Eds.), *Handbook of school-family partnerships for promoting student competence* (pp. 380–406). New York, NY: Routledge.

Sokolowski, S. W. (1996). Show me the way to the next worthy deed: Towards a microstructural theory of volunteering and giving. *Voluntas, 7*(3), 259–278.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stolp, S. (1994). Leadership for school culture. *ERIC Digest*, *91*. Retrieved from https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/3312/digest091.pdf

Wang, L., & Fahey, D. (2010). Parental volunteering: The resulting trends since No Child Left behind. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 20*(10), 1–19.

Warren, M. R., Hong, S., Rubin, C. H., & Uy, P. S. (2009). Beyond the bake sale: A community-based relational approach to parent engagement in schools. *Teachers College Record, 111*(9), 2209–2254.

Weiner-Levy, N. (2009). When the hegemony studies the minority—an Israeli Jewish researcher studies Druze women: Transformations of power, alienation, and affinity in the field. *Qualitative Inquiry, 15*(4), 721–739.

Weininger, E. B., & Lareau, A. (n.d.). *Cultural capital*. Retrieved from

http://www.brockport.edu/sociology/faculty/Cultural_Capital.pdf

Wertheimer, J. (2007). *Family matters: Jewish education in an age of choice*. Lebanon,

NH: University Press of New England.

Wilson, J. (2000). Volunteering. *American Sociological Review*, *26*, 215–240.

Wilson, J., & Musick, M. (1997). Who cares? Toward an integrated theory of volunteer

work. *American Sociological Review 62*(5), 694–713.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods. Applied Social Research

Methods Series* (3rd ed., Vol. 5). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

בן-ארי, ט׳ (ללא תאריך). *שיתוף כל קול ההורים – הכרת חינוכי*. אוחזר בתאריך 20 בדצמבר 2009

מתוך

http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/Zchuyot/PinkasHazchuyot/Shituf

Horim.htm

בנבנשתי, ר׳ (2006). *נטור כבסיס להעצמת הורים ולהשתתפותם בתהליכים לקידום בית הספר

ותלמידיו*. ירושלים : אוניברסיטה העברית.

גור, ח׳ וזלמנסון-לוי, ג׳(2005). יחסי הורים-בית ספר מנקודת מבט של החינוך הביקורתי *.החינוך

וסביבו 27, 142-131.*

גרומב, מ׳ (2011). *מישהו להתנדב אתו : התנדבות ובני נוער מתנדבים במאה ב-21*. כפר סבא : נדב-

הוצאת ספרים.

דיין, א׳ (1999). הורים ללא גבולות. *הד החינוך 73* (8), 11-8.

הרפז, י׳ (2004). *מדברים קהילתית*. תל אביב : ידיעות אחרונות.

וידיסלבסקי, מ׳ (ללא תאריך). של מי האופק הזה? שיתוף ההורים בתהליכי ההבניה המחודשת

לאור ״אופק חדש". אוחזר בתאריך 3 יולי 2014 מתוך

http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/FD36B0FC-D84B-492A-95F1-

.1370C0FE3C54/112134/4shelmiHaofekhaze.pdf

וידיסלבסקי, מ׳ ושמש, ד׳ (תש״ע). מדריך לניהול עבודת בית-הספר וההורים. גף הפרסומים משרד

החינוך, ירושלים. אוחזר בתאריך 3 יולי 2014 מתוך

http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/EB98CFDC-B370-4D31-8009-

.99BCE793383A/109309/madrichNiholGreadNEW.pdf

וינקלר, ר׳ (1997). מעורבות הורים בבתי ספר. *דעת-אתר לימודי יהדות ורוח, הגיגי גבעה* . אוחזר

בתאריך 16 בנובמבר 2009 מתוך- www.daat.ac.il/daat/kitveyet/hagigey/meoravut ,

2.htm,

טרופר, ח׳ (2013). *מקום בעולם : מחשבת על חינוך* . תל אביב : ידיעות אחרונות ספרי חמד.

ינון, א׳ (תשנ״ז 1997). מעורבות ושותפות הורים-גישות שונות. בתוך א׳ פלדי (עורך), *החינוך במבחן
הזמן* (עמ׳ 360-366). תל אביב: רמות .

כהן, א׳ וכהן, ע׳ (1997). *החינוך האפור בישראל תל״ן בשנות התשעים*. ירושלים : אייסס-מכון לחקר
מערכות חינוך.

לוי, ג׳ ״הורים, יש לכם זכות השפעה בבי״ס״. אתר YNET, 13.10.2010 . אוחזר בתאריך 14

בנובמבר 2010 מתוך http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3957983,00.html.

מכטר, א.(2001). מניעי מעורבות הורים בבתי ספר קהילתיים בישראל. *החינוך וסביבו 23*, 241-258.

משרד ראש הממשלה, ועדת המשנה של השולחן העגול בנושא התנדבות (2010). ״השולחן העגול
הממקשיי״ מצע לדיון : קידום התנדבות והשתתפות חברתית בישראל בראיה תלת מגזרית.

אוחזר בתאריך 29 בנובמבר 2011

מתוך-http://www.pmo.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/89C2DFD1-5019-484B-88A1

F5C9C050CABD/0/Agol151111.pdf

סגינר, ר׳ (2002). בית הספר והמשפחה : מתחים ושותפויות. *מנחה למנחה 10,* 89-94.

עומר, ח׳ (2008). *הסמכות החדשה : במשפחה, בבית הספר, בקהילה.* מושב בן שמן : מודן.

עמית, ח׳ (2005). מעורבות בעירבון מוגבל. *הד חינוך 10,* 43-40.

פישר, י. (2010). *אפשר גם אחרת : סיפורי הצלחה של שותפויות הורים בבית הספר .* מכון מופי״ת.

פישר, י. (2007). מצוינות בחינוך : המודל התיאורטי ויישומו. *עיונים במנהל ובארגון החינוך 29, 31-
53.*

פישר, יעל ופרידמן י׳ (2009) . ההורים ובית הספר : יחסי גומלין ומעורבות .*דפים 47,* 11-37.

פרידמן, י׳ (2010). *יחסי בית ספר, הורים בישראל,* חומר רקע לעבודת
היזמה,http://education.academy.ac.il. אוחזר בתאריך 17 באוקטובר 2013
מתוך
http://education.academy.ac.il/Uploads/BackgroundMaterials/Hebrew/Parents%20S
chools%20Relations-Friedman.pdf.

פרידמן, י׳ ופישר, י׳ (2002). הזדהות וערות : יסודות במעורבות ההורים בעבודת בית הספר. *עיונים
במנהל ובארגון החינוך 26,* 7-34.

פרידמן, י׳ ופישר, י׳ (2003). *ההורים ובית הספר : עמדות ורמת מעורבות.* ירושלים : מכון הנרייטה
סאלד .

ריחאני, ח׳ (2004). *"בין הצהרה ליישום״ : מעורבות הורים בבי״ס הערביים בתוכנית קרב.* דו״ח,
משרד החינוך.

168

Appendices

Below is a very small selection of some of the interviews, observations, and documents collected from the four schools researched. In the interest of space only a sampling are included below (one interview, plus two observations and documents per school), though all contributed to the findings. Identifying details have been removed, blackened out, or changed in order to maintain confidentiality.

Sample Interview

Levana (from Gibor School) 30 Oct. 12 9:30 researcher's home

[You never know who will give you the best insights. This was an amazing interview. I had no expectations, but it lasted over an hour and the last half hour or so was full of insights such as the quote below, which just sums it all up, I think. Never turn off recorder till end, best insights there. House was quiet and clean, husband came down and left. I offered her coffee, she took, very opinionated (only if you have not powder, too dark need more milk—but OK!). Mood was fine, I had thought she'd be cold and snippety (indeed, she said her husband asked her why she's wasting her time on me!). I liked that she was culturally not like anyone else—convert, anglo, married to oriental, living in low socioeconomic section of town. Left me with a depressed feeling, hearing about all the problems at the school, but for the research I actually got a lot from her. I think she and Ruth hope I will save them—that's why they are cooperating. Puts a lot of pressure on me afterwards to be helpful. Oy. How to deal with this? Question arose: does a school need a culture. It's kind of paralleled to the opinion that some parents don't volunteer since they are in "survival mode" of just getting through the day—this school also is just fighting to survive so can't focus on culture building (though previous principal did…but was fired…). Though very open, talkative, she seemed happy to run out at the end!

End of interview: "The school would survive without it [the parent's committee]. But if you wanted to develop a culture and develop a love for the school and make the school an interesting and exciting place for kids to come to, then you do need a parent's committee. Because teachers are too busy teaching. It's not their job to make parties and events and stuff like that….You can just not be involved, and nothing goes wrong, the world doesn't collapse."]

Ok, first of all, i just want to let you know that in terms of confidentiality, I am sworn to confidentiality, I have my מפקח, we have משרד החינוך, I have all the אישורים, all names will be changed, whatever descriptions. Also, I should be honest with you, at my age I've interviewed so many people, that the second you walk out the door, what you said and who you are, I will not even connect who said what. It's like, yes, I'll remember things people said before, but I'll be like who said what, that's irrelevant, so what you said will be coded or whatever, but will not be connected to a person.

Ok.

Any identifiable person, let's put it that way. So in that respect… you know that and also I'm required to destroy the data at a certain date, this is all done כמו שצריך.

Doesn't bother me.

Just so you should know, I'm very exact. I mean this is very light, but there are certain interviews which are much deeper, so it's all the same rules. So, I'm at Bar Ilan University, I'm doing my Doctorate in education, with a slant, as you may know, education isn't a discipline of itself, it's not like physics or chemistry. It's built of all sorts of things, psychology, sociology, it also has a slant towards anthropology. What I'm studying is parent involvement and school culture. It's qualitative research, I don't know if that means anything to you. Do you know the difference between qualitative and quantitative research, most people don't know.

No.

Ok, qualitative is statistics basically, qualitative is a different kind of research that was typically in the realm of anthropology. We look for descriptions of things.

Ok.

You're not looking to prove a hypothesis. You're looking to discover things.

Ok.

So I'm looking at the school culture, I'm looking at parent volunteers, parent volunteers, parent involvement, I used the two words interchangeably. And I'm interviewing, part of the said research is interviews, I'm interviewing parents, I'm working at two schools in Israel and two schools in America, similar backgrounds and interviewing a little bit of administrators, but mostly parents, so I want to hear from the parents themselves.

What do you want to do with this afterwards?

That's a good question, I don't know, we'll see, [laughs], we'll see.

Are you a teacher?

I'm not a teacher. I've worked actually in the field of education for many years, but not a teacher. A million years ago I taught Hebrew school in America, I don't know if that counts. Back when I was a student.

Are you in the direction of counselor?

I actually have my masters in psychology. I did not work in that field either, but that's a talk for another time, about making aliyah and whatever, that's a different story. So I do actually come from the world of psychology, but my employment has always been more in the fields of education, not so much teaching, more of the תכנון מדיניות, all that type of aspect, so that is where I am now. What I'm going to do with this afterwards, stay tuned,

don't know. You just suspend belief at a certain point, I enjoy what I'm doing and that's where I am now. So, I have, this is what's called a semi-structured interview, which means that I have some questions here, but I discovered through, I've done a lot of interviews already and I've discovered through my interviews that my questions are not always what you always want to tell me. I want to hear what you're going to tell me. So I'm going to, I will, I'm going to open up the discussion to you or whatever you want to call it. If I have some questions I will interject them but this is not a questionnaire of answer this, answer that.

Ok

So in general, again, what I'm looking at is parent involvement and school culture. The reason I'm interviewing you is because a) I saw you at the parent meeting, the PTA meeting, or whatever they call it here, the ועד הורים. Somebody recommended I speak to you. So bearing in mind the school, Gibor, and what you do, why don't we start off, just if you give me a little bit of a background of who you are, just so I know who I'm talking to and what you do in terms of parent involvement at the school.

So, I'm from England and South Africa, half half.

Ok.

I came here as an au pair, stayed for a year, traveled around Europe, decided to settle back here, things weren't going that well in South Africa, I came back here, I converted to Judaism, met my husband, married, had four kids, ah... they all went to, we're dati, they all went to local religious school.

Age range? What's the age range?

My youngest is grade school, oldest high school.

Ok. That's close to what I have, similar range.

I have a BA in drama and English, worked as an actress before coming here. When I came here the language was a problem, so in the end I got involved in art, worked for many years doing murals, worked for the עיריה, doing murals round about the city, and taught art a little bit in חוגים, and then when it got too heavy carrying the paints everywhere I went [laughs], I slowly got into writing and now basically I write on-line, I write content websites.

Ah, what, what types?

Independent. And that's it. But basically I'm a mother full time. And then any, like my husband is the provider of the family, I don't really have to work to contribute, but now that they're getting older, I get the need to do something with my time anyway, so I'm on the computer most of the time. Ah, of my four children, every one of them is a different kind of student and a different kind of personality. The oldest one is…

That's my husband, just leaving, right? [walked down the stairs]

The oldest one is the one with, that I have to work on or with and for and push and pull. Of all of them, he's the only one that I actually worry about and has any kind of problems, so basically when I got involved in the school, it was to get closer so that I had more contact in order to help my son, my oldest son.

Is this high school level, or going back?

From the beginning.

Ok.

Ahhhh(...) and then, so the oldest one has behavior problems and study problems. The second one perfect student, studies at the University once a week, does excellent in everything, quiet, whatever.

Also Gibor?

At girl's school, she's a girl.

Oh, a girl. Right.

Third one, at Gibor, happy go lucky, gets through everything. Not the most brilliant, not stupid, somewhere in the middle, everything goes fine, he can bring himself up, I don't have to do anything.

Ok.

And the last one seems to be doing ok.

At local religious elementary school.

Yes.

Ok.

And that's it. So because I'm involved in art, everything of my involvement in the school started off with me helping out with things to do with art. I would come in and do classes with the school with the class and stuff. I've done assemblies when I've taken the whole שכבה, and organized them into something to do with drama. So I've been on the ועד כיתה, and then the ועד בית ספר.

You're talking about all the kids.

Basically all of them, now I'm going less and less. Let's say in the last two years less, and then I've also been on the ועד of the עיריה, the one where they send representatives from each school.

Ah, ישובי. ?

I went there for a couple of years, for the grade school.

Ok.

Ahm, (...) I think that being involved in the school definitely helps with the way they treat your child.

Ok.

Definitely.

Can you tell me more about that? Examples maybe.

I mean they actually do. I've actually been told in my face by a headmistress, if it wasn't for your parents, your parents weren't so, you wouldn't be here, they said to my child, you know.

Ok.

Or… you know, if it wasn't you, we would have sent you home. If it wasn't this family, we would have sent your son home kind of thing.

Wow.

If things had gone wrong…

And you think this is because of your presence?

Definitely.

Wow. Ok.

At Gibor the head master said you've only passed בגרות because of the parents you've got. Said to my son. Not because of the involvement and the thing, but because of the pushing and the shoving. Also being involved, like with your אצבע על הדופק.

Let me, let me just interject one other thing. When they say involvement, at least what I'm interested, I'm more interested in the involvement in the school. Not so much, I'm not, [talking together]. I'm not talking about doing homework with the kids, that's different, but what interests me, because it's school culture, is the parents being in the school, like on the ועד, but that's fine, you keep going, that's fine, I just wanted to clarify that.

So Purim, helping with the Purim float, at Gibor I've done their float for the last three years.

Oh wow.

Ahm, you get paid something like 1,000 shekel, but you work your ass off and build the entire thing by yourself, and it's supposed to be done by the students.

You get paid though.

Yes, you get paid, but like סמלי, for the amount of work you do. Ahm (...) parties, organizing parties. At junior school, the thing of שוק פורים, organizing the whole שוק פורים. But definitely my involvement started because I knew that if you get close to the teachers, they're going to be nicer to the kids.

And that's been your experience?

And I've absolutely seen that.

Wow. Ok.

In the same way that I've felt less need to be involved in my daughter's school, because she doesn't need me to be. She can get along quiet happily without me, but there is definite coloration between parents that are involved and parents that aren't. And one thing that I can say also about an observation, things that I actually coming to meet you, that I wanted to say, but I didn't know if you'd ask or not.

Please.

Being a family that is half ספרדי and half אשכנזי. Ah, my kids can, they sort of fit in both sides, and I sort of fit in both sides, I have loyalty towards the… the ספרדי, maybe even more then I do to the אשכנזי. And I've had experiences sitting at ועד meetings, where I can pick up on some kind of racist undertones, … that's because I'm white and I'm sitting in front of you and I'm speaking, I've got an English accent. Nobody thinks oh well, she's actually got a connection with the other side. Ah, politician, ah the עיריה .

Oh, yes, from the עיריה, sure.

So many years ago, a few years ago, at the ועד ישובי, when Gibor, first year of Gibor, he actually made a comment in front of everyone, about we all know it's the שאריות, like we all know where the kids that go there come from. And the same thing I had at grade school once, where they were talking about האוכלוסיה הזה and they weren't saying what it is, but they will say תראו, סוג האוכלוסיה בכיתה הזאת and I know that all the אוכלוסיה comes from lower socio neighborhood, so it's been interesting for me, I have loyalties to both sides, being taken for face value.

So do you think this is part of a culture, in the school also? Do you think this is, this עדתי thing? Do you see it as a, or is this only what you've seen in the meetings?

I think it's all Israelis. The minute you see anybody, a human being, the minute you see someone you make an immediate… I'll see a black person and my first thought is is he Sudanese or Ethiopian, I mean it's in the culture, it's in the, whether you like it or not, they'll see someone with a dark skin and they'll hear Mizrachi music, and immediately a chain of associations comes into mind. And I think that goes for the teachers as well, when they see a child, and then people sum up well, he's wearing disheveled clothes, he's that and they'll make a conclusion.

Is that at both schools? Have you seen it at grade school and Gibor?

Both schools, but I would say less in Gibor.

Less in Gibor.

Because Gibor when they started, they knew what they were getting. They felt and they knew from the very beginning that they were the underdogs. And unfortunately I think that one of the downfalls of that school, is that the kids feel that. All the kids that go there feel that they are second class citizens, that they're there only because they didn't get in anywhere else. And more so, the older kids. Because like when my son started in the שכבה ראשונה or the way they were called מחזור ראשון, it was literally you guys, it was literally like you're there because you couldn't go anywhere else. I think there were 40 kids or something and a lot of them were sfaradi and most of them had study problems. So… the whole mentality was, we're the underdogs, let's make this work, maybe we can survive, maybe the schools can succeed, kind of thing. And so trying not to get into the side that you're not interested in [laughs] and with the parents as well, it was a feeling of lets show them.

Tell me about what you do. I'll be honest, I'll tell you, you keep on saying parents parents, other people I've spoken to… let me step back, one of the reasons I chose Gibor as one of the schools I wanted to study is because to me, I had this impression that parents push for this school, parents build up the school and are a big presence in the school. When I first started interviewing, at least the people I was speaking to, I got the impression of 'wrong, there is nothing here'.

Ok.

Which is why I'm now getting to you and you're talking parents parents parents, so I'm hearing a flip side that I've not heard until now and I really want to hear this.

Ok, so two important things. One of the people that was pushing pushing pushing, A, I don't remember her first name, apparently she was one of the first group that was with Ruthh. And she's got three boys, one of them was with my son, so he could have started in the first year. And she didn't put him in. And it was like … I don't understand, you pushed and pushed and pushed for the school and now he's going to private school. And that was like donnggg, red light. And the first meeting of the school with the headmaster and everything, she pitched up, and I said what are you doing here? Like your son's not here. And she answered … well, it doesn't mean I don't support the school.

Hmm.

And that's what you're basically saying. It's like there was this support, support, support, but when push comes to shove, you want the best for your kid and if you can get him into a school that's thought to be better, you're going to do it.

I also thought now that there is more involved and it gives me the impression that, again, I don't know where I got this impression, that the principal is being accompanied by the parents, and as I said in my initial interviews, I got a totally different picture. So please enlighten me.

It doesn't seem to be wanted.

What doesn't seem to be wanted?

The, … the cooperation for parents. I went to the first meeting of the first year, of the first parents meeting ever of that school, and they had it in town, about three or four parents I think, and the headmaster, and I was used to grade school, where there's a lot of involvement and [???] and everyone's doing this, and something for charity and something for this and something for this, and parties and blah blah blah. So I came with a lot of enthusiastic, enthusiasm, ok let's do this and how much money should we take from the parents. And they said look high school works differently, it's not the same as… and I said, at that meeting I said, so what are we supposed to do, nothing? We're not doing anything. And I got so disappointed from that meeting, there wasn't really another meeting after that, but it was basically we don't need anything from you, you're the parent, stand back, let us be teachers, let us run the school, and since then there's been…

And what about now, because the principle has switched twice.

Once.

We're on the third principle, aren't we?

Second.

I thought it's the third.

Second.

Oh really?

Yes.

Ok.

First one was X.

Whatever, it doesn't matter.

He was a tyrant.

So let's try and think last year and this year.

Ok.

The current culture at the school last year and this year. Does the same still apply, the feeling of not wanted?

Before I answer that…

Please, go on.

You will also find that 99.9% of the parents on any committee of the schools have kids with no problems. They are there in a, in a position of power that they don't have anything to worry about except what party should we do and what fundraiser should we do. Parents with kids with problems are embarrassed to volunteer and are embarrassed to be on the committee and they feel that they don't have the right to say anything. If you…

Although your experience is the opposite, you deliberately went on to improve the situation.

Right.

You're saying you're …

But most of the time I didn't anticipate the level of problems I would have with my son, because at that time it was כיתה א', ב'. I was thinking how this will help out, and then everything is going to be ok. But generally speaking, you won't find too many sfaradim, and you won't find their parents. I'd be very interested to know if any of them have parents with, kids with problems and if they do, they're taking Ritalin and all the problems are solved. But you won't find too many rebels. You won't find anyone who actually wants to do something different, or wants to… or disagrees. Ok, so going back to your question. Last year, the thing is, on the committee where you were, the meeting you came to.

Just now?

Yes. Half the people there I've never seen before. The other half come from one class. The one class they come to, is in כיתה, it's my youngest son, in ט', and they are people who volunteered on committees in grade school, all together and now together. And they're a very close-knit group and they do everything together and they love doing things and they'll do anything and they want to be involved and they want to take part.

And are they?

177

Nobody asks, nobody says anything, no, last year there was one parents meeting, I don't care what Ruth says. One parents meeting, in the beginning of the year, and that was it. Not only me, none of the other five or six parents that were there, that I know, weren't invited to any other parents meeting. Now one of those people, who wasn't there at that meeting, is he volunteers for everything, he helps with everything, he donates whatever is needed and last year his son came to Gibor and so we were all quite happy about it. We thought oh great, now that he's here, surely something will start happening, we'll be able to be involved, we want to help, we'll be able to do something with this, he'll be the leader kind of thing. And he asked several times, Ruth and Abraham, what can I do, where must we go, and he's got connections with the עירייה, and he wanted to make meetings and that kind of thing, and there was no feedback, there was no encouragement, there was no, and in the end he didn't do anything.

Can I just, the purpose of the research, to see if it matches up with what I've heard, who this was?

Yaron.

Ok.

Ahm(...) and so the answer to your question is the parents do, a section of the parents want to be involved, obviously most of them don't, like 90% of the parents of the whole school don't want to know anything, just take my kid, babysit him for the day and bring him back at the end of the day. The people that do want to be involved don't feel like anything is being asked of them. And when they have done something, it's off their own bat and organized within their own individual class. Why hasn't Gibor got a שוק פורים? Every school in the city has a שוק פורים. Ha (...) things that…

When you say also being asked. By whom?

By the school.

Ok.

Or decided at, for example the first committee, the meeting that you came to, ok, so there were other things there that needed to be followed up, who's supposed to follow up, when are they being followed up, is there every going to be another parents meetings. So ask by the school, and ask by decision of the committee. So that's what happened last year, there was one meeting, we didn't hear anything else after that. A few things were organized in the classroom of the people that I told you, that little group, they had a meal a couple of times in the year, on special occasions, Yom Ha'atzmaut and that. And I think they organized an outing to bowling for the class.

I'm sorry, meal for the class, not the whole school.

Yes.

Ok.

Because there wasn't a feeling of the committee of the school, but they did do it for their class. So the basic feeling is that they… Ruth is running everything all by herself and doesn't want to have, and is quite happy with it that way, and doesn't need or want the help of anyone else, and so things happen and we hear about them afterwards. And that's the story of Gibor parent's committee.

Ok, so what you're saying to me as someone who is researching parent involvement for the school, is that it is not a rosy picture of rich involvement going on right now.

No, but it's not for lack of interest.

Ok, so tell me, ok.

That's what I'm saying, there is a few parents who are keen and interested to get involved and I know this from experience, because I've seen them at the grade school what they can do.

Ah ah.

And (...)

But.

But they don't, but it's not. Also, maybe, because the kids at Gibor, a high percentage of them do have either behavioral problems or study problems, maybe because of that, davka at Gibor there is less parent involvement in the parents committee, or because of what I said about parents not getting involved because they (...) they're sort of embarrassed because of their son, and secondly because if I've got X amount of time in my life, in my day, am I going to spend it organizing the שוק פורים for the entire school, or shall I just use my time to make a meeting with the counselor and a meeting with the principle and private lessons for my kid and blah blah blah. And you say, well my loyalty is really first to my child, and second to the school. So maybe it's happening at Gibor like that, because most of the parents are more worried on an individual basis for their kids and so they don't have the time or energy to worry about the school.

Ah ah. It's interesting what you're saying, because you're putting yourself, your approach is totally different, because what I'm hearing from you is that you're actually in there even though your kid has issues.

I'm in there but I feel guilty that I haven't done more. I feel like I'm doing nothing compared to what I've done in the past. My involvement in Gibor 's parents committee has boiled down to.

I was going to ask what have you done, what have you done, and don't be modest. [laughs]. What do you see you've done in the past few years.

Ah, (...) basically for Gibor the main thing is doing the Purim thing, which I take over, they don't have to worry about it, they don't even look at it, they don't have any idea of what I do and it turns up on the day and everything is perfect.

What is that exactly?

Ah, (...) you know the עגלות that go down the street.

Ah, yes, yes, yes, the parade, the parade.

So they bring it to the school.

The עדלאידע.

They bring it to the school, they put it in the school.

Ok.

And then I come there daily and build it until it's done, and shop for the materials and do it, sometimes they bring students, and I work together with them, make costumes for them and then we walk down the street. So that's been my main involvement this year, in the last three four years.

And remind me, was that something you, you, you volunteered to do or somebody came to you to ask?

They came to me to ask.

Who's they?

The teachers. … or Iris.

And how did they know about you?

Because at the beginning of the year, I went to the מחנכת, I think she was the מחנכת, and I said look I am an artist, anything you need to do ask me. And in terms of when you say who's asking, who's coming, who's not asking, for help. That's the thing, after I've come to you and said to you, look I'm an artist, I'm home all day and willing to do anything you want, more than that I can't do. You know, you want me to decorate your classroom, you want me to do a lesson with your kids, teaching them how to draw, you know. And then the other involvement, you asked what we've been involved in. Mainly because we're worried about our oldest son, my husband's gone on all the school trips up to now, as a volunteer parent.

Do they go in high school, or just because?

Yes they do.

Parents go in high school.

But in the earlier years, they would say to specific kids, if your parent doesn't come, you can't go.

Oh really, ok.

And (...) what else (...) these meals that I told you that the one class does, my younger son, they've done a couple of meals.

What kind of meals? Meals for the class?

Hotdogs and… they went to the park, to the Sportek one day, and then they… we brought along hotdogs and stuff like that.

Is this during school hours or after school?

Yes. It was an end of year party kind of thing.

And it was just that class?

Yes. … the science teacher asked me to help him make something for his room, and I went along and I saw, but in the end I didn't, because it was ridiculous, but I made faces like I was going to do it, he wanted me to (...) You know the teacher??? [laughing].

I think so, I think my son has him.

Everyone's been trying to get rid of him for the last three or four years.

Oh, yes?

And he doesn't treat the kids very well. There were times when school trips were very… he shoved and screamed and shoved and pushed. Anyway…

Ok. Not for now.

So I didn't end up doing that. But they know the address. Like they know my phone number and they know I'm willing, so more than that, if there's nothing, if I'm not involved it's because nobody is asking me.

(…) Ok. (…) What about other parents, are there other parents from what you see, involved?

Only the ones that I told you about, in the one class.

Are there any activities that go on in the school, that you can say are because of parent involvement, or anything in this school, that if the parents had not done, it wouldn't have happened?

I think only that one class.

Just the one class. ... ok. Again, this is setting me off a little bit because it is not what I expected to hear, but that's fine, that's fine.

Have you actually heard that things happen in the school because of parents?

That is exactly why I'm asking.

But you have heard?

Ahm

Maybe I missed it.

No, I, no, that's why I'm asking. I guess it was assumed but maybe not.

So if I have to place blame, I don't want to place blame. Ruth does amazing things for the school, she's an excellent, ah, head of the ועד.

So what does she then?

Whatever she's done with the עיריה, all the things behind the scenes.

Oh that stuff. Ok.

Ok. And she was one of the ones that pushed to get the school established. … but it's all very bureaucratic, it's not really hands-on with kids. Nothing is happening with the kids, you know what I'm saying. [sound of closing door, noise].

[talking to someone else [???]] [laugh]

Like no delegation, and no (...), like when I think back to what we used to do in grade school, ah (...) my daughter went off on the Shabbat bat mitzvot, I made cookies in the shapes of hearts, and wrote the names of sixty kids individually on each cookie, with icing, and wrapped it with cellophane with a bow.

Wow.

You know, that's the level of involvement with parents and not only one. Other parents made cakes, made this, made that.

So here you're saying we don't have that.

So, no.

Are you, do you volunteer elsewhere, are you involved elsewhere?

Ah, as a parent?

No, as a person. Do you volunteer anywhere else, in any other capacity?

No.

There's no wrong or right answer here.

[talking together]
You know that feeling of there is but you can't remember it. No.

Ok. So you're focusing on school.

Yes.

For the reasons that you mentioned. Ok. When you were growing up, were your parents involved parents? Again, not with homework at home, at school.

No.

But I don't know, some part of the culture there?

(...) no. I don't really remember even other parents being involved. But, just because my parents were divorced and my mother worked from morning to night.

Ok.

She wouldn't have had the opportunity to if she wanted to. I mean I've had situations where I've said Mom do you remember when I used to go to karate, and she said I didn't know you did karate.

Wow.

No, she was involved in the (...) making sure we had food on the table.

Ok. (...) what about (...) where you live, I don't know your social circle or whatever you consider those close to you, would you say there are people who are involved, who volunteer, be it at the school or elsewhere.

Ahm. (...) I'm really part of the Oriental community.

Ok.

I don't have any South African friends.

Ok.

And a lot of people I know donate, and (...) for example we have a lot of friends who have farms and that around the area, and they'll bring food to people. They'll bring a sack of potatoes to (...) לקט. There's in our road, every Wednesday a family that gives out to the community. And so I'll as well take stuff there. We donated 10 trays of eggs a week ago. But that's in like physical things, it's not (...) money. (...) and involved in the school, yes I do know some, (...) or parents who go on trips with the schools, or (...) one that I know she's an excellent cook and bakes cakes and she's always sending things along for events. (...) ahm. (...) but also I think in the Yemenite community, from the neighborhood, there is a sense of (...) they do have this kind of inferiority complex, like they're not as good as (...) as the others, and it does hold them back from volunteering for things that are (...), that they might have to, I don't know, stand up and voice their opinion.

Are you talking about in general or in school?

Generally.

Generally. Ok. (...) ok, let me ask you a question. In the other school one of the questions I would ask is how do you think the school would look like without this parent involvement. I'm going to flip the coin. How do you think Gibor would look if there were more parent involvement? Let's flip the coin.

Ok, so it might solve the one...

What's your fantasy? What your dream scenario?

In terms of parent involvement?

Yes. At Gibor

Ahm (...). I've got to just give you a הקדמה. If what's missing for a lot of parents, is that their child has extra help and it's בושה, because we're all walking around feeling that it's only my child, nobody says anything and everyone is scared to ask kind of thing. And ideally, if there's more than one child, who's having problems with a particular subject, someone will come on a Friday or something, give them an extra lesson, no one will ask for that because they think that only their child. So now back to your question, if there was parent involvement, more parent involvement, firstly the academics might improve, because parents would pressurize the school to provide extra help for kids, even if they don't have אבחון, and even if they are not classified as someone with problems, they would still be able to get extra help because they'd be pressured from parents, there'd be a שוק פורים, there'd be מסיבות של כל הבית ספר, at Chanukah or something have a party for the entire school and parents would bring the food, and maybe somebody will volunteer some kind of entertainment, and things like that. That would improve the (...) image of the school. And it might solve one of the major problems at Gibor, which is the תדמית of the school, that the kids have, the fact that the kids don't like this school and the kids think that they're second class citizens, and the kids think that they, they failed in some way because they're not at private school. So if the parents were involved and made the school more attractive in terms of events that it has, wow you should you come to our

184

school because we have every Friday karaoke and the parents bring food and have a few cakes. In some way like that, it would maybe raise the appreciation and the love of their school, and if they liked their school, they would study better and סך הכל what do we want, we want an education.

It's very important, which you didn't tag it as such, which is exactly what I'm looking for about the culture of the school. What I've been hearing until now is a very glim culture. Can you tell me a little bit more about this school? You've just described very well about the kids and how they feel, and that's very important. That's one indication. Can you tell me a little bit more about this school, in general, ahm(...), there are often cultures that are described as symbols, ahm (...), I always forget, symbols, rituals that happens, myths. Granted it's a small school, a small school and a young school, and very often these types of symbols, these types of rituals take many years to develop. But can you see that Gibor can be considered as a school culture, other than what we describe now, which doesn't make me happy but it's a very good description.

Ahm, I think that there isn't such a, such a culture, because they're sort of living in a war mentality, a survival mentality, still trying to prove themselves or still trying to be established, just trying to להתקיים, just trying to stay here, it's continued, and it's like a desperateness that you feel from the teachers and you feel from the organizational management of the school, it's like we'll do this and we'll do this and everything will be ok and we'll accept... and then we'll be accepted as normal human beings. [laughs]. And the kids feel that, and the kids feel the same thing and it's just getting through from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, without (...) the school falling to pieces, or the kids falling to pieces. How many times during the year do I hear so and so is leaving the school? Even if he doesn't, like at the end of every year I'll get a list from my kids of how many of their friends are changing schools.

Are you talking about the 12th grader and the 9th grader?

Yes.

I'm assuming both.

Yes.

Ok.

Whenever I say anything, take it that both. 12th grade is worst and the 9th grade is just a little bit better. Definitely better, which is why I'm saying maybe the school's improving. Ahm. (...) so because of that feeling of almost like temporary, almost like we're just here because there wasn't anywhere else to go, so how do you develop a culture built on that. You're not going have that שוק פורים, because there'll be one this year and next year there won't be one. (...) ahm. So the only culture if I was looking for it, would be the trips that they take, the טיולים that they do. The kids enjoy and it's good גיבוש. If I have to be honest, however much nobody liked the first headmaster and he had his good and bad sides, there were good things about him, and he was developing a culture. He had a very moving ceremony for the Bar Mitzvah boys, where they went to

the desert or something and they were praying, you saw them praying as the sun came up in the middle of the desert, and the photos and that kind of stuff were presented them with watch, with Gibor written on it, at the Kotel. And every Thursday, he would have at the end of the day, and everyone laughed at this, every Thursday he would have like meet in the front of the school and share good things that have happened that week or something like that, then they'd sing Mashiach Mashicach, and then everyone goes home for the weekend. But he really tried to develop that, that group. He took the idea of lets survive and tried to make it into we're going to be a group, we're going to be a team and we're going to survive. That's right, we are going to be best, we are going to survive, we are going to be a good school, because we're going to be so מגובש. So he had that, he had on all kinds of, look he did have ceremonies and at each ceremony, you can't do it now because there were too many kids, he would stand up and he would say parents, ראש העיר, and this, and then he would list the names of every child in the school. Ahm (...) so he would try to develop that kind of love of the school, that kind of culture.

That stopped though you said.

Yes, it stopped because when Abraham came, it was more like he was trying to save something.

What does that mean?

He was, he was (...) I think he's a better headmaster over all. But it was like we don't have time for all that שטויות, let's get together and hold hands on Thursday. Let's just get the school up and running. Let's just get... he was more down to basics than into practicalities. Other thing at Gibor was what made is special about that headmaster, the change with Abraham was that they had to wear long trousers, they weren't allowed Bermuda, I don't think they were allowed...

Previously?

Yes. I don't know if they were allowed jeans even. And they had to have a shirt with a collar. It was the only school in the city with a collar. And it made it special, it made it something different. The kids didn't see it that way.

No, I'm sure not. [laughs].

For me it reminded me of overseas, it was like wow, that's a real school uniform.

With buttons.

It made them better than everyone else. But now there isn't. Apart from the trips, that's the only thing that gives them the culture. They don't have the events. And those events should be, should and could be established by the parents.

And now, the scenario that you described before, from what I understand, had to do with the principle, had nothing to do with parents. What you described actually is, yes, a budding culture.

Right.

That I was unaware of until now.

He didn't want involvement of the parents. He was of the attitude, like I told you at that first meeting, that was with him. And he was of the attitude of let us teach, let us run the school, you're parents, you stay at home. I mean עד כדי כך, I don't know if it's anything to do with what you're doing, but my son once kicked the dustbin, in anger, or pushed in a line, he was very strict, this headmaster. He got sent home for a day. We were sitting at the table, luckily, my son sitting doing his homework, knock knock on the door, the headmaster and the deputy coming to visit my son.

Wow. Wow.

I mean, thank god he was sitting and doing some work. [laugh].

Wow.

I was in shock. But it just makes you feel so part of a group, so careful, so part of the culture, as you say.

Aha. So you had the culture and now it's... wow, ok, that's very interesting. Cause you would think way back then they were really worse struggling to survive. What you're saying now is that feeling of struggling to survive is more than building up the culture.

You can think of it as a family business and (...) and Microsoft. You know what I'm saying, perhaps less personal and less one on one now.

Ok.

And then it was more (...) we're a family and we're going to make this work.

I see. That's a good way of looking at it. But again, this is... what I'm hearing from you really has nothing to do with the parents, this is just principal and whatever was happening.

Right.

The two things separate.

But standard events, the שוק פורים, in other schools parents arrange, and then when the kids get older, the older kids arrange it. And there are schools that perhaps nobody would even look at or be interested in, like X, not such an attractive school. It's got a good reputation for education, but (...) ahm, when they had the שוק פורים everyone

wanted to go to the שוק פורים. And it gave an opportunity for younger kids who might be going there in the future, to get inside the school, like wow look at the fun they have here. (...) Yaron, the guy that volunteers for a lot of things, he would organize it, he does until today, organize all the (...) מתקנים at שוק פורים, the blow up inflatable things. Back to when you asked me what other (...) involvement that we had. Ahm (...) my husband's got an עגלה kind of thing that goes behind a jeep.

Oh ok.

And every year they have a sports day for Gibor. So he helps at six in the morning to carpool all of the equipment.

I was going to ask if your husband is involved.

Yes.

[talking together].
So he helps with that, with the sports thing, so there's a sports day you're saying.

There was.

Was. Was.

And parents got involved.

Parents got involved. You're saying about the previous principle, or just...

I think maybe in the first year of this principle, it changed. It used to be grade school and Gibor together, it used to be at the park, the big park. And so there were a lot of parent volunteers and the Gibor family used to come, but now it's just grade school, I don't think Gibor the school is involved.

Right. Ok. (...) I am finding that, what we discussed with other people is not relevant here, which is fine, absolutely fine, this is very interesting. Ahm. (...)

The other thing about being involved and giving the help, is because it's art, what I'm doing, and a lot of the times I'm in classrooms. I'm talking more about grade school now, but it hasn't happened so much. A couple of times it has happened at Gibor, but when I've been fortunate to help a teachers with some kind of project with the kids, with arts. But it give me an opportunity to see the teacher at work and I've had times not at Gibor, where I've actually seen the teacher behave really badly to a child. And I'm like, (...) the child got up and had to read something and didn't read it properly, and she was like you know you can't read it properly why do you volunteer? You knew this. And I'm like gees, the boy obviously had some kind of problem with reading it and then I know the mother, and then the situation will be do I tell the mother this.

Wow.

Anyway, so I like the fact that I can sit and spy, while I'm in class I can see what my kids are putting up with, see what's going on in the classroom. And that's another reason for me to get involved. I get to know the teacher that's with my child all day.

Wow. Can you estimate how much time you've put into your being in the school or being involved in whatever?

Ok, so you want [Talking together], just on things that are not personal with my child?

Right, correct.

Personally with my child, it's things like can you come to the school, we live close and I'm at home and my husband works from home. So it's like that. If he's behaved badly, we've kicked him out of class, and I can be there in a second, and sorting it all out and getting him back in class. So if you don't count that, (...) a couple of hours a month. At Purim time it's every day for a month.

How much do you want it to be? Would you like it to be?

I'd like to do more, I'd like to do more, that's the basic question. Willing to do, able to do.

What's (...)

How much can you push yourself? How much can you say, look do you need anything, do you me to come and give a lesson, do you want me to help you decorate the class, and as the kids get older it's less relevant.

Where are you showing up? Who are you talking to there?

I start with the מחנכת or מחנך, at the beginning of the year, and in the other schools, which they don't do at Gibor although maybe they should, but there the מחנך actually asks is there any parent, any interest, any chug, some special talent that they want to come and share with the class, that they want to come and give the class. A couple of years ago, at Gibor, a couple of years ago, they had a lesson once a month or once a week, where a parent came in and talked about his career. It gets the parent involved, it gets them to know the teacher better, and I think it's helpful for the kids.

So it was done?

Yes.

And now it's not. As far as we know, it's the beginning of the year. (...) ok.

The thing is that I don't want you to get the impression that there's no parent involvement because the parents aren't good parents or aren't wanting to. I think there are a lot of parents that do want to, and are willing to, are either embarrassed for some reason or feel not good enough or that maybe they're not wanted.

Has anybody said that to you or is it just feeling that you have from being around for so many years with so many kids? Are you basing this on any... again, because your personal experience is the direct opposite, you're assuming this about other people, is there any...

My experience of sitting at a parents meeting year after year, looking around and knowing the kids, and I, I interrogate my kids pretty thoroughly about it, and looking around and saying she's got an A student, she's got an A student, she's got an A student, she's got an A student, there's one sfaradi also with an A student. And I'll sit there and I don't want to say can we have extra lessons for, you know, instead the discussion will be can we have for the genius kids in the class, which is fine, that is also necessary. So yes, my experience of looking is an observation. Or another way that I know it is that I have parents coming up to me and sort of whispering we should do something about that, we should say something about that, can't you say something about that, and it's from parents that they don't go say it themselves.

They know that you're out there and you'll talk.

Where you at the meeting where I spoke up in front of everyone? When Ruth talked about the position of the school.

I was at the PTA meeting that was a few weeks ago.

And the meeting at the beginning of the year, were you at, when everyone was in the basement?

Yes. The beginning of the year, beginning of the year, you mean for everyone. I think I was at that.

Were you there when it all exploded about the location of the new school?

I think so.

Cause it's like, that's a perfect example, everyone was saying why aren't you saying anything, and I was either not going to say anything or I'm going to say exactly how it is and what I think, so I said something and the whole room erupted.

I don't remember specifically, remind me. I was there.

They changed the location of where the new school is going to be.

Ok.

From Street X to Street Y.

Ok.

And then Ruth had been to a meeting with the עיריה, by herself, without consulting with anyone else from the ועד, and said that they don't agree. So I said, trying to be polite in front of everyone, but my first question was sorry how much percentage agreement do you need from the parents in order put forward an opinion. And the thing was that there hadn't been any agreement, and there hadn't been any parents meeting. And but most parents want it to be in the original place, so everyone suddenly started saying we don't like this, sort of attacking me because I said something. But that's the example of people saying say something, say something.

(...) Ok. you've given me a lot of information here. Again, not questions that I thought I'd be asking, because it turns out it's a totally different scenario. Ahm.

Who have you been asking?

No, I don't want to say.

Ashkenazim?

I don't want to say.

Students?

I don't want to say. It's been hard to find, I'll be honest with you, it has been hard to find what I define as parent volunteers at Gibor. Which is why with you it was so great I found another person. Then I spoke with someone else, oh great another person. I'm going to ask you if you think there's anyone else I should speak with?

Like the lady I mentioned earlier, she doesn't have a boy in Gibor, so that won't help you. What's the other school you work with?

I don't want to say. Like I don't tell them about Gibor.

So if it's the high school, there's a parent there I can give you a name of.

I'm talking about Gibor. Is there anyone else you think at Gibor?

Yaron, you should talk to.

You think so?

Not specifically because of his involvement at Gibor.

Does he have a kid there?

He's got a kid there. But he hasn't been so involved but he's, he's able to be involved.

You don't have a phone number for him?

I might have. Yaron, and O, but I don't know her surname but I can give you her phone number as well. [looking for phone number]. So Gabi is _____.

Ok. The active class?

Yes. [looking for phone number].

Are they Israeli speaking?

They're both [???] .

Ok, that's fine. (...) ok, this is interesting, very very interesting as I said.

And now you can use all the information to do something wonderful for Gibor.

Well, that's the thing, until I finish, I've had many discussions with my advisor about this actually, because on one hand I'm collecting all this information. On the other hand, I have a child who is in school now. So until the information is all collected and I've finished with that, I'm ethically forbidden to be involved in the school. You can imagine, it makes sense, because I'm skewing whatever is going on there. I'm, there is something called insider and outsider, it's fine but I sit in the meetings as a parent of but for me to become involved, it will be very difficult for me to sit back, but I am ethically required not to be involved right now. (...) trying to keep the two things separate. This is a challenge, definitely a challenge.

What do you recommend?

At this point, I can't recommend anything. Hopefully we'll be finished with the data collection soon and I'll be able to freely do what I want to do. Right now I'm trying to keep it separate, for ethical reasons. Frustrating as it may be. (...) it's the challenge.

I ask myself all the time, should I be doing something else. Every day I say to myself, should I pick up the phone and just phone Abraham and say is there any news, like the meeting that was supposed to be organized at the עיריה to tell us more about the location of the school, you know, should I pick the phone up and just say has the meeting been arranged? Because I don't want to hear afterwards there was a meeting, didn't we contact you? Like I get emails for everything, from the school, but just for the ועד meetings I didn't get? I get meetings every week, for every kind of peeps you can imagine, but then the excuse that we never heard about the ועד meeting last year was that there is something wrong with the email list. (...) My kids don't want to be there.

Where, at school?

Yes. My last one, it's a miracle that he got to י"ב, and I'm holding on like this till he'll gets through [laughing].

Just a little bit more.

And when he finishes, I'm seriously considering taking my, the younger one out. Just because he hates it so much, that he's not getting involved, that he's not doing anything.

What do you mean?

Like, he doesn't like his school, he won't get involved in anything culturally. That's the problem, if parents do start something culturally, it's going to be hard work in the beginning, because the kids won't want to be involved.

What do you mean?

For example, they had a trip, they did סליחות.

Right.

The amount of kids that didn't want to go on the trip. And Poland, Poland, my sons class is going on the trip this year. He doesn't want to go. Why? Because him and some other friends from the class they want to go to Eilat in that week. I said we're not going to Eilat, you're either going to Poland, or you can sit at home and study for your בגרות. But the fact that he's not the only one, it's like they don't have that feeling that they want to be involved in anything at the school. So if the parents suddenly come up and say hey it's Chanukah soon, then we're going to have a, let's all sell donuts to raise money for the school and then we can buy a new blah blah blah. I don't know how much interest there'll be from the school, from the kids.

From the kids you're saying. It will be a challenge.

So it's not just the parents, and it's not just the teachers and it's not just the kids. It's the fact that, it's the working together, it's like a catch 22, that one's not interested, so that one doesn't want to.

Right, it's like throwing the kids into the cultural thing also.

[talking together]

It's a responsibility, they're not just on the receiving end, there's other schools where kids are involved in getting stuff organized. At the other school, the children organize the שוק פורים.

Ahm. (…) חומר למחשבה.

That's it.

Right, such a very important point.

That's why I didn't know, that's why I wanted to meet you. My husband said what are you wasting your time for? Phone and cancel, cancel, I said, look I do have an opinion.

Ah ah, well it's important, even for selfish reasons, for my research and I appreciate your time, believe me. Anyone who I interview, I appreciate the time they've given. Look, in this particular case, I admit it, I'm in it, so who knows what will happen afterwards, I, I don't know at this point. (...)

I meant there's so many negatives in this school, that you start thinking well what's the positive. What's the positive? And the only positive, the basic reason anyone sent their kids there in the beginning? I'm talking about the top classes, it's because it's religious, it's the parents who didn't want to give in and send their kids to חילוני schools and didn't have a religious option. Like my husband refuses to send them to חילוני, over his dead body, it's not going to happen. So if he's not going to חילוני, he did the tests for the private school and didn't get in and did the tests for technology and didn't get in, not going to send him out of the city. What's left? The other school, which the way they run the school, doesn't suit my kids. The kid has to be very responsible in order to make it there. So what's the option? Only Gibor. So the kids are walking around with the feeling of I don't have any other option, the parents walk around feeling that they don't have any other option.

And you say this is the prevailing culture of the school?

Yes.

Even lower down grades.

[talking together]

The positive thing is that each year more and more kids are signing up. So presumably the mentality is changing and the way the community is looking at the school is changing. Because at the beginning, parents didn't want to, like, for the second שכבה, or even י"א now, we at the first שכבה were walking around trying to persuade people to send their kids, cause we knew that if we didn't get the next year, the school would probably not survive, so in the beginning, in the first few years it was like talk to everyone, spread the word, we've got to have meetings at the junior schools to persuade the parents. Now there's less need for that.

Do you know off hand how many kids are in each grade more or less?

Ahm, י"ב is 26, and the whole school is something like 300.

Cause the 7th grade now has 3 classes, the 8th grade has you know?

No. no (...) 8th grade is two classes, two classes.

Two classes of twenty something?

Thirty something.

Thirty something?

Thirty four maybe.

Oh, that's the same number of students actually. Cause the 7th is twenty something [talking very softly to self].

Last year when they were in י"א, they had two classes, and they had sixteen and fourteen.

Wow. (...) I'll have to ask the school about that. (...) ok. wow.

There's also being such a small school, it's a lot of, an advantage, a huge advantage. I'm going to send my child, who needs one on one help, I must send to a school with twelve thousand kids?

(...)
It also should be an advantage for the parents. It should be an advantage for parents committee. You've got such a small amount of kids, just think, between five parents you could make a cookie in the shape of a heart for everyone. [both laugh and talk together].

Aha.

I mean they could do so many things. (...) yes, parents should take responsibility. I feel guilty, maybe I must come up and push something, I want to do such and such with the whole school and then just take it on but you end up working for the school, you end up being a part employee of the school in a way, as a parent.

What do you mean?

Like Ruth. I don't know how much now she's a part of the bureaucracy of the school, as opposed to being part of the parents committee. She's more an employee of the school, and a parent in a way.

Hmm.

Cause she's not involved in actually hands-on making cookies for the kids. She's involved with the עיריה meetings and bureaucracy. And if there's no connection with the parents, if there aren't any parents committee meetings to even keep us updated, who's she representing? (...) so if that connection is lost, then there isn't a parents committee.

(...) interesting thought also.

A lot of parents committee events and things that they do are normally motivated by raising money. Ah, this is another point. Because when Gibor started, the whole big thing was we're going to get lots of money from the עיריה, that's an advantage of the school, just think, we'll get this and this and this, we'll get free t-shirts, we've got each kid got their first t-shirt for school for free, watches I think the עיריה paid for, they got a

beautiful book on Yom Yerushalaim, it was like oh איזה יופי, they're going to pump money into the school and we're going to be spoiled. These kids are going to have a really good time at the school because of the עיריה's support of the school. And (...) but then there is no reason for parents to do any fundraising. If there's no fundraising, why are you doing an event? Are you doing an event just for kids, that's fine, but the kids hate the school and don't want to come to the events [laughs] so why bother?

[silence and both laugh].

I've depressed you!

No, look, it's, what you're saying is very important, It's very important, you know, put me aside, it serves my research, this is very important what you're saying, it's very very valid.

The whole כיתה ו', parents, your kids went to Zion? . The parents committee of כיתה ו' works towards raising money for the end of the year party. Right. And they do that by having a שוק פורים that raises money and by a million different things. Selling sufganiyot, bringing flowers on (...) Tu Bishvat, all these things throughout the year, little things in order to raise money, counting their coins so they've got enough money for the book at the end of the year and the... Gibor didn't have a need for that. (...)

So you think that had something to do with the involvement?

What was the purpose of that? Getting together and working towards that. So instead Gibor got, the purpose of the ועד is all the problems with the building, the present building and the future building, problems with kids that are behaving badly and the אוכלוסיה. There's a low אוכלוסיה that's coming to the school and how they behave. (...) and (...) now I'm in י"ב, at the parent's meeting of the individual classes, I said ok so we should we get together and raise money and I'm thinking well they don't have a prom, what do they have? It's my first child finishing in Israel, I actually don't know what they have at the end of the year.

Right, there's no prom. At least there hasn't been a prom (...)

So I don't know.

Did you ever question whether it's necessary?

The ועד, the parents committee?

Right.

The school would survive without it. But if we wanted to develop a culture and develop a love for the school and make the school an interesting and exciting place for kids to come to, then you do need a parents committee. Cause teachers are too busy teaching, it's not their job to make parties and events and stuff like that.

You just summed it up beautifully . (...) all right, that's a very good summary. That's an important insight. You're right.

And that's it.

That's a good insight.

Are we done?

We can be done. Just one last thing I need from you. Again, getting back to the ethics, I just need your signature. I told you that this is confidential and that I will destroy any information, you can read it if you like, it's protocol.

[silence].
Here?

Right here.

[silence].
I really do appreciate your time.

It's a pleasure.

Tell your husband also that I really do appreciate your time. (...)

And I look forward to see the fruits of your work.

Look, I can't know, I'm still collecting data, I don't know, I really don't know, but let's hope, you know.

When you're all done with this, you must get involved and use it

[laughs]. You know it's really funny, you asked me why I chose this field, the truth is, to be perfectly honest, I was not an involved parent, I was never on a ועד, my parents were never on a ועד, I looked from the side and would say, why, what, like explain it to me, I think that's what got me going in the first place.

I always wondered how parents could not be involved and sort of look like on them, it's not like bad parents, but how could you not, I know the names of all the kids in the class, because I've been on so many things with them. How could you not know, want to know, what is [???] . But now, in this school, now I'm less involved, I realize what an easy life they've got. איזה יופי, you make a sandwich, send them to school, end of story, you don't have to worry about them, they come back at the end of the day.

[silence].

Yes, well I'm one of those. Was, was one of those. So that's why I'm trying to [???] and interviewing.

You know that shop in the mall. So the owner was a very involved parent, when I first arrived in grade school, everything, at some point she just stopped and it was weird to me, why, she's gone from a hundred to zero and how can someone do that, how does that feel, is it possible to not be involved in your kid still survives. Until I found that it is possible, you can just not be involved, and nothing goes wrong, the world doesn't collapse. [silence].

Ok, so I hope I see you at the next ועד meeting.

[laughing].

In some capacity.

[talking as they walk away].

Zion School

Observations

#1
Zion School, Friday 10 Feb12, Vaada Toranit Tu B'shvat Activities

[Always take 2 pens!!!]

9:20

After rain, but sunny. It's been a cold and rainy winter, finally. Grey clouds overhead. As I enter the school walkway, I hear שירת העשבים being sun in the gym. Playground has leaves, but is otherwise relatively clean.

Gym (half of it), Israel songs. Sixth grade. Quiet. Religious guy with guitar singing Israel songs. Kids sitting on the plastic chairs lined up. One kid on the bleachers—punished? (Son affirmed later, didn't ask why). Boys and girls are together but sitting in groups alone. Teachers get up every few minutes to discipline. Teachers sitting together (get up when have to). They have the song words on paper typed out. At end girls start to spontaneously get up to dance in circle. A few minutes later most are up, boys too, then two "trains" start. Using entire 1/2 gym area. About 3/4 of the kids got up. Not wild, energetic, but not wild. Guy singing says their next stop is the library (there are three stations for the kids). I asked a teacher who the guy is who is singing, didn't know, thought Rav (school rabbi) brought him. Not a parent.

9:30

Beit Midrash. A play. Introduction by Rav. Teacher yelling at a kid to be quiet. "עוד מילה אחת" She saw me and appeared a bit cautious. Music playing, ארץ ישראל שלי יפה וגם פורחת. Rav dressed like a halutz—kova temble, hoe, apron. One parent actor acting with clear American accent, acting as real estate agent. Contrasting between old (Rav)- עובדים בידים and new (parent) אתה עושה את זה בגלל שאתה חייב או רוצה Another parent now, in French (first time I have seen this), dressed in beret. They are arguing whether Israel is the best place in the world—American says for sure, we must have oil reserves. Rav says no. [Started to rain hard]. American says maybe gold. Rav says yes, in the hearts but not in the ground-only tomatoes. American says must have water. Rav said touched a good point, no, no water. American—so what do you have? Rav—a lot of salt! American—tell me what is so special here. Rav—no gold, water, yes wars. Anyone have an answer? What is so special? Kids raise hands and answer, called on: holy land, our forefathers, gd got us here, Jerusalem center of the world, torah. Rav—amazing that such a small country, a dot, and the UN is always talking about us. What is so special about this country (note he didn't say "us," but "country"—stress on the land not the people, Tu B'shvat—he corrected someone who said something, yes, but that is about the Jewish NATION). The answer is not physical/tangible but spiritual. Can't be explained in words. He now talks about Gush Katif and the miracle, that the Arabs had called it the cursed land. Kids are a bit fidgety at this point, but mostly quiet, chairs not

moving. ZD said she couldn't hear what a kids said—is she overstepping role of parent to teacher? Is this now התערבות and not מעורבות that the teachers complain about? Rav now hold up A4 laminated pictures for the kids to identify—they are supposed to be idioms such as לדבר אל העצים ואבנים then בול עץ then איש אשכולות then כשושנה בין החוחים. Then he moves on to easier one, words not idioms—פטל, חרוב, ברוש, ארז, סביון, סרפד. Here too kids sit in boy-girls clusters but all together. Teachers spread out. Music from tape recorder again.

הפסקה 9:50

General observations during recess:

I am enjoying doing this. Had dreaded having to come on a Friday, but enjoying this observation. Finding that whenever I come to see something, so many other things pop up. Too much to see and learn. Such a rich "lab"!!! At Zion feeling more comfortable—a lot of people know my intentions already. I wonder though how much I can ask questions when observing, or just observe. Now that I'm מן המנין feel like I don't have to "apologize"—more confidence.

Teacher sitting outside class, talking to each kid about his/her report card (given out today). T got hers, ran to show me. Teacher asked me if I'm there with doctorate hat—told her this is my insider/outsider challenge (really have to read up on this!).

Saw principal, welcomed her back after illness. Exchanged a few friendly non-research related words. Feel as if I belong now, can work independently.

BA also noticed me at gym.

ZD told me I must see library play.

Raining, so a lot of kids releasing energy inside. Spoke a few minutes with vice principal, mostly about the cold weather. There is a thank you sign on an easel at entrance to school, from principal to the kids for their get well notes. Male teacher in suit (son later told me he never dresses like that—was for the play) walked by with a lollipop (casual atmosphere).

PA announcement for all kids to come in, no one to play outside (rain—first time I had seen recess inside). Teachers with on-duty vests guard the doors. Some kids play in groups on the floor—disc chips, jumprope, sharing nibbly food (not healthy stuff).

Spoke to another teacher who, turns out, is finishing her masters and did final paper on PI at Zion, case study! Need to see it! I complimented one of Atara's teachers for his PPT on gemara—he seemed embarrassed (maybe bec he gave N a very low grade?) and told me he does them himself.

10:15

Went up to library. N gave me a tip-off that that Rabbi is doing the play there. He seems to be giving instructions to the kids. A Down's kid shadow walked in, found the kid on a table and told him to get down. School has a few Down's kids, kids with hearing difficulties. She walked out of room holding his hand. One kid is alone in the library reading a comic book. Two girls talking in English. There I am, taking notes. Halls seem to be emptying. Just saw N go to the WC. The Rabbis sends the two girls to their classes to eat—he seems kind.

School LCD has trees from all over the world. I complimented Rav on the play and that he added someone French (he was unaware it was anything new). He doesn't know who is in charge of the LCD.

10:20 bell

Library—rectangular, lined with bookcases (not in middle). Good fluorescent lighting with blue wavy molding on ceiling (clearly used a decorator). Corner has exhibit in a niche, with overhead spot lights—plaster figurines reading. Also has on wall there הספר הוא לי חבר, עליו לעולם לא אוותר. Librarian desk is in the middle, computer, file cabinet, book code scanner. Furniture matches—light wood, light blue, light blue tiles on floor, metal shelves/bookcases in beige. Windows. Shades light green. Chairs light green and medium blue. There is a smart board. Other corner has memorial to a soldier who died in a war, also in plaster niche with overhead spot lights. Two a/c units. Puff chair on floor (a kid is there now, as I write—why—who goes there???).

10:30 Actor kids coming in.

Decide to walk around upstairs. There is an ארון הספר היהודי niche with all of the classics displayed behind class, plus open shelves nicely displayed of other books—in memory of a teacher. There is a נר תמיד. Kids artwork on the wall. Pictures of religious Zionist rabbis (הוצאת מופ"ת בשיתוף המרכז לחינוך הדתי בישראל). Lockers. I hear kids benching together in the classes. On third added on floor I see an Ofek class and Kitat Olim. Bumped into ZD again (should interview her again). Talked about the good teacher ("you should tell Atara—lots of talent untapped here—you should put this in your doctorate—knowing how to utilize the teachers").

10:40 kids come in, third grade (mistake—first second came in, they left for gym). Some on chairs, some on floor mats. Takes a while to quiet them down.

Kids acting—fruit selling. Very hammy. A very talented "stand-up" boy. Also local rabbi's s son. VERY talented! Rav M acting too. Very funny and engaging for the kids. Explains truma and maser. Rapport between teacher and kids great—eye contact, close physical proximity.

Four teachers sitting together chatting—shut up! (I shushed them finally, couldn't help it—this type of butt-in by me has never happened before!!!)

Pictures on smart board also, a kid controls it.

Cohen, levi, poor person (kids acting)

Next, PPT on truma and maser to review. At end, he said teacher will give everyone sheet with explanation (my kid came home with one)--"if you have trees in your home…"

Fun and warm, not fear based.

After, vice principal mentioned to me how great the parents here are—the connection is great between the teachers leading to confidence for the kids. She hugged about 10 kids in the few minutes I stood there with her, as they came into the library (first graders this time).

11:15

#2
Zion, 14oct12 20:00, first PTA meeting, school library

Walked in as Atara was turning on lights, startled her. Told her I almost said "Boker tov." Walked up to library. ZD, Leah and another parent walked in. Table with cookies and drinks (4 bottles, elephant ears, pretzels). Library has about 40 chairs set up in a circle, already set up. Atara: "I am optimistic." Told ZD I should for ethical reasons probably introduce myself, she said no need, Atara said of course, during introductions. Small talk about iron man competition while waiting for people to arrive.

8:05 Eight people total. Atara sitting next to Liat, next to ZD.

8:07 People coming in, mothers and fathers, mostly skirts, some with head covered. I sat at other end of circle (figured it made sense, as people come in to leave those seats open for them). Circle fills in at side near door. I am alone, not chatting with anyone. Vice principal and teacher walk in, teacher and teacher.

8:10 Three fathers, 8 mothers, plus the heads. Atara opens meeting. This is the first הנהגת הורים meeting, will do הכרות then H will say a few words, I will talk about the school, then ZD re last year and this year's plans, will open the discussion then choose heads of PTA for this year.

Four teachers here.

H talks about a local charity, up to 1M NIS this year, need connections to the community to develop and grow. City has a diverse population, want to give equal chance to all. Want to continue.

8:15 Parents still coming in, up to 5 men.

Atara added to what H said, 10% of merutz went to the fund, would like to continue.

8:20 Atara asks for introductions. Mostly Israelis. "Some new faces, some old. Kol hakavod to those of you who come even though salary not very high." Goes on to vision of the school: בית חינוך כמשפחה. Head of MMD coined the term. We believe that like in a family, תורה goes from generation to generation. In family there is respect for parents, love for the children, want them to progress. We feel all this here—it is our goal. We feel your kids are our kids, with warmth, learning, experience, feeling, etc. Our lifestyle is motivation to learn, for the teachers too. Five milestones: 1) Feel it in climate of the school, keep kids' smile from home, safe feeling 2) ללמוד וללמד that includes PD 3) שיפור חמ"ד (4 למידה והעמידו תלמידים הרבה (smooth transition gan to 1st then 6th to jr high) 5) וקהילה. Don't know any other school where parents are so involved, each in his own way. Alissa can tell her at the end of her research [!!!]. Really have wonderful projects. This year I want to build a בית מדרש, active one, will need parents help. Every year have a topic, this year it is leadership, from MOE—Begin and Ben Gurion, and MMD added Rav Kook. Need to think how to integrate this. It is שיתוף פעולה פדגוגי, not done in most schools. Also, will try to implement the book rental idea that didn't work last year. Need 60% approval, last year had 15%. Need to plan.

8:40 Passing floor to ZD

ZD—will open then turn to Liat. Welcome. Our goal is to work with staff, to initiate programs, educational and cultural. This is a very active environment. What we have done so far this year: calendar, info pamphlet for olim.

Atara—we meet every new family (not 1st grade) every summer, also give them an adoptive family, thanks to vaad klita.

ZD—also send a RH gift to new families. This year we want to work via projects, not committees. That way almost all PTA work will be with class and teacher. Don't like to do phone calls, too much, so will ask to organize email list of class. In Jan. is יום המחנך so will need help. There are projects in the calendar but can add more.

Liat—last year asked the vaad. This year asking parents to volunteer for school activities directly, so as not to nudge you too much. First activity is for first grade, in Nov., גיבוש for parents. Then Hanuka activity with local not religious school

Atara—the tiles on the way to that school started from the good relationship I have with the principal there. We did joint activities and the iriya helped. The cooperation between the two schools is growing.

Liat—So Hanuka. Also successful last year was the Marathon. Didn't think it would succeed. May change a bit this year.

ZD—51,000 NIS collected. Left with 30,000 NIS (detailed it), 18,000 NIS left for this year.

Liat—כניסה לארץ ישראל—אירוע תורני kids, teachers, parents, act. Also this year will be a Lag Baomer change. Will do one big one with iriya two days before (Atara—no, sfira problem). Why? Green issues as well as גיבוש. Parent—first graders need a guarded

small area. Discussed it and other problems a bit [if I were a parent with contradictory opinions I'd be afraid to open my mouth]. Always willing to hear ideas [I cringed at this internally]. Of course there will be per grade activities, this is just for the school.

Atara—without parents we can't do this. WN will be the Yedion this year with Yigal. Discussion re translating to French.

Atara asked everyone in circle to comment (I passed!). Sign up volunteer sheet was passed around.

Atara—have always had ועדת חסד/ About 40 families, 10%, get support from us. Discreet. Have always been very generous.

All commenting in turn. Environment very smiley, happy, talking in turn, no criticism [I wonder if this is because there isn't, or fear to speak up and break the soft atmosphere—which is better—is this really open???]. Discussion about תקשוב brought up by a father. Atara described the high tech trend in classroom. Smartboard.

Parent brought up zaharonit food issue, kids have no room. Atara shirked responsibility, it is iriya issue, no head, go to head at iriya and insist on a director.

One parent was a student here—two of her teachers recognized her, Rav too. [déjà vu Elite]

Discussion re whether teachers should be sending emails all the time of if kids need the responsibility.

Brief mention of Lag Baomer medurot.

Parent: כיף לתת היום לא תמיד היה

Rav: Every year more impressed by parents giving of their time and more. Here, ideas are thrown and done!

Parent: הועד סוחף

Atara: Deepest thanks to ZD, Liat and Leah. Love you, can't thank you enough (tearing up!). Can't take that for granted. Need to vote for a new head, one to three people [I had the impression this was "fixed," and she wasn't supposed to have anything to do with it, but clearly she does. This was a joke—vote took 5 seconds, and no option open to anyone else, not that anyone seemed to want it, or maybe did???]

Liat recommends Leah.

Atara—so we have three. No one voted against [I didn't vote]. It was by raise of hands. [seems like vote was known from outset]

9:40 A few people left chatting, I felt uncomfortable snooping, though I stayed a few minutes looking at the library books.

Documents

Below are two documents from the Zion School (note that one was translated at the source; the second, newsletter, is often translated fully into English):

Print   http://us-mg4.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=6to2gdkvdtvbp#mail

Subject: ידיעון מספר 24, תשע"ג

From: [redacted] (yedlon@[redacted].org.il)

To: not-a-real-list@[redacted].org.il

Date: Friday, February 22, 2013 12:29 AM

(newsletter about Purim activities)

Newsletter A24 In English

ידיעון בית ספר "[redacted]"

שבת פרשת תצוה פרשת זכור, תשע"ג, 21.02.2013

כניסת שבת: 17:12
יציאת שבת: 18:50

הודעות

פורים שמח

מתנעשה ב "בית התלמיד"

Gibor School

Observations

#1
Gibor, 6 Dec11, school meeting hall, meeting for prospective parents of 6th graders

19:50 started (it was called for 19:30, we arrived at about 19:40)

Met in basement hall/miklat of main building. Abraham opened, said will start with two musical pieces from two students (and a teacher who was on the keyboard). Oriental songs. One used darbuka. Also had guitar.

There is a piano in the corner to the front, covered with a table cloth looking thing.

Lighting dimmed while the kids sang. (A parent complained to me about lack of parking. She has a kid in the 10th, pleased with the school: "No pressure like at private school." On way in spoke to Ruth—told her about my research, background a bit. She was warm. Itzik exchanged a few words with Abraham.)

Music piece #2—teacher invited us to join in שיר המעלות אסע עיני

When parents talk about the school they keep on mentioning that it's the kids who will make it or break it next year—parents have to be involved if they want it to succeed.

Third musical piece—אם אשכחך ירושלים—pointed to the picture projected on overhead, of J'lem (Abraham wanted 2 songs, teacher asked for a 3rd, pointing to the picture).

Choice of kids compared to other schools—here, musical. Other school was just a bright kid who talked. At other private school was music and alumna. Another private school, a kid talked.

Abraham mentioned that there is a choir at the school, performing 23 kislev (jewish date, note) at Yad Lebanim. Introducing, and mentions mayor as strong supporter. Welcomes school rabbi to give a dvar torah (kids clean up musical paraphernalia from stage as he is talking). The kids seem comfortable, smiling, working efficiently, know where the wires go, move speakers back to their place.

Abraham mentioned כי האדם עץ השדה, role of teacher in laying foundation, values. Education of values, honestly, chessed, tsedaka.

Powerpoint presentation on school:

First slide—we educate for values and excellence. We are growing and renewing.

Second slide—Vision of the school, 6 points— תורה ועבודה, מיצוי יכולת אישית, פיתוח מצוינות, הקניית כישורי חיים, חינוך לנתינה בקהילה, אקלים חינוכי מיטבי—אהבה וכבוד הדדי)

Third slide—goals of the school — העמקת ערכי דתי, היישגים ומצויינות, העצמה אישית וקישורי חיים

Fourth slide—organizational structure

Fifth slide—Pedagogy/subjects taught (Vice principal for pedagogy presented)—six-year vision. Abraham added that the schedule, tests etc. online for everyone's access.

Official from the iriya came in, Abraham mentioned again that the school is strongly supported by them. Another official of iriya came in, and the English teacher. In English the classes are homogeneous.

Vice principal—excellent, professional, experienced staff.

Abraham—offer new megamot.

Computer teacher explained, talked about percentage success rates.

Abraham pointed out the art projects all over the school (I had wanted to mention to him that I noticed the art, from my previous visit!). All kids take art. Showed bagrut stats.

Rabbi—religious extra studies, 2 kids talked about it (סיירת תורנית)

The רכזת חברתית talked about that—explained why called Gibor and the bond with that גדוד.

Kids do volunteer work with special ed School, old age homes, Latet (Teudat bagrut hevratit), פיתוח מנהיגות/ participate in municipal culture projects, trips ceremonies, plays, lectures, holidays.

Vice principal—the מסלול מצויינות—science, robotics, math (kids showed robotics).

Also, sports class (gym teacher got up—NOW a lot of parents all of a sudden woke up and started asking questions!!!)

20:50 Mayor arrived (after long budget meeting), sat in front of me in front. He didn't want to talk yet so Abraham continued.

Parents starting to stir—this is a long meeting, lots of info.

Explained connection between school and parents via משוב(I hate this!)

CULTURE תוכניות טיפוח (אמנות, הוראה מתקנת, קידום נוער)

Powerpoint presentation over.

Abraham: Daily schedule, starts with davening in separate groups at 7:40, lower grades till 15:15, some kids go Friday. Playground, no gym, yes cafeteria (they seem very proud of this—keep on mentioning!), computer room. He thanks mayor for his help, gives feeling of encouragement.

Mayor—This school is a flag that we wave to show about education in the city. Regular high schools have good success rates, now we want this routine to be in the religious public HS too. What the state offers is not public education—it weakens education in the country (the yeshivot and ulpanot). We want to give every student what he needs. We invest in this school more than in any other in the city. We do excellent foundation work with an excellent staff. We will continue with this—with no entrance exams or tuition. {He then spoke about the building plans, should finish 2 years after final approval—though the kids lack nothing at this building!)

Abraham—come see (again, transparency here)

Keeps on stressing senior, experienced teachers.

Q&A (shows where the parents' minds are):
Religious 1/3 and secular 2/3 studies
25% *olim* (there is a כיתת עולים)
Very few kids from w/o the city (mayor added only the best, then added that kids here get 3X the budget of other schools—only thing missing is the walls.)
Municipality official said MOE has 38 kids in a class, here it's half (20-25)!
Goal is 3 classes next year.
A parent added—this is the Gibor FAMILY. It's really a family. Don't buy education, we need to join, to dedicate ourselves. Warmly recommend.

About 60-70 parents came, also saw Zion 6th grade teachers and vice principal.

#2
Gibor, Monday 27aug12 7:25-8:00, First day of school

7:00 N left on iriya school bus from home. Well organized in the end, by school secretary (though at first I didn't get the email).

7:25 A few cars are outside Gibor, a parent is taking pictures, vice principal (VP) instructing guard what to do (leave the bus parking spot for busses—facilitating smooth transition for the kids?). About a dozen kids in school yard. I said "Good morning and good luck" to the VP before entering. Introduced myself to guard as parent and doctoral student. Lots of kids now coming in from the bus. (I found a corner to stand and observe). Saw son. I now see Abraham outside of the school entrance, tells HS kids where they can daven. No physical signs outside about new school year. 7th graders making circle of their own. Abraham just went over the 7th graders to tell them where tefila is. ["I wonder if my being here, lurking in the corner yet in eyesight of the principal, is affecting his behavior, no doubt for the better. Would he have gone over to the circle of new 7th graders, mine included, so quickly, if I were not a reminder to

him? How else am I influencing the environment? Is my research a good thing or a bad thing for N? For sure, it can't be neutral"] A woman (secty?) talking to some kids, explaining that they are fixing the a/c in the classes. Only a few parent-looking people here. Kids dressed neatly, some have tsitsit hanging out, all have heads covered (see takanon).

7:30 The woman of above has lists and is telling kids to go down (to davening area?). Maintenance men are walking around with electric equipment. School Rav said good morning to me, asked if I have a kid there. I wished him luck. Light planes fly above, loudly. Three flags—city, Israel, Gibor —at entrance to building. Kiosk is already open—one kid walking around with a coke. Heard a kid saying "they haven't told me yet to get a haircut" (his hair is long, but not hippie). Most kids in short, some in pants—all have shirts with school logo.

7:35 Filling up. VP walked out with shofar and booklets. New principal woman came over to me and told me she is disappointed that she made a tape of songs and the sound system isn't working! (she's trying!!!) She was warm, no paranoia. Abraham told her about me. Beginning to wonder what will be different this year—school as well as in terms of research. (I am so tempted to go over to N but I won't!). Kids congregating in groups of about 6-10, seem to be happy, smiling. 7th graders alone on bench, seem less happy, less smiling! Kid was overheard saying, "Look what's happened, suddenly we have a school"—was he referring to the kids or did something change at the building? I hear mostly Hebrew, a drop of French. Grounds clean.

7:43 Abraham—good morning, please go to tefila. Tells them where (it's split up). They go. It's pretty calm and quiet. Abraham is shepherding them.

7:45 I stepped inside. Nothing much has changed on the walls since last year. I popped in to secty to day good morning and good luck, she gave me a harried half smile. Kids still walking around, looks like went to the wrong place for tefila. LCD TV not working, someone just came to take a look. Upstairs, classrooms are pretty empty, chairs on desks, a few tikim a few posters in some rooms. One kid is upstairs looking out window—I wonder what he's up to and what's the problem. WC is clean, for now. Same thing for 3rd floor. There are water coolers in the halls. A few kids come up—why not at tefila? Were they late (dropping off bags)?
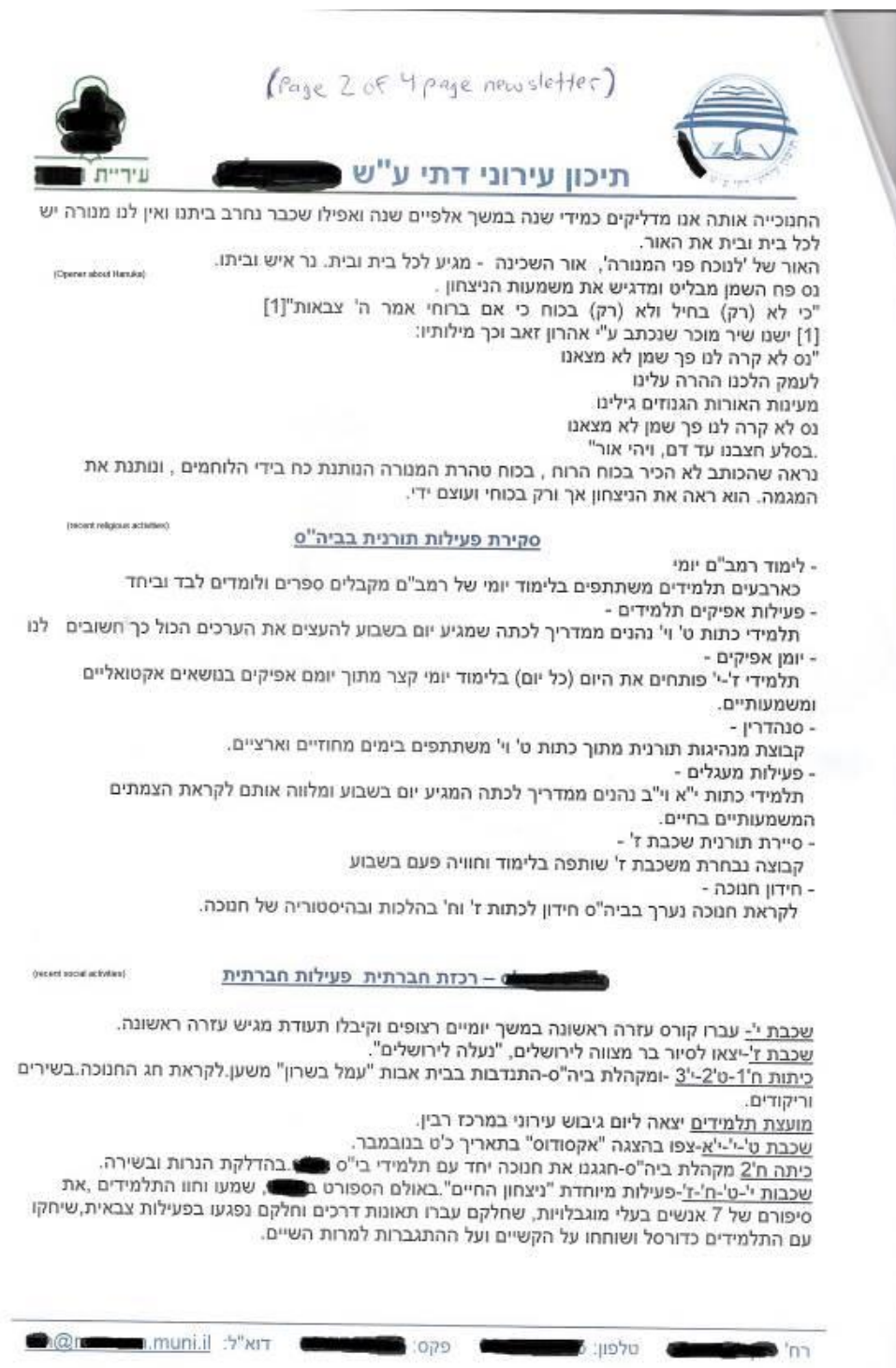
7:50 kiosk is closed. Annex area—clock on wall is broken (another one is working). Water is dripping all over outside—from a/c? Kids still coming in, walk past Abraham, no castigation for being late. Abraham and vice principal are outside 9th-10th davening area, looking at lists. A few kids walking around. Calm. A few kids didn't know which class to go to, but no panic at all (only 7th graders look a bit out of sorts). Vice principal goes over to a lost kid, he answers in English, she was able to reply in English.

7:55 Teacher says to me, "Still jotting down notes" so I smiled and wished her luck. A few 11th graders just walked in cursing a bit—first I've heard so far. A few kids walking around with talit and tefilin—have they lost something? In the wrong place?

8:00 I left, wishing guard luck.

Documents

Below are two documents from the Gibor School (note that the second is a three page document of school rules):

(Page 2 of 4 page newsletter)

תיכון עירוני דתי ע"ש   עיריית

החנוכייה אותה אנו מדליקים כמידי שנה במשך אלפיים שנה ואפילו שכבר נחרב ביתנו ואין לנו מנורה יש
לכל בית ובית את האור.

(Opener about Hanuka)

האור של 'לנוכח פני המנורה', אור השכינה - מגיע לכל בית ובית. נר איש וביתו.
נס פח השמן מבליט ומדגיש את משמעות הניצחון.
"כי לא (רק) בחיל ולא (רק) בכוח כי אם ברוחי אמר ה' צבאות"[1]
[1] ישנו שיר מוכר שנכתב ע"י אהרון זאב אב וכך מילותיו:
"נס לא קרה לנו פך שמן לא מצאנו
לעמק הלכנו ההרה עלינו
מעינות האורות הגנוזים גילינו
נס לא קרה לנו פך שמן לא מצאנו
בסלע חצבנו עד דם, ויהי אור"
נראה שהכותב לא הכיר בכוח הרוח , בכוח טהרת המנורה הנותנת כח בידי הלוחמים , ונותנת את
המגמה. הוא ראה את הניצחון אך ורק בכוחי ועוצם ידי.

(recent religious activities)

סקירת פעילות תורנית בביה"ס

- לימוד רמב"ם יומי
כארבעים תלמידים משתתפים בלימוד יומי של רמב"ם מקבלים ספרים ולומדים לבד וביחד
- פעילות אפיקים תלמידים -
תלמידי כתות ט' וי' נהנים ממדריך לכתה שמגיע יום בשבוע להעציים את הערכים הכול כך חשובים   לנו
- יומן אפיקים -
תלמידי ז'-י' פותחים את היום (כל יום) בלימוד יומי קצר מתוך יומם אפיקים בנושאים אקטואליים
ומשמעותיים.
- סנהדרין -
קבוצת מנהיגות תורנית מתוך כתות ט' וי' משתתפים בימים מחוזיים וארציים.
- פעילות מעגלים -
תלמידי כתות י"א וי"ב נהנים ממדריך לכתה המגיע יום בשבוע ומלווה אותם לקראת הצמתים
המשמעותיים בחיים.
- סיירת תורנית שכבת ז' -
קבוצה נבחרת משכבת ז' שותפה בלימוד וחוויה פעם בשבוע
- חידון חנוכה -
לקראת חנוכה נערך בביה"ס חידון לכתות ז' וח' בהלכות ובהיסטוריה של חנוכה.

(recent social activities)

– רכזת חברתית   פעילות חברתית

שכבת י'- עברו קורס עזרה ראשונה במשך יומיים רצופים וקיבלו תעודת מגיש עזרה ראשונה.
שכבת ז'- יצאו לסיור בר מצווה לירושלים, "נעלה לירושלים".
כיתות ח'1-ט'2-י'3 -ומקהלת ביה"ס-התנדבות בבית אבות "עמל בשרון" משען.לקראת חג החנוכה.בשירים
וריקודים.
מועצת תלמידים יצאה ליום גיבוש עירוני במרכז רבין.
שכבת ט'-י'-י"א-צפו בהצגה "אקסודוס" בתאריך כ'ט בנובמבר.
כיתה ח'2 מקהלת ביה"ס-חגגנו את חנוכה יחד עם תלמידי בי"ס   בהדלקת הנרות ובשירה.
שכבות י'-ט'-ח'-ז'-פעילות מיוחדת "ניצחון החיים".באולם הספורט ב , שמעו וחוו התלמידים ,את
סיפורם של 7 אנשים בעלי מוגבלויות, שחלקם עברו תאונות דרכים וחלקם נפגעו בפעילות צבאית,שיחקו
עם התלמידים כדורסל ושוחחו על הקשיים ועל ההתגברות למרות השיים.

רח'   טלפון: פקס: דוא"ל: @ .muni.il

212

תיכון עירוני דתי ע"ש ███████

עיריית ███

בס"ד

(school constitution/rules)

טבת תשע"ג

תקנון ביה"ס – תשע"ג

מובילים לערכים ולמצוינות בדרך ארץ ויראת שמים. התקנון הוסכם ונכתב בשיתוף צוות ההנהלה והמורים, נציגי מועצת התלמידים ונציגי ועד ההורים ומטרתו העיקרית אקלים מיטבי וכבוד הדדי.

"בין אדם לחברו"

כבוד לחברים, כבוד המורים וכבוד התלמידים תוך הקפדה על לשון נקייה הם אבני יסוד להתנהגות נאותה וראויה בבית ספרנו.

1. ע"מ ליצור אווירה חברתית נעימה לכולם, נתייחס בחומרה בכל ניסיון לפגוע ולהחרים אחד מן התלמידים.
2. בית הספר מקפיד על תרבות הדיבור ולכן יש להימנע מניבולי פה, תופעות של חוסר כבוד וזלזול כלפי מבוגרים, צוות החינוכי והעובדים. תלמיד שיחרוג מכללים אלו יישאר בסיום הלימודים ויידרש להגיש עבודה חינוכית.
3. פגיעה ברכוש - תלמיד שיפגע בציוד בית הספר או בציוד חבריו, יחויב בדמי הנזק ובעבודת סיוע לצוות האחזקה של בית הספר בהתאם לחומרת העניין.
4. אלימות פיזית - תלמיד שינהג באלימות כלפי חבר ישלח לרכז השכבה ו/או לרכז החינוכי ו/או למנהל לבירור העניין, בכל מקרה של אלימות שני הצדדים המעורבים מביה"ס לפרק זמן שיוחלט עפ"י חומרת העניין, למעט מקרים בהם ברור שהצד הנפגע פעל להגנתו.
   בכל מקרה של הרחקה יותר מיום אחד תותנה החזרה לבית הספר במפגש ההורים עם אחד מצוות ההנהלה.

"בין אדם למקום"

5. תפילות:
   - תלמידי ביה"ס מחויבים להיות נוכחים בכל התפילות בזמן(גם בשחרית וגם במנחה).
   - תלמיד שיעדר ללא אישור מתפילה שלוש פעמים בחודש, לא יוכל להשתתף ביום הלימודים ויהיה עליו להשלים את כל התכנים הלימודיים הנלמדים ביום זה ולהגישם בכתב למחנך הכיתה.
   - תלמיד הנתקל בשאלות רוחניות ובקשיים בנושא התפילה יוכל לגשת למחנך הכיתה או לרב ביה"ס או למנהל ולתאם איתו כיצד יוכל להשתלב ולהתקדם בביה"ס מבחינה רוחנית.

"לבוש והופעה"

6. כללי הלבוש וההופעה מהווים מסגרת ראויה לאווירה לימודית במוסד בעל אופי דתי לאומי. תלמיד שלא ישמור על אחד מכללים אלו ויופיע בצורה שאינה הולמת לא יורשה להיכנס לביה"ס.
   - כל תלמיד חייב לחבוש כיפה.
   - מצוות ציצית הינה מצווה חשובה ולכן נשמח על כל תלמיד שיתהדר בלבישתה.
   - תלבושת - חובה להגיע לביה"ס בכל יום עם חולצת תלבושת הנושאת את סמל ביה"ס, בימי החורף יש ללבוש סוודר עם סמל ביה"ס.
   - יש להקפיד ביותר על תספורת ראויה – תלמיד שישחית את פאת ראשו יושעה עד אשר יצמח שערו.
   - אין לגדל שיער פרוע.
   - אין לענוד תכשיטים.
   - מכנסיים - אין ללבוש מכנסיים בעלי גזרה נמוכה ומתחת לקו הברך.
   - הופעה במבחני המתכונת והבגרויות גם אם אינם בימי הלימודים הינה בתלבושת ביה"ס בלבד.

תיכון עירוני דתי ע"ש

עיריית

<u>"אווירה לימודית"</u>

7. מהלך שיעור:

* בכל פתיחת שיעור יש ליישר שורים ולנקות את הכיתה.
* בכל כיתה ימונו תורנים שבועיים שבאחראים לדאוג לניקיון הכיתה במהלך היום ולהרמת הכיסאות בסוף יום הלימודים.
* כניסה של מורה לכיתה תלווה בעמידה שקטה של התלמידים במקומותיהם.
* מקומם של מכשירים סלולאריים בזמן השיעור הוא בתיק. מכשיר שיהיה במהלך השיעור על השולחן או בשימוש יילקח ע"י המורה ויימסר למנהל.
* תלמיד שיפריע באופן חוזר ונשנה בשיעור יזומן לבירור עם המחנך בשיתוף יועץ, רכז השכבה, צוות הנהלה והורים עפ"י חומרת העניין.
* עישון :
  בשטח ביה"ס ואו בסביבה הקרובה ואו במהלך פעילות בלתי פורמאלית אסורה בהחלט. תלמיד שייתפס מעשן בפעם הראשונה יידרש להכין עבודה חינוכית בנושא זה וכן יעודכנו הוריו בפרטי האירוע. במידה והעישון ישנה יושעה התלמיד וישוב לשיחה עם הצוות החינוכי בליווי הוריו.

8. איחורים לשיעורים:

* על המורה והתלמיד להגיע בזמן לשיעור.
* תלמיד מאחר ירשם אצל המורה ויכנס לשיעור.
* תלמיד שיאחר למעלה משלושה איחורים בחודש יקבל מטלה לימודית באותו המקצוע. תלמיד שלא יבצע את המטלה יזומן לביה"ס בליווי הוריו לבירור.
* תלמיד שיאחר למעלה משלושה איחורים בשבוע יאלץ להישאר בביה"ס בסיום הלימודים ע"מ להשלים את השעות והתכנים שאותם הפסיד ולהגישם בכתב למחנך.
* איחור מוצדק הינו איחור המלווה באישור מנהל, סגנים, מחנך או אחד ההורים.

9. חיסורים:

* תלמיד יוכל להיעדר משיעור רק באישור מנהל, סגנים, מחנך או אחד ההורים.
* שחרור משיעור יהיה מלווה בטופס שחרור רשמי של ביה"ס, אותו ניתן לקבל במזכירות, ללא טופס זה לא יאושר השחרור.
* על התלמידים להחתים את המנהל או אחד מן הסגנים או מחנך או אחד ההורים על טופס שחרור.
* תלמיד שהיה חולה נדרש להציג אישור מחלה ע"מ שהחיסור יהיה מוצדק.
* באחריות התלמיד הנעדר משיעור להשלים את הנלמד ולקבל את החומרים שנמסרו בשיעור.
* תלמיד הנעדר מעל שלושה שיעורים ללא רשות יידרש להשלים שעות ולבצע מטלות לימודיות בהתאם לשיקול דעתו של המחנך.
* הפעילויות החברתיות והבלתי פורמאליות הינן חובה על כל תלמיד ולא ניתן להשתחרר במהלכן ללא הצדקה.

רח'   טלפון: פקס: דוא"ל: muni.il

תיכון עירוני דתי ע"ש ██████ עירית

10. מבחנים:

היבחנות הינה דרך לבדיקת הישגים ולקבלת משוב אמיתי למצבו של התלמיד.

* יש לתת תזכורת לכיתה בזמן סביר לפני המבחן.
* על המורה חלה החובה להגדיר את החומר שעליו יבחנו התלמידים.
* לתת לתלמידים בעלי התאמות לימודיות את ההתאמות המגיעות להם.
* אין לדחות מבחן או לקבוע מבחן נוסף ללא תיאום עם הרכזת הפדגוגית ואו ההנהלה.
* ניתן לעשות בחני פתע אך עם זאת יש לשים לב לעיתוי מתאים ולהתחשב בלוח המבחנים.
* יש להזין ציונים במשוב ולהחזיר מבחנים תוך שבועיים ממועד המבחן.
* מועד ב' לבחינות יקבעו ע"י הרכזת הפדגוגית ומטרתם להשלים או לשפר ציון, ביום זה יבחנו בכל המקצועות אלא אם כן הגיע התלמיד להסדר אחר עם המורה והרכזת הפדגוגית.
  למועד ב' ניתן לגשת רק באישור מורה מקצועי, מחנך ומנהל ולהגיש בקשה מסודרת על גבי טופס רשמי של ביה"ס הנמצא בחדר המזכירה.
* העתקה במבחנים הינה גניבת דעת והפרת אמון, בכל מקרה של העתקה יפסל המבחן ויטופל התלמיד בחומרה.

11. נוהל מעבר תלמיד בין הקבצות:

תלמיד הרוצה לעלות או לרדת הקבצה צריך לקבל את אישורה של המורה המלמד וכן את אישור הרכז המקצועי. בנוסף יש ליידע את המחנך, רכז השכבה, המורה החדש וכן את הורי התלמיד על המעבר.

<u>אנו מאשרים שקיבלנו וקראנו את התקנון</u>

חתימת התלמיד _____

חתימת הורי התלמיד _____

Elite School

Observations

#1
via Skype (researcher in Israel)
Elite, PTA Meeting, 19dec11,15:00 (8AM by them, NY)

They introduced me. I didn't catch their names—too fast for me.
It was all but impossible to get this via Skype—see emails with Yair!
19jan12 Yair gave me the names when I interviewed him (he remembered that I had asked

A wants to go first. Yair had to leave for a funeral.
Sitting around an office. Four women, one man (I think—hard to see all of them).
All have papers and pens.
Talking about candles.
Guy is discussing upper school budget. They don't have the numbers—can't understand why not. Waiting for numbers.
Each get about 20,000. Discussing lost money.
Door is open, can't tell exactly where this is.
Suggestion about how to get money, snail mail, maybe not—very heated discussion, all talking together. They all agree they get a lot of emails and phones.
Everyone talking together. Hard for me to understand exactly about what—for sure, it is about money.
At one point, this money was in tuition, seems now it isn't.
Discussing pros and cons of calling and taking credit card numbers.
For dinner, seems callers have had people hang up on them.
Moving over to party and funding. Someone said they don't want parents council involved. Again, moving to budget talk.
Discussed a speaker option, PTC involved but not necessarily with the money.
How about middle school something to make them feel like they are moving up.
One parent is clearly most talkative (striped sweater), man less.
All taking out papers, going over numbers-what the divisions asked for last year.
Now discussing a sports program—asking why it is necessary if most do it anyway after school. It is to learn how to deal with conflict, team work. Talking about pre-school.
Yair doesn't want it (first time I hear his name brought up now). What about Yoga? All talking together—hard to follow.
Everyone has cellphones on table.
Hard to see room—fluorescent built in lighting, blue door, things handing on wall, bookcase.
Yoga and other chug—seems like teachers really count on this PTC to pay for it.
Questioning if really have to pay an outsider for this, during school hours. They agree he is good, maybe he will give a better price. Maybe team building can be included in curriculum somehow.
Women do not have head covered-guy has black kippa.
I heard a bus go by—must be open window.

Guy saying yoga is 2500 (month, year, class???).

"This was a really bizarre year anyway."

"We don't really pay for curriculars, we pay for extras."

Police car in background now, honking.

Talking about the teacher now, how much experience he has.

"These kids are going to be so adjusted!"

Upper school-empty. Someone else talking now—Jan 9 something planned. Bottom line is have lots of ideas, question is what is budget. How to keep them in school (I think this is for the activity)? Some game. This is about some sale.

Phone rings.

Problem is no storage space (talking about some clothing sale—t shirts or something). Have to get kids to go. Should be early in the year. Hard to hear (she's the one with her back to the computer). "Goal is to have a bunch of these."

What giving out (striped woman asking)? I have someone.

Parent said timing is important-need to order right now. Get back on third, everyone going away in three days.

Kids in lower school been asking for tsitsit, kipot with school logo.

One parent said, yes, this is a fulltime job.

She's talking about how to do the clothing idea.

Seems like this will be upper school idea—will work with Yair to get it done.

So how do we do this in terms of budget? Can have L (who?) look into the prices for the candy etc.

Striped one explains why budget is low—so can play with it later.

Also planning father/daughter or mother/son thing. Concept is to have other things in the year to involve parents, to get them involved. Need them to do face paint, posters. Will contact a parent liaison. Mentioning specific people's names.

#3 teacher's gift (seems there is an agenda for this meeting—and people are taking notes).

New policy—CAN get teachers gifts. Some upset—financial issue, lots of teachers, what if I don't get. Seems people were sending anyway, to homes. Teachers didn't know what to do! Then again, teachers felt they should get gifts—they work hard! Big issue. Decided $25 a kid for gift certificate. This is for hanuka gift. Yair made sure the box was anonymous in case not everyone gave. Supposed to tally up, but Yair not there now to say how much made. Seems it's not super anonymous, but more or less. First said $100 a teacher—but what if don't get enough? Letter went out explaining why doing this, giving as community, everyone is the same. But this was NOT parent's council initiative. Someone (not here) said that by doing this, stripping it of it's niceness since just a box, and kids not involved. So stressing the card, from everyone. Mailbox in lobby idea—each kids puts a letter. All agree it's nice. Teacher must appreciate the idea. All agree this is a nice idea.

Did away with candy sale for pesach, discussed fundraising mishloah manot. Clothing idea again—concerned about prices. Will try to find out about prices. Prob with mishloah manot is that middle school does it for Israel trip fundraiser—and very labor intensive. No one seems to like this idea. Now something about magazine subscriptions, the problems involved.

Health night—this year will be different, instead of tables of dentist etc, parents night out or body mind and soul. Meditation, psychology, will be social evening but informative and not stuffy. Nice panel, easy going. Light dinner and healthy deserts at this. This should be exciting. Give recipes? Yes! Some on her blog.

Theatre update—sold all tickets, got bus, $450 not expensive, was amazing even though before x-mas. Were goodie bags for kids with PC sticker on it (they have a logo!)— people had the best time since together. Should do in spring something. Paid $88 and charged $125. If you make it a social thing, people can't complain I could have done this myself.
Sports day. Coaches didn't want major food so don't puke on field. Was a food messup at another game (not enough, unclear who was supposed to get it), a parent got angry. Seems like some parents didn't realize who was getting what—maybe need to followup with a phone call. Trying to figure this out.

One more issue is trip—may need more parents. Would save a lot if took subway (one telling story of a kid who got lost last year). Busses very expensive. Visit close by sites. Worth it to save thousands of dollars every year.

Relax over break, enjoy. They are closing up.

Said thank you to them. (I don't think they even felt I was there)

16:10

#2

23April12 8AM, researcher's first day at Elite

Waked to Elite. Cold and drizzly. Elementary school, parents outside with tripod and poster re annual campaign. Strict security to get in. Bumped into Yair. Asked him to choose a parent for me to approach. Went to Naomi, she said she'd meet me after drop kid off. In corner are muffins of all sorts, nicely displayed, for parents as well as the kids (heard a kid ask "can we take them?"). Parents have school caps on. There is also coffee in the corner, 7 thermoses. Soy milk option. Inside is a poster with a thermometer, "The goal" for each class. They want 100% parent participation.

8:05 Parent said, "OK kids lets go to class." Emptying out. Sign at entrance asking parents to wear kippa. Large coat rack in corner. Heard someone say, "mom gets a hat since she's volunteering." Yair is mingling and talking. Another poster in corner, "Thank you for supporting Elite." Parents also have Elite thank you pins. Scheduled a few interviews with people Yair showed me to. Art at entrance to school—Israeli landscapes.

8:30 Handful of parents left. Heard the word "volunteer" a lot. Yair still here. On top of elevator is Israeli flag with "64" (Israel Independence Day is soon).

8:40 In the elevator are a few kids and an adult with a food services tray with Cheerios and fat free milk (who is this for?). There are flat screen TVs by the elevators with pictures, of Israel too, and school schedule.

8:45 Auditorium. I hear teachers telling kids in Hebrew to sit. A directing. Guy with a blue shirt and yellow tie on guitar, girl on keyboard up front. Kids piling in talking, not wild. Single file, more or less. Teacher speaking in Hebrew, hushing kids. Hebrew music in background. Cold (a/c on). Went over to an Israeli teacher, this is the 4th grade, half day all Hebrew, they understand. She also studied at BIU. This assembly is for 1-4 grades. Kids remain seated once in their seats. Boys and girls sitting together. Kids wear uniform shirts. Kids coming in with siddurim. Auditorium has tiles on perimeter and parquet floor. Green "catering" chairs (metal with upholstery). Greenish curtains. No windows. Small stage up front, where the music comes from. Well lit. Wood paneling, light, marble under paneling on walls.

8:55 Kids sitting, talking but not walking. Same song repeating while all get seated. Now there is someone in a talit and mic up front, told music to stop. Hushing everyone—takes only a few seconds! Principal yells חודש טוב בית ספר and scream in reply חודש טוב נועם. The principal says that this week will be in this room a lot, happy and not. Start with Rosh Hodesh then Yom Hazikaron then Yom Haatzmaut. Let's make sure we start things off right. RH is a new beginning, always need to stop, pause and reflect (think). We should be grateful for a lot so at beg of month thank Hashem. Please turn to page X and rise.

Extreme decorum.

"We begin together." Say Hallel aloud, together, one voice. Another song, all sing, they clearly know the song. Teachers distributed, participating fully. [This is so dif from Israeli assemblies, I want to cry] A few more Hallel songs, all sing. Woman at mic with guitar leads this all, I asked who she is, music teacher. I do not recognize all of the songs, must be American Hebrew songs. Recite a few lines from hallel. Kid brought to mic to sing, others too (A moves with the mic). A few teachers stand on the perimeter. Whole assembly so far is standing. Some women teachers have head coverings, I see one long wig, berets, bandana. Some look Israeli. Guy singing on guitar. More songs. More recitations. Some clapping, some shoulder dancing. Boys and girls equal. Some traditional Hallel songs, spruced up with music.

9:15 Starting to see kids talking a bit, but decorum maintained. Used Hashem's name, even though repeated a few times. Another song, more recitation. All knew to sit. Rabbi dismisses class by class, they line up, very cute. Others keep singing. A teacher spoke to a Hebrew speaking teacher in English.

9:25 "Please rise for aleinu on page 92", sing spruced up version (some kids already left). I find myself singing! Some girls dancing to this. "Fourth grade you are dismissed. Hodesh tov." Music as kids pile out orderly. Talking but orderly. Each class waits to be dismissed by class. Music continues till all kids out. Bumped into old time friend Shira who brought me to get coffee then showed me around the whole school.

Documents

Below are two documents from the Elite School.

Flik DINING

February 2013
[ ] School

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
				1 NO SESSIONS
4 NO SESSIONS	**5** NO SESSIONS	**6** Vichyssoise Cheese Pizza Vegetable Pizza Green Beans and Mushrooms Tossed Garden Salad Tuna Tabbouleh Salad Caesar Salad Watermelon Slices	**7** Mushroom Barley Soup Roasted Barbeque Chicken Steamed Rice with Citrus Zest Steamed Corn and Peppers Blackened Tofu Traditional Cole Slaw Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**8** Pacific Seafood Chowder Tuna on Assorted Breads Pizza Bagels Carrot and Celery Sticks Glazed Beets Tuscan Hummus Sticky Buns with Peacans
11 Jamaican Red Bean and Rice Soup Cheese and Bean Burritos Kash with Spicy Maple Pecans Curry Style Vegetables Sour Cream Salsa Shredded Cheddar Cheese Corn and Jicama Salad Orange Smiles	**12** Chicken and Rice Soup Meatballs and Marinara Sauce Spaghetti with Fresh Basil Sauteed Green Beans Mushrooms and Tomatoes Roasted Tofu White Bean and Asparagus Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**13** Four Onion Gratinee Cheese Quesadillas and Vegetable Quesadillas Roasted Beet and Scallion Rifried Beans Marinated Two Bean Wheatberry and Cranberry Watermelon	**14** Tuscan Potato and Chick Pea Cheese Ravioli Homemade Focaccia Sauteed Broccoli Rabe Garlic and Olive Oil Frisse Feta and Pear Curried Rice Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**15**
18	**19** Beef Wonton Kung Pao Chicken Steamed Brown Rice Stir Fried Bok Choy Citrus Marinated Tofu Thai Style Green Papaya Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**20** Minestrone Cheese Pizza Cauliflower Mushrooms and Shallot Tossed Salad Cous Cous Jardinera Caesar Salad Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**21** Sweet Potato Bisque Garden Vegetable Fritata Whole Wheat Pancakes Housemade Berry Syrup Cheddar Jalapeno Biscuits Fruit Salad Green Bean and Feta Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**22** Tomato Quinoa Tuna on Assorted Breads Pesto Tuna Wraps Carrots and Celery Stick Potato Chips Chocolate Brownie Cheesecake
25 Curried Carrots Sweet Potato and Ginger Penne Sundried Tomato Pesto and Feta Tossed Salad Eggplant Tomatoes and Spinach Southwestern Caesar Tuscan Hummus Grapefruit Smiles	**26** Black Bean and Cilantro Chicken and Beef Fajitas Tex Mex Sily Corn and Peppers Caribbean Rice and Peas Soft Flour Tortillas Tomato and Avocado Shredded Lettuce and Slice Olives Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**27** Traditional Tomato Grilled Cheese and Grilled Cheese with Tomato Roasted Winter Vegetables Mustard Greens and Onions Moroccan Carrots Spinach with Strawberry Vinaigrette and Feta Seasonal Fresh Fruit	**28** Curried Lentil Herb Roasted Pollack Fillet Baked Potato Vegetable Chili Sour Cream and Cheddar Wild Rice and Cranberry Seasonal Fresh Fruit	

Daily Offerings
Salad Bar with House-Made Dressings. Low Fat Plain Yogurt, Low Fat Cottage Cheese, Light Cream Cheese, Soy Nut Butter & Jelly. Hoouse-Made Granola, Hand Fruit. Composed Salads, Tuna Salad, Plain Tuna and Egg Salad. Apple and Orange Juice. Low Fat Milk and Low Fat Chocolate Milk. 100% Orange Juice on Meat Days. Assorted Bagels, Breads and Pita. [ ] menus are reviewed monthly by [ ], MS, RD, CDN, Flik Independent School Dining Nutrition Specialist.

Subject: 24 Hour Countdown - Bid on Great Prizes

From: ██ Spring Fling (auction@██████.org)

To: ███████@yahoo.com;

Date: Sunday, May 13, 2012 7:50 AM

To view on a handheld or as a webpage, click here

SPRING FLING
24 hours and counting
ONLINE AUCTION CLOSES TOMORROW NIGHT

Bid on GREAT prizes including:

- Camp discounts
- Hotel and beach club deals
- Beauty, health and fitness treatments
- Beautiful jewelry and home goods

Available at www.██████.org/Auction2012
until Sunday night, May 13, at 11:45PM

If you have not yet done so, please "Register to Bid"

-We strongly suggest you use an alias or fun "USERNAME"
as it goes public as you bid.
-If you forget your password, please click on "Forgot Password."
-You will receive bid alerts through-out the auction
letting you know your bid status.
-Your credit card will be charged only if you are the highest bidder and winner.
-If you have won an item, you will receive instructions post-auction detailing pick-up of your prize or mailing of your gift certificate.

Shop often and enjoy!

SPRING FLING

PARENTS COUNCIL

Wave School

Observations

#1
Wave, 26apr12 7:40, researcher's first day at Wave

Just got to Wave, very early. Left house at 6:45 and got bus at about 7 (very nice driver!). Next time take later bus! Security here much nicer than at Elite. I explained my situation and they asked ME to sign in (at Elite THEY signed me in), take a generic guest tag (at Elite I had a bright sticker with my name), and wait about 20 minutes until the security guy got in. Sitting on bench at entrance. This school is total unknown to me so a bit scared but excited. Eliana is NOT here so a bit apprehensive waiting for RA to phone.

Some preK kids are coming in with their mothers. So far, all mothers have covered hair, either bandana or shaitle. Seems like kids are all wearing white shirts. Floor is rustic brown, small tiles, not too new. Israeli flag hanging on walls. Welcome Home Gilad Shalit, little kid artwork, big poster on facing wall about responsibility. A mother just walked in in jeans. So far only English. I don't want to walk in further to observe since I was asked to stay here.

7:50 A father just walked in and said to the Hispanic guard, Happy Independence Day.

7:55 A small yellow school bus drove up

8:05 Just spoke to the cute security guard, an Israeli. I think he will be helpful, he offered me coffee. Kids starting to come, congregate in the lobby. There is a guard outside with a yellow vest directing those coming in. Teacher looking person at the front desk too. There are kids running around, screaming, acting free. Less discipline here than at Elite. RA arrived and is giving me the tour.

8:30 Very open atmosphere, kids still coming and walking around (is there a late policy?). I hear three women saying kaddish at the morning minyan. Bags strewn all over, very heimish environment. How do you describe this school???

8:55 All go to a central area to say Hallel. Loud. Noisy. Boys and girls more or less separated. Rabbi Nadav on microphone, "No better way to start a celebration today than to have 600 ppl saying together hodu lahashem, thank you to hashem for the gift of Israel. When we were born, that gift was waiting for us, but we waited for it for 2000 years. Got it 64 years ago. Influencing our lives for better wherever we live. So let's start our celebration." He leads. Kids use ArtScroll and Koren siddurim. Israeli teacher tell kids to open their siddurim, in English. Not all in white, but most. Modest dress here. Kids singing, Rabbi Nadav leads. Someone is taking pictures. Kids all over the place, in every corner! A girl from my son's class comes over to me!

9:15 Hallel finished. "Please return to your classrooms" Teacher—6th grade go back to tefilla. Some parents came to Hallel, it is a ritual here. The girl shows me around! Teachers direct the kids, in English.

9:30 Kids outside on enormous fake grass lawn with tent covering. Simcha dancing in groups—chain and circle. Music is keyboard guy. Principal wears Israeli flag tie. Most kids in sneakers, teachers join in dancing. Small water bottles, napkins, watermelons, no other apparent decorations. Little decorated kids join. Parent looking people come by, teachers smile at me. Atmosphere is controlled balagan, energy filled but not wild. Happy. Few kids by themselves. Boys trying to make a pyramid. Yard is totally fenced in. All sorts of kippot.

9:55 Chant of "we want color war" It breaks out.

#2
Wave, 3may12 8:25, class prayer/bar mitzvah

Back at Wave. Kids asked to go to a room, they all pile in. Will I hear the ritual morning welcome over the PA system? Yes! Here it is! Asked secty where the Bar Mitzvah is, had to ask a few people but found it. Had never seen that room. It is a very stripped down, storage-looking room. Boys to left, girls to right, near the door. Looks like there are some relatives—I am not the only one without a head covering (I asked a young teacher if that is OK and she shrugged OK pretty apathetically). I think a boy is the one davening, I hear a teacher very loud. A lot of talking. There are some posters here on walls—Israel with kids, Israel flag, Tu B'shvat cartoons, IDF prayer, laminated Temple posters, "Shabbos is coming" like a street sign or car license, "modim." Mehitsa is simple wood, low shoulder height. White board has names of sick people to pray for, a teacher updated it. There is a big (35"?) old Panasonic TV in the room. Holy ark is an olive wood looking cabinet. Prayer books are kept in black filing cabinets and boxes on the floor. Some have names, some belong to the school. The young teacher is davening with an Ashkenazi accent. Teacher quietly yelled at talking girls, it quiets down a bit. Some boys have tefilin, don't see any talitot [no sefardim???]. There are tissue boxes up front, kids get up to use them a lot. There is a large, open, garbage bin. Male teacher tells everyone when to get up. A girl asked a teacher if she could go to the bathroom, and was told not now, they argue quietly then she sits down amicably. Some sections of prayer chanted out loud. The female teacher seems to be taking attendance, not davening, she pipes in every now and then. Can't tell if any female teachers are really davening. Kids go in and out a lot, more girls, maybe since they are closer to the door. Other main parts of the prayer are sung/chanted. The guests (relatives I assume) are talking. A female teacher told a standing girl that there are chairs elsewhere, said in Hebrew (I think she is Israeli). Sing other parts of the prayer, not familiar tunes to me. Shma said entirely out loud. Four girls brought in folding chairs (all chairs here are folding), and got sidurim with teacher's assistance. I see 3 male teachers around the age of 30 and 3 women, also around 30 (not more). Most girls look bored, not praying (I can't see the boys to well)—there is a hum of davening but I can't tell where it's coming from!

8:50 The TV, on a trolley, is being rolled out by kids, I think because of space. All say shmona esre beginning together—"heicha kedusha." Kids talk during kedusha. Not quite as they finish shmona esre, I don't think they are really davening, the teachers are. Male teacher reminds that as is the case every Monday and Thursday, say the longer tahanun, and reminds them what to do. Kids, girls esp, go to the tissues a lot. Sing something from tachanun. No one offered me a seat. Someone came down and kisses the relatives, the mother? She has a siddur. Sing when taking out the torah. Teacher: "Please sit [in Hebrew], please turn to page …Parshat Aharei Mot. We would like to wish mazal tov to David and his family. Am sure you will listen to every word." [said sing songy like imitating the principal's style—to me sounded fake, is he trying to be cool?] Kid reads, I assume it's David. Just saw a boy with a talit—sefardi? Boys giggled over something and were hushed. Sing "ya'amod" very ceremoniously, he is a Levi [sounds fake/forced!]. Someone, maybe a father, is taking pictures. A woman teacher corrected a trope mistake of his!!! After, all sing "siman tov umazal tov". About 60 girls, I assume same number boys but can only see when they stand up. I hear a sefardi "loolooloo" from about 2 kids. Father says "baruch sheptarani" in broken Hebrew. He has an aliya, very Yiddish sounding. Male teacher tells everyone to stand up for Kaddish. Kids sing along. A kid who just came back from Israel said the "hagomel" blessing. Torah is medium sized, they sing "etz hayim hiy" in an uplifting melody. Teacher gives a student the attendance sheet and she leaves with it. A male teacher once again says Mazal Tov to the boy's family. Did wonderful job. There are so many wonderful things to talk about in these 2 parshiyot, will skip to Kedoshim. Full of important mitzvoth [again, he is trying to act cool]. Last year we studied Rome, Code of Hamurabi—when you read the laws in ancient texts, torah and contemporary, legal, it's "casuistic"—cause based. But kedoshim is NOT like that! It lists laws as "apodictic" imperatives, things you just must do, who you are. David, as you become a bar mitzvah, these laws become yours and define who you are. They are your life, as taught by your parents, grandparents, and school. It is a blessing for you to take that path. [that's a nice dvar torah!] He then gets a gift from the parent council. Applause. Pictures. A girl fell asleep and was gently woken by a teacher, for her to get up for aleynu. No one saying kaddish here.

9:20 Male teacher says in Hebrew to sit. Asks who will say prayer for IDF. Kids hushed. Boys taking off tefilin. A girl says it, kids sitting. Tzedaka box goes around. Male teacher tells everyone to go to lunchroom for celebration. Some kids put siddurim away (those who help are thanked) and some take them with them. [I asked the little girl from N's class later what girls do for Bat Mitzvah—she said dvar torah, dance, donut celebration]

Documents

Below are two documents from the Wave School.

Print   http://us-mg4.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?reason=launch_error&ec=

Subject: Chadashot 3.1.13 - Parshat Ki Tisa

From: chadashot@▓▓▓▓▓.org (chadashot@▓▓▓▓▓.org)

To: ▓▓▓▓@yahoo.com;

Date: Friday, March 1, 2013 8:27 PM

(page 1 of 18 page newsletter)

CHADASHOT

CHADASHOT
March 1, 2013
Candle Lighting: 5:28 pm

Shabbat Parshat Ki Tisa
19 Adar 5773
Havdalah: 6:30 pm

Click here for PDF version of the Chadashot

A MESSAGE FROM RABBI ▓▓▓▓▓

Dear Parents,

We had a wonderful week which began with over 450 people joining us for Megillah reading on Purim morning. Thank you to Rabbi ▓▓▓▓▓ and Morah ▓▓▓▓▓ for teaching our middle school students to read the Megillah; it was truly a simcha to listen to them.

Thank you as well to our 5th and 6th grade teams for the substantive and fun per bar/bat

Mazal Tov

To Michelle (▓▓ Faculty) and ▓▓▓▓ on the birth of ▓▓▓▓▓. Mazal tov also to big brother ▓▓ (▓) and sister ▓▓

To S▓▓ (Elective faculty) & ▓▓▓▓ on the birth of a granddaughter ▓▓▓▓▓, born to ▓▓▓ (▓▓elum) & S▓▓▓

To F▓▓ (▓▓ Faculty) and ▓▓

Print   http://us-mg4.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?reason=launch_error&ec=...

Subject: Supporting Our Community in the Aftermath of Hurricane Sandy

From: Announcements (announcements@▇▇▇▇.org)

To: ▇▇▇▇@yahoo.com;

Date: Monday, November 5, 2012 10:42 PM

ACADEMY | HIGH SCHOOL
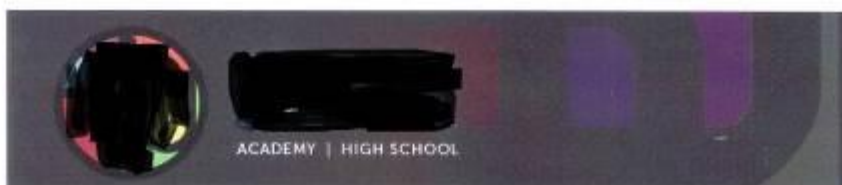
Dear Parents,

We were blessed to have been welcomed into the "tents" of our community last week where chesed was modeled for us and lived by us.

This past Shabbat we read Parshat Vayera, and in keeping with the school tradition, the Chesed Tent went up and we were looking forward to watching each class come visit the tent and emulate the ways of Avraham and Sarah by performing an act of chesed as a grade. The tent is appropriately decorated with the words "Olam Chesed Yibaneh". We can build and rebuild through acts of chesed. In light of our current situation, we have decided to focus our acts of chesed on hurricane relief this week and to follow through with originally planned chesed projects during Chanuka.

We are partnering with Achiezer Community Resource Center who will be distributing our collected items. Items in need are:

- toothpaste
- diapers
- wipes
- baby food
- canned food
- toilet paper
- paper towels.

In addition, we are collecting new toys and games for children of all ages for the ▇▇▇▇ Chanukah toy drive.

We are very thankful to all the parents that previously signed up to help in the chesed tent this week - we will keep you posted on the new chesed week schedule for December.

If you have additional questions, please contact ▇▇▇▇ at ▇▇▇▇@▇▇▇▇.org.

Unsubscribe from this eNotice.

FINALSITE

1 of 1   10/17/2013 11:17 AM

226

תקציר

מחקר על תופעת החוויה הבית ספרית בדרך כלל מתמקד בילד, במורה ובמנהל. מחקר איכותני זה בודק אוכלוסייה אחרת חשובה במידה דומה : ההורים. הוא מסתכל על ההורה המתנדב במטרה להאיר את תרומת ההורה המתנדב (PI) לתרבות בית הספר.

בעקבות ממצאי מחקר פיילוט בבית ספר ישראלי אחד שהתמקד בתופעת התנדבות הורים בכלל, מחקר זה צועד צעד אחד קדימה, וחוקר הורים מתנדבים בשני בתי ספר ישראלים ושני בתי ספר בארה״ב עם רקע אידיאולוגי דומה (בתי ספר ציונים מהזרם האורתודוקסי מודרני). ננסה להבין יותר טוב לא רק את תופעת התנדבות הורים בכלל—ממבט ההורה עצמו או עצמה—אלא, במקרה הזה, התרומה של ההתנדבות על תרבות בית הספר. עצם שימוש באוכלוסייה הבולטת הזאת כקרש קפיצה, ננסה להכין את הקרקע מבחינה תיאורית להבין איך ההורה המתנדב שזור בתרבות בית הספר, ולהבין תיאוריות לגבי התנדבות בכלל, מעורבות הורים פעילה בבית הספר, ותרבות בית הספר.

פרידמן (2010) מייצג סקר כללי אבל רחב לגבי היסטוריית PI בארץ, ומציע טיפולוגיות של סוגי הורים שונים, כולל התפקידים הפוטנציאליים שלהם בבית הספר. אפשטיין (2001) ידוע כמי שמקדמת את חשיבות השותפות בין בית הספר, המשפחה והקהילה. וילסון (2000) וגרומב (2011) מדברים רבות על תופעת ההתנדבות, גרומב עם דגש על ישראל. שיין (1985) כותב על תרבות אירגונית, ודיל ופיטרסון (1999) מתמקדים על תרבות בית הספר בפרט, עם דגש על מנהיגות. ובורדו (1986) ידוע היטב בגלל התיאוריות שלו לגבי הון אישי, חברתי ותרבותי, שחוקרים קשרו לתופעת PI, כשדורקהיים (1956 ו-1973), מבוסס על עבודות מוקדמות ביותר) היה בעצם אחד הפילוסופים הראשונים שחיבר בין חינוך לסוציולוגיה. נושא PI גם זכה לעדיפות עליונה בדרג הפוליטי ומדיני, כפי שרואים בדו״ח דוברת משנת 2005 ורפורמות אופק חדש ליסודי מ-2008 ועוז לתמורה לעל-יסוד מ-2011, וגם חקיקת No Child Left Behind בארה״ב.

לאחר מחקר אתנוגראפי, חקר מקרה שערך שנתיים, בשני בתי ספר בארץ ושני בתי ספר בארה״ב, בו התקיימו מעל 40 ראיונות עם הורים, מורים, צוות מנהלי ודמויות פוליטיות; התקיימו ותועדו עשרות תצפיות; ומאות מסמכים נאספו ונותחו—החוקרת מציגה ״תיאור עבה״ (גירץ, 1973) של הממצאים. ממצאים אלו מציגים מי הוא ההורה המתנדב (כגון, סיבות להתנדבות); המבנה הדינאמי של כוח, פוליטיקה, ושותפות המוצגת בבתי הספר; וההורה כסוכן של סוציאליזציה, חינוך בלתי פורמאלי, ותרבות בבית הספר.

הדיון לוקח את הממצאים האלו לרמה יותר עמוקה מבחינה תיאורית וגם פרקטית, ומציע שיטת מיון חדשה של סוגי מתנדבים המתבססת על ארבעת בתי ספר אלו; דן במשמעות של קונצפט המנהיגות ואיך תפקידי המנהל וההורה לפעמים שזורים בסוג של שותפות; ומחבר בין חינוך לסוציאליזציה, הן בתקופתנו והן לאור מחשבה קלאסית.

מחקר זה מאיר לא רק את התיאוריות הקלאסיות לגבי סוציולוגיה וחינוך ומעלה אתגרים מתודולוגיים הקשורים לתופעת צופה\משתתף (insider/outside), אבל יותר חשוב, מציע השלכות פרקטיות ויישומיות במסגרת בית הספר. הוא גם מעלה שאלות להמשך מחקר, כגון תפקיד ההורה הלא מעורב בכוונה. התקווה היא שצוות הניהול, המנהלים, מורים, והכי חשוב, ההורים, ילמדו מממצאים אלו ובכך יוכל להעשיר את החוויה הבית ספרית לכל המעורבים.

תוכן העניינים

תרומת ההורה המתנדב
לתרבות בית הספר

חקר מקרה אתנוגראפי

חיבור לשם קבלת תואר "דוקטור לפילוסופיה"

מאת
עליזה בתיה בורשטיין
בית הספר לחינוך

הוגש לסנט של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

רמת גן   כסלו ה'תשע"ד

תרומת ההורה המתנדב לתרבות בית הספר

חקר מקרה אתנוגראפי

חיבור לשם קבלת התואר "דוקטור לפילוסופיה"

מאת
עליזה בתיה בורשטיין
בית הספר לחינוך

הוגש לסנט של אוניברסיטת בר-אילן

רמת גן   כסלו, ה'תשע"ד