

**TEACHER-PARENT INTERACTION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL:
NEGOTIATION AND CONSENT**

by

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Declaration

I declare that TEACHER-PARENT INTERACTION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS IN ISRAEL: NEGOTIATION AND CONSENT is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed: **E. A.**

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SUMMARY

This study examines patterns of negotiation between teachers and parents in junior high schools in Israel. These negotiations were examined on "parents' days" in three schools between four class teachers and 80 parents of students in their classes.

Guided by interpretive approaches to the study of micro-social processes and their application in the models of Hargreaves (1972, 1991) and Strauss (1978, 1990), dealing with negotiations, strategies and working agreements, the study focused on observations of teacher-parent interactions and interviews with teachers and parents.

It was found that teachers are guided on parents' day by both pedagogic and survival goals: they seek to advance the students in their studies and to care for their well-being through contact with the parents, but also to shift responsibility to the parents. The parents' goals on these days are to learn about their children's situation in the school, but also to win the teachers' support and sympathy for their children in order to help them advance.

To achieve their goals each side uses resources to impress and convince the other side. The teachers emphasize their professional authority, their bureaucratic status and the knowledge they possess of the parents and their children. The parents use their status and rights as parents and the knowledge they possess of the school and the teachers.

The findings also indicate that the teachers stress mainly the instructional aspect. This approach perpetuates the hierarchy existing in the education system and does not help to narrow the gaps between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. This indicates a direction for further study and investigation of the question as to how the school can be made to contribute to greater equality, among other things through changing the teachers' educational perception.

Perhaps the main purpose of parents' day lies in its ritual functions, which are designed to serve the school organization and constitute a restatement of the common goals of teachers and parents, while supporting the ideology of parent participation and confirming the statuses and roles of teachers and parents.

Key terms:

Parents' day; Junior high school; Interaction; Awareness context; Definitions of situation; Negotiations; Strategies; Working agreement; Concord; Pseudo-concord.

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Please note that the American English orthography was used in this thesis, as this is the common convention in Israel.

INTRODUCTION

The present research deals with the relationships between teachers and parents in the Israeli education system. In order to understand these relationships it is important to relate to the historical background that influenced the development of the education system and the parents' place in it.

Modern Israeli society developed out of a small number of pioneers who came from eastern Europe and aspired to realize the Jewish Zionist vision of returning to the ancient homeland and rebuilding Jewish society in it. After World War II, survivors of the holocaust arrived from various countries, many of the children without families. Immediately following the establishment of the state, in 1948, large waves of immigrants began to arrive, mostly from North African and Asian countries. The population grew by over 100% in one decade, from less than one million in 1948 to two million in 1958 (Eisenstadt, 1978).

The establishment of the state of Israel was charged with a historical religious and national load and accompanied by aspirations to establish a new and improved society. Education was expected to be one of the main tools for realization of the Jewish Zionist and social vision. The belief in the strength of education was rooted in the Jewish tradition and the heritage of the Jewish nation that had always seen in education and learning a means to preserve the national existence. In the new Israeli reality the education system had to struggle with the needs of a society in the making, composed of people coming from many different countries and bringing with them different traditions, languages, social outlooks which were often conflicting, and diverse sets of values (Eisenstadt, 1978, p. 224).

To these circumstances we need to add the struggles between the political parties, each one trying to win the votes of the new immigrants by providing educational services to their children. During the period of the British Mandate in Palestine (1917-1948) the Jewish education system had developed autonomously, independent of the British administration, in separate directions, referred to as streams, each associated with a political or ideological movement (Kleinberger, 1973). The educational streams in fact comprised parallel education systems, each fully independent in all the aspects of educational work in the school: setting the curriculum and teaching

methods, appointing principals and teachers, responsibility for funding and budgeting, and public relations (Elboim-Dror, 1985). The stream structure enabled the parents to choose the social, political or religious framework in which their children would be educated, although their freedom of choice was limited to the schools provided by a particular stream and did not extend to the choice of a particular school (Elboim-Dror, 1985).

The new state of Israel faced difficult challenges: the need to develop all the institutions of an independent society and establish a viable economy while still fighting for its very existence (the War of Independence continued until 1949). This meant, among other things, that limited resources were available for education. But despite these limited resources, there was an urgent need to develop a high-level progressive education system that would meet the needs of industry and provide skilled manpower. Israel was still in the process of absorbing hundreds of thousands of Jews from countries in distress. The growth in the number of students from different levels and different cultures required structures, equipment and manpower. The enormity of the tasks and the lack of skilled manpower, intensified the policy-makers' feeling of the need for administrative centralization of the education system, placing the needs of the state above the needs of the various sectors and limiting the independence of the various streams which threatened the unity that was so necessary for the state in those early days. The Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, who understood the need for unity, placed the principle of statism above the sectarian reality, meaning education independent of political parties, ethnic groups or other non-governmental organizations (Eisenstadt, 1978).

Historical background – development of the education system

After the establishment of the state, the Knesset (parliament) passed the Compulsory Education Law (1949). Although this law did not abolish the stream structure, most of the parents now sent their children to the state schools (the continuation of the general trend). However, although the law recognized the parents' right to have some influence over their children's education, their influence did not reach into the school. In fact, the parents left the educational work to the teaching staff, while they watched from the sidelines, both out of faith in the teachers' professionalism and because they themselves did not feel capable of helping very

much in their children's education. Many of the parents were immigrants, who perceived themselves to be weak in face of the establishment, and their feeling of inability to be partners in the work of the school was compounded by the struggle for their own social integration in the new country, which required considerable psychological resources (Elboim-Dror, 1985).

In 1953, the State Education Law abolished the streams and enabled the parents to choose between state schools and state-religious schools. This law determined increased centralization and standardization of educational policy. In fact, the new law released the parents of responsibility for their children's education and handed it over to the state. In this way it denied the parents the right to intervene in their children's education. As a result, the parents' link with the school became looser. The school was no longer perceived as an institution that actualized the parents' value system but as a bureaucratic institution subject to instructions from the central government, and the support and trust in it declined considerably. The decreased parents' involvement also stemmed from the drop in ideological tension and the loss of the sense of mission that had characterized the pre-state period (Elboim-Dror, 1985).

The mass immigration from Asian and African countries from 1948 onwards also created problems because of the gap in cultural values between the school and the home, with the school becoming an alien institution for many parents. The learning difficulties that began to appear among immigrant children from Asian countries as soon as they entered the education system were interpreted by the teachers, who did not understand the meaning of cultural difference, as the child's or the parents' personal failure and not as an inability of the system to meet the particular needs of the child and his/her family. This interpretation intensified the separation between the school and the family (Friedman, 1984).

Structure of the system today

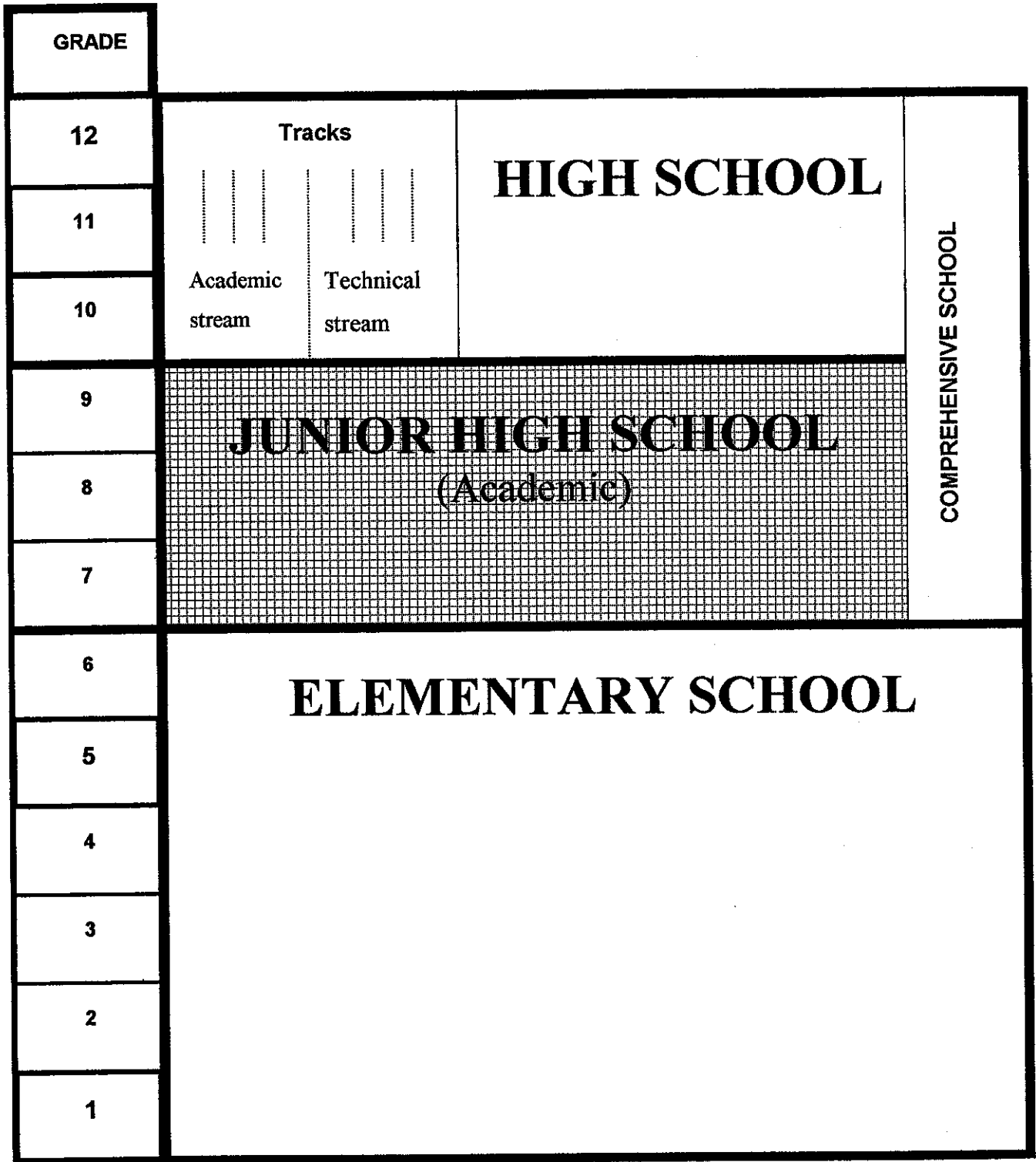
At the end of the 1960s, in response to the growing social and educational gaps in the schools and in society, educational reform was introduced. The structure of the schools was changed to a three-tier system, composed of elementary school (grades 1-6), junior high school (grades 7-9) and high school (grades 10-12).

Every junior high school is associated with a high school. This framework is called a comprehensive school. The instruction in the junior high schools is basically academic and the learning takes place in heterogeneous home-room classes composed of strong, weak and average students, except for mathematics, science and languages, which are taught in homogeneous groups, constructed according to level of ability. The junior high school classes are the 7th, 8th and 9th grades. The 8th grade is an intermediate stage in preparation for high school, and the 9th grade is the last year of junior high school before moving on to high school. During this year the next stage of each child's education is decided upon, and therefore it is important for the parents to negotiate over the setting where their children are to be placed and their position in it, which may well determine their chances later in life and their status in Israeli society.

The high school classes consist of the 10th, 11th and 12th grades. The school has many learning tracks (in both academic and technical streams). The comprehensive school takes in all the children in the area regardless of their abilities, inclinations and expectations. Following the English comprehensive school model, the schools admit a diverse student population from all socio-economic levels. The comprehensive school sought to gather under one roof a varied group of students, some of whom are not capable of meeting the usual high school requirements, while some have high potential and can easily complete their matriculation studies. The role of the comprehensive school, among others, is to channel the students into learning tracks according to their abilities (Swirski, 1990, 1995; Shmida & Ish-Shalom, 1993). The academic and technical curricula are varied, and in principle students have the right to move from one track to another and one stream to another according to the rate of progress in their studies (see Figure 0-1).

Matriculation confers an official certificate of the Ministry of Education and is one of the conditions for acceptance to higher education. The school leaving certificate is granted to those who have not completely fulfilled the requirements for matriculation. The schools create a positive climate and support the integration of various groups in the pupil population, providing opportunities for every student so as to prevent dropping out. The junior high schools are in regular contact with the high school with regard to study and counseling in order to ensure a smooth passage from the junior high to the high school, while the high school offers the students a wide range of tracks and streams according to their needs and allows them mobility between the various tracks.

Figure 0-1: Structure of the Israeli school system



Focus area of this study

Parents' involvement in their children's education

Parents today have become a part of the school "agenda", and communication with them occupies the educational staff a great deal. Local authorities seek ways to respond to the individual needs of parents in the community, among other things because of their awareness of the parents' electoral power. As a result, the local authorities tighten their contacts with the schools, and meet with representatives of the parents from various schools in order to answer their needs, especially their physical needs, in terms of equipment, enrichment lessons, reinforcement of learning and extra-curricular activities for the children. The schools' willingness to allow parental involvement is not uniform, and depends largely on the leadership of the principal and the skills of the educational staff. The professional training of principals and teachers does not include preparation for working with parents. Some of the principals are indeed capable of adapting themselves and their staff to the new situation, involving the parents in the educational work and also expanding and enriching the work of the school. Many others see parental involvement as intervention that disrupts the educational work and does not serve the children's needs. The gap between each side's expectations of the other can become a source of contention, friction and power struggles (Peled, 1976).

Parents' representation in formal structures

The parents' representation occurs on three levels: at the national level, the level of the community and level of the school. The activity at the first two levels is mainly political. Representation at the level of the school, whether in the framework of the class or the school, is of the greatest significance for most of the parents, although more and more parents see this activity as a springboard for political roles such as heads of departments in local authorities or members of city councils.

The parents' power in the school is expressed mainly in activities that require funding, such as planning trips, organizing shows and ceremonies marking the various religious holidays, as well as improvement of the conditions in the school, such as installing air conditioners, drinking fountains and computers. The funding for all these is supplied by the parents, initiated by the parents' committee (Elboim-Dror, 1985).

Conclusion

This brief overview of education in Israel reveals a dynamic education system that has undergone many changes in a relatively short period, due to the special circumstances of the renaissance and ingathering of an ancient society and its evolution in the modern world. In this process, the education system confronted many problems, some of them universal and some of them unique to Israel's special circumstances.

Since the establishment of the state (in 1948) Israel's education system has changed constantly in response to the challenges posed by the needs of the time. In the early period, the influx of large populations of immigrants from Asian and African countries emphasized the need for universal state education in order to develop a common culture. Today, too, Israel continues to absorb large numbers of immigrants, mostly from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, and confronts the question of how to foster a common national culture while respecting and preserving the immigrants' previous culture and language. Influenced by general trends of modernization in Israel and abroad, the education system is becoming much more open and increasingly recognizes the rights of students and their parents to choose from a variety of educational options.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION

This chapter describes the background to the study, the theoretical considerations in the choice of research approach, the research questions, research population and procedure, and briefly outlines the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the study

More and more parents tend to seek involvement in the course of their children's formal education at school. This involvement — although it often concerns the children's welfare in the here and now of their school lives — seems to be mainly connected with the parents' wish for their children to achieve education and training that will prepare them for adult life or qualify them for a prestigious certificate or diploma that promises them a place in the social center. This is also the case in Israel (Resh, 1987).

The Israeli parents, however, have no uniform characteristics, as the society is composed of immigrants from various ethnic groups and different social classes. Research concludes that this heterogeneity finds diverse expressions in the education system (Ackerman, Carmon & Zucker, 1985; Krausz, 1989; Shapira & Peleg, 1989).

The forms of their involvement are also varied: one way that is becoming prevalent in Israel is through the formation of parents' associations in order to revise and enrich the school curriculum (Givton & Zilberstein, 1988). The custom in modern Israeli schools, based largely on European and Jewish traditions, is for parents and teachers to meet frequently (Arieli, 1989). A common form of involvement is for parents to initiate direct personal interactions with the teachers or to respond to the teachers' initiatives to meet with them. Through negotiations parents hope, and apparently often succeed (Goldring & Shapira, 1991), in influencing teachers'

decisions on subjects such as placement of children in tracks, streamings and settings, prevention of expulsion from school and the awarding of prizes. A reverse practice is for teachers to send for parents to come and be informed about their child's behavior or situation and share in enforcing discipline or encouraging a child who has misbehaved or failed.

A form of parental involvement that has become institutionalized in the Israeli education system is the official parents' days taking place regularly. These are meetings formally organized by the school, and they provide an opportunity for teachers and parents to exchange information about the children. The researcher wished to understand the dynamics of the relations between teachers and parents in these meetings, to clarify what happens in these meetings between teachers and parents of different social classes and cultures of origin.

As a result of my interest in the interactions taking place on parents' days, I examined the relevant literature in Israel and abroad, and found mainly publications relating to the status of parents in the educational system in terms of their influence on the shaping of the school's character, as well as publications that relate to the characteristics of teacher-parent relations in the educational system. In the major educational data-bases I found very few publications relating to the meetings that take place in the school between the actors — teachers and parents — at the micro-social level in various situations in the life of the school and the meaning ascribed to these situations. This aroused my curiosity and strengthened my wish to investigate this subject. In the meantime more articles on this topic have started appearing (e.g., Maclure & Walker, 2000; Power & Clark, 2000). This indicates the topicality of the theme and the need for research in different settings and different countries.

My motivation in conducting this research may be seen as stemming from the following points:

- a. Personal experience and beliefs. As the head of a junior high school, I see great importance in examining the interactions between teachers and parents. This can enhance my awareness and understanding of the meaning each side imputes to its actions and to those of the other side. It may also help to improve communication and relationships between the two parties for the good of the student, a matter which can have a practical application in my educational work.
- b. Biased press reporting. The press in Israel often refers to power struggles between teachers and parents, and to parent intervention in teaching methods

and even in the teachers' ways of evaluating pupils. This kind of exposure cannot solve the problem at its source, which is lack of trust between the two spheres — the school and the family — and therefore I believe that dialogue and negotiations between the two sides will increase trust and partnership.

- c. The contribution of the research to educational knowledge. Teachers and parents create and construct part of the social reality of the school. This subject has not been sufficiently dealt with in research, and there is scant knowledge of it. It is important to understand the social developments that are increasingly evident in the world with regard to the family setting and the school system. On the one hand, parents are aware of their power and their right to intervene in what happens in the school. On the other hand, teachers attempt to recruit the parents to guarantee their children's learning and behavior, while simultaneously seeking to restrict the parents' intervention, seeing this as a threat to their professional status.
- d. Anticipated results. In this study I was interested to see if there exist typical patterns of action of teachers and parents, based on their social and cultural ascription. In addition, I expected to discover the meanings that each side imputes to its actions and to those of the other side, and to understand how they reach agreement through negotiations and create definitions of the situation.

1.2 Theoretical considerations in the choice of research approach

Before stating the research problem it is necessary to discuss the paradigmatic conception that guided the research approach, as the formulation of the research problems and research questions stems from the theoretical framework. For this reason the research questions could only be formulated after an exposition of the theoretical models (in chapter 4) which informed the course of the empirical research.

The social and organizational reality of the school in Israel is generally studied through hypothetico-deductive surveys and research, in which the researchers seek to examine certain variables or predefined aspects of the reality studied and the changes that have occurred in them. These variables include ability traits or social and cultural characteristics of the students, teachers and parents and their attitudes and behaviors, for example, towards social norms and values (Yogev & Shapira, 1992; Chen, 1995).

Studies like these are based on functionalist theory and on the application of positivist research methods (see chapter 3).

This study is grounded in an alternative approach which is in the context of the sociology of education, expressed mainly in the interpretive approach, or as it is also called, the constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). In a generalization we can summarize the principles of the constructivist approach in three statements:

- a. Sociological and socio-educational enquiry is concerned with meaningful action and not with behavior per se.
- b. Known meanings exist through their reconfirmation in actions.
- c. Actions may lead to changes in meanings.

Interpretive researchers thus tend to see the individual as defining social reality rather than reality defining the individual. Individuals' ability to free themselves or to "soften" the deterministic bonds of the material world is rooted in their ability to interact with others. In this way they learn the roles of the other, discover what these mean and process this information in a way that serves to form their own patterns of response and action. Therefore, the interpretive-constructivist approach sees social reality not as an independent entity that imposes its constraints on the actors, but as an achieved order of things that exists and changes through the negotiations of those taking part in it (Strauss, Schatzman, Ehrlich, Bucher & Sabshin, 1963; Bernbaum, 1977; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Bloor, 1997, 221-238).

Blumer (1969) argues that each human action is actually three actions, but it is hard to discern whether these actions are synchronic or diachronic because the psychological time between them is short. The three actions that can be attributed both to teachers and parents are as follows:

1. They evaluate the result of the latest action in which they were involved. In other words, they define the situation.
2. They define their purpose in the situation: why is it important for me; what is in it for me? They choose their objectives.
3. They choose one possibility from among those available; that is, they choose a line of action, a strategy.

1.3 Selection of the interpretive-constructivist approach

The interpretive-constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Burr, 1995) appeared to be the most suitable approach in guiding this study. The reason is that, unlike the positivistic approach, which presents a hypothesis and tests it empirically, interpretive-constructivist research based on action sees social reality not as an independent entity that imposes constraints on the actor but as a dynamic order that exists and changes through the negotiations of the participants (Strauss et al., 1963), or as a fabric of the intertwined consciousnesses of the actors who take part in its definition (Buckley, 1968). As an inductive approach, it seeks to obtain its findings from reality as it unfolds, therefore it does not make any prior assumptions or impose a structure on reality.

The research method usually employed in interpretive-constructivist research relating to microsocial processes is ethnography. In this method the main research strategies are direct observation and open interviews, collecting data that cannot be obtained by other means, such as questionnaires. This method does not examine correlations between isolated variables, and thus there is no room in it for research hypotheses. It seeks to observe processes and discover the meanings that the actors impute to their actions or to the actions of others. The implications of the interpretive-constructivist approach for the present study will be discussed in more detail in chapters 4 and 5.

1.4 The research questions

The main research question was: *What factors shape the interaction and agreements between teachers and parents at official parents days?* In Israel, teachers and parents hold various meetings, formal and informal, to which each side brings its own resources that form the basis for constructing strategies of action. Ostensibly, they appear to be conversing, but closer scrutiny reveals that in fact they are conducting negotiations designed to advance the interests of each side.

The parents come from different socio-economic and cultural groups (with different resources for interaction), and the researcher wanted to examine these background differences and their influence on the interactions and negotiations

between teachers and parents. In other words, this study aimed to clarify, using an interpretive-constructivist approach, whether parents' and teachers' reciprocal actions were the outcome of their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and professional and power contexts (Ball, 1981) by examining the following questions: What happens in meetings between teachers and parents? What are the objectives of each side in these meetings? What are the strengths and the interactive strategies used by each side in the course of the meetings? What resources does each group bring to the interactions in order to fulfill professional or personal goals – and to what extent do these meetings help to achieve their respective goals? What patterns of agreement are reached through the negotiations between the two sides? These questions will be explained in further detail in chapter 4 (section 4.4).

These questions were examined in the context of the official parents' days, meetings formally organized by the school. Although these meetings are not initiated by either of the sides and are more or less imposed on both sides by the school's established policy, they could serve as an interactive arena of negotiations for both sides to achieve professional and personal goals (Campbell, 1992).

1.5 Brief overview of the research process

Apart from the literature review of theoretical approaches and teacher–parent interactions and relations in Israel, the empirical study comprised the following:

1.5.1 Research procedure

The research procedure followed through three stages and the same teachers and parents were involved throughout the study. Four teachers of four different classes were involved and initially 80 parents (20 per class), who were eventually narrowed down to 20 (five per class).

- a. Pilot stage. This stage included as many observations as possible in loci of parent-teacher interaction, which were recorded in writing and on audio-tape. At this stage the researcher attempted to discover intuitively the actors' patterns of action or deviations from them.

- b. Unguided observations at selected loci of interaction. This stage focused on loci of interaction where several repeated behavior patterns had been discerned in the pilot stage, and which were readily accessible to observation.
- c. Guided observations at selected loci of interaction. Following the unguided observations, behavior patterns of teachers and parents of which the meaning was not clear were marked, and these, in fact, formed the research questions mentioned in section 1.4.

All these observations were processed in the stages below:

1. Documentation of interactions by the observer, based on audio-tape recordings or unsystematic notes taken during the course of the observation.
2. Interviews were held with the four teachers and 20 parents in order to discover what meanings they imputed to their actions, and thus to verify or refute the researcher's interpretation.

The findings were processed according to the categories that emerged from the material collected, and analyzed using the theoretical concepts mentioned in chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.

1.5.2 Research settings and groups

Three junior high schools in the center of Israel, which cater for students from middle class and less privileged backgrounds, were used as research settings. The schools are defined as heterogeneous by the criteria of the Ministry of Education. The parents come from high, middle and low socio-economic groups, and live in places that match their respective groups. The lower class group moved to the region of the school from a poorer neighborhood and saw this as a rise in status. The 80 parents in the research group comprised 71 mothers and nine fathers, one parent of each student, selected at random (see chapter 5).

The group of teachers included four home-room teachers who also taught specific subjects. (A home-room teacher is assigned the responsibility for a specific class and acts like a guardian.)

The 80 students whose parents and teachers were observed were aged 15 (8th grade) when the empirical research started and 16 (9th grade) when it ended. The classes were heterogeneous and they included students from different socio-economic

and scholastic levels, but they studied mathematics, sciences and languages in homogeneous groups, that is, in groups according to their level of ability.

The 9th grade is the last year in junior high school before moving on to a high school. This is the year when vital decisions are made concerning the next stage of education, and therefore it is important for the parents to negotiate for their child's placement in a school with a high standard, which will determine his or her future status and fate.

1.5.3 Characteristics of the schools investigated

The schools investigated were examined according to a typology distinguishing between a "closed door", "open door" and "balanced" approach. The "closed door" approach sees the community in which the school is situated as "outside" (Litwak & Meyer, 1974). According to this approach, the school is perfectly capable of dealing with all the students' educational, behavioral and social problems within its walls. The parents' participation in the life of the school should be minimal. This approach has both a sociological and pedagogic basis. Its pedagogic basis is the assumption that the parents have no professional training to educate their children in a methodical manner. Its sociological basis appears to rest on the assumption that family relationships tend to restrict the freedom of action of organizations such as schools. According to Weber (1949), the family and the school are two organizations that constitute different loci of power, each of which strives to increase its power. They are not organizations that complement each other, and the development of one organization threatens the development of the other.

The "open door" approach sees the student and the parents as the focus of its activities and is therefore prepared for dialogue and participation, combined with caring parents acting as a cohesive group that wants participation but does not always see the boundaries (Gal, 1989; Givton & Silberstein, 1989) (see chapter 2, section 2.1.6).

The "balanced" approach states that intimate or distant relations between the school and the population of parents should be coordinated for optimal achievement of the school's educational aims (Litwak & Meyer, 1974). Thus a kind of "state of balance" is achieved somewhere between the "open door" approach, that permits

involvement in all domains, and the "closed door" approach, which prevents involvement in all domains.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Teacher-parent relations have changed over the years in Israeli society, which is characterized by groups with different social and cultural ascriptions. The school has become more open to the community, parents are more involved and want to influence the character of the school and advance their children on the stratified social scale (see chapter 2). This study examined how both sides attempted to achieve their goals. The thesis documents the parents' and teachers' definitions of situation, strategies and action agreements as each side views the other's goals, resources and perceptions, based on their own class and cultural ascription.

To examine the research questions I documented interactions between teachers and parents in the framework of parents' days held in the school, aiming to discover the patterns of teacher-parent negotiations that derive from the resources the actors bring to the interaction from their social and cultural context. These subjects are examined in the following chapters:

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature on teacher-parent relations and interactions in Israel and the world. Chapter 3 discusses general theoretical issues and explains my choice of an interpretive-constructivist approach. Chapter 4 commences with a discussion of the research models reported in the literature and goes on to present the research questions. The research design (research population and method) is described in chapter 5. Chapter 6 reports and analyses the findings, and chapter 7 is devoted to the discussion of these findings and to conclusions, ending with recommendations for the improvement of communication between teachers and parents.

CHAPTER 2

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CHAPTER 2

TEACHER-PARENT RELATIONS AND INTERACTIONS - A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will elaborate on the subject of teacher-parent relations because this subject is a highly significant one in Israel, and expansion of the discussion on it may contribute to the understanding of the present research.

The parents' relationship with the educational establishment, as reflected in many countries worldwide, is sometimes called "parent involvement" or "parent participation" in the work of the school and the educational process. It may be argued that the parents' increased involvement in the education system is based on their right to have a say in their children's education, a right that is based on the principles of democracy and the potential contribution of this involvement to the children's education. In a democratic society people are free and entitled to determine their fate, and this naturally entails the right to regularly and recognizably influence the spheres that influence them. The parents' participation in the work of the school is therefore designed to exercise their democratic right and enables them to experience democratic procedures in practice. In addition, the parents' involvement is likely to improve the quality of the education because their point of view is taken into account by the system and the school is exposed to the criticism and supervision of those enjoying its services.

One should not conclude from this that the children's education in the school framework is entirely subject to the parents' control and that their wishes find full expression. But it can be understood that the intention was to establish the parents' right to have some degree of influence over the education given to their children (Collins, 1979; Turner, 1980; Beattie, 1985; Cochran, 1991; Cooper, 1991, p. 235; Giordano, 1992; Malen, 1994, pp. 147-148; Power & Clark, 2000). Research evidence also suggests that students whose parents are involved in their formal education achieve significantly better (Cochran, 1991; Olmstead, 1991, p. 225; Katsiyannis & Ward, 1992, p. 52; Herman, 1993; Walker, 1996).

These world-wide trends in teacher-parent relations and interactions are also evident in Israel and this chapter will focus on how they are manifested in the Israeli education system. For example, a survey sponsored by the Tel Aviv municipality provides broad confirmation of this. The study included the parents of children in state elementary schools (grades 1-6 only) in Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Some 66% of the meetings between teachers and parents focused on scholastic matters (the child's progress in studies, problems); 17% of the meetings concerned matters of discipline and the child's behavior in the school; 9% concerned the child's social situation; and 8% touched on other matters (mainly administrative matters and the child's medical problems) (Harpaz, Hadad & Fedida, 1985).

According to a study by Smilansky, Fisher and Shefatya (1986), the Israeli school sees the child's parents as important partners in its educational work. The child's progress is the shared aim of both teacher and parent. Both invest their energy, time and talents in the child's development and success in studies. The existence of a common basic interest permits the teacher to request the parent to contribute to the endeavors that the school system devotes to the child's progress in school. Parents are asked to supervise their children's homework, help them if they have difficulties and guide them or provide them with a private tutor. This may be seen as the fulfillment of pedagogic goals — the teacher asks the parent for help with the child's instruction, and the parents concur in order to avoid friction with the teacher and perhaps harm their child's prospects in the school.

2.1 Teacher-parent relations: involvement and expectations

The main causes of the increased parental involvement in their children's formal education are social, financial and educational — the parents' educational level is rising and with it their wish to be involved (Comer, 1986, p. 443; Dehli, 1996). Parents' readiness to invest money and time in various parent involvement programs (Elmore, 1990, p. 25; Dangelo & Adler, 1991; Williams, 1991, p. 340; Epstein, 1992) is increased by the democratization of society and the openness to a variety of wishes and opinions (Erbe, 1991; Heller, 1992), increasingly available free time and money, and the growing awareness of the importance of education.

However, out of their increased involvement and rising awareness of the weaknesses of the education system, the impression is that the school's status has

become devalued in the parents' eyes (Crozier, 1995, 1998). It appears today that many schools, while seeking to increase parents' involvement, fear that this involvement may turn into intervention (Dixon, 1992; Walker, 1998).

2.1.1 The evolution of parent involvement in Israel: parents' versus establishment views

Israel's State Education Law of 1953 was the first legislation promulgated after the establishment of the state in 1948 (see Introduction). This law, which still governs the education system, does not give parents a significant status. Parents' freedom of choice in registering their child in a school is expressed in the ability to choose between three options: state, state-religious, or independent schools. (The last type of school is not public, but is recognized by the Ministry of Education.) Parents do not have the right to choose a specific elementary school within each of these types, because the regulations require them to register their children in the school allotted to their neighborhood. Theoretically, the State Education Law allows parents to be partners in decision making with regard to school curricula up to a level of 25% (Eilon, 1968; Levin, Sidi, Mazor & Lieberman, 1979; Resh, 1987, pp. 91-92); however, this does not always happen in practice (Shapira & Goldring, 1990).

Until the late 1960s the division of roles between the school and the parents was clear. The school was responsible for the educational processes taking place in it, for obtaining the resources and allocating them to the various activities, while the parents were charged with sending their children to school. This one-way relationship consisted mostly of reporting on the students' performance and on the activities conducted in the school framework (Smilansky et al., 1986, pp. 33-35). From the 1970s onwards there has been a significant change in the school-parent relations, whereby the parents started seeking to become more involved in what was happening in the school (Givton & Zilberstein, 1988; Shapira & Goldring, 1990).

2.1.1.1 *Forces and factors in parents' involvement*

Friedman (1984) reviews the history of the Israeli education system and points to fluctuations in the parents' involvement. After the establishment of the state (in 1948) he discerns three stages in the education system's policy that have a salient connection

with parent-school relations. The first stage (in the 1950s and 1960s), which Friedman (1984) calls the stage of "alienation and defense", was characterized by the aim of creating equality and uniformity in education through centralization, while absorbing the waves of mass immigration. In the course of time the gaps in terms of scholastic achievements, occupation, income and living conditions between the immigrants from Asian and African countries in comparison with those from Europe and America became increasingly evident (Frankenstein, 1964). The second stage (in the 1970s), the "transitional" stage, came as a result of the awareness of a serious educational gap and social alienation following the findings of a study by Feitelson (1969, p. 53), who called for the formulation of defined aims and as a result of research by Adar (1978) and Frankenstein (1968). The third stage (1980s and 1990s), which Friedman calls "integration of broad community education", is based on a view of the school as an organization integral to the community (Bashi, 1985; Elboim-Dror, 1985). This perception created forces pressing for decentralization (Biniamini & Teter, 1992; Noy, 1992), including:

1. Administrative forces, which claimed that administration at the local level would better answer the individual needs because it was closer to them.
2. Ideological forces, which claimed that social services would fulfill their function when they were oriented towards the needs of those whom they were supposed to serve.
3. Educational forces, which claimed that children from various educational and cultural backgrounds would benefit from education only through close ties of the community with the school.
4. Political forces, which included population groups who wanted to increase their influence on the school system, such as minority groups or political movements.

Recognition of these forces led to a demand for decentralization in the educational system, and there began a process of defining roles and areas of responsibility, and simultaneously allowing for parental involvement. The factors involved may be classified as follows:

a. Economic factors:

Economic recession and a cut of 28.5% in the educational budget between the years 1981 and 1986 strengthened the power of the parents, who controlled the sources of funding for educational programs, such as arts and citizenship. This

gave them a powerful role in making decisions concerning these programs. The principals consented as long as these remained supplementary and enrichment programs. Beyond that point they began to limit the parents, arguing that there was too much interference (Goldring, 1988).

b. Social factors:

The school and the home were in agreement on the subject of alienation and lack of human contact in modern society, where the sense of "give and take" existed without any warm human contact. Through cooperation the sides attempted to bridge the gaps that still existed. Parents saw and heard in the media about other parents acting in other schools, and their desire to emulate them and succeed spurred them on to greater involvement (Cohen, 1997). They recognized the fact that education was the key to success and social mobility, and therefore they wanted it for themselves and especially for their children.

c. Educational factors:

The reform and the "integration" program in the Israeli education system, based on a government decision of 1968, determined that schooling would consist of six years elementary school, three years junior high and three years high school. Compulsory education was gradually extended to ten years. The reform was designed to raise the level of studies and strengthen equality of educational opportunities and integration of diverse social groups. This change was opposed by some groups of parents, who resisted the idea for fear that their child would learn together with weak pupils from a lower social class. Concurrently, these parents increased their activity and investment in their own child's school. In addition, the growing number of educational frameworks and streams, from technological to magnet and open schools, required the parents' participation and assistance and thus increased their involvement (Chen, 1995).

d. Factors relating to the family:

The parents had been active since the 1970s in the area of informal education, such as community centers, community projects and so forth. They had accumulated experience and by the 1980s felt that they were now able to influence formal education as well. In addition, the immigration of parents from western Europe and the United States (US), who brought with them patterns of involvement in their children's education, served as an accelerating factor (Goldberger, 1991). Parents were also informed by their children on conditions in

schools. Because relationships between parents and their children are more open today than in the past, children talk about their experiences at school and are not afraid to criticize it. They are more open, educated and "cheeky", and the parents take note of what they hear.

2.1.1.2 Increased parents' participation

The above mentioned developments and the increased pluralism in the educational system opened the way for decentralization, which in turn further strengthened the community. The center of gravity shifted from the high position of the school in the professional hierarchy to a new link between the school and its environment. In the early 1970s, the Ministry of Education for the first time discussed the need to grant more autonomy to the periphery in order to encourage pedagogic initiative and creative coping with educational questions. It was hoped that this would also help to raise the professional quality of teaching (Reshef, 1984).

An issue that had to be considered in the context of this process was the question of parent participation in it. It seemed as if everyone began to recognize the value of participation, but, to quote the late Minister of Education, Hammer (1978, p. 15), "There has to be balance, not too much intervention, to avoid undermining the authority of the principal or hampering the teacher's ability". As Kashti (1983, p. 6) said, "It is not natural for parents to be partners in the educational process, and it certainly was not so in the history of Israel, yet now they speak of the wish for participation. We need to examine the 'participation recipe' very carefully and take care that it will not result in harnessing the parents to the school's organizational interests or to the interests of the teacher, the principal, or others".

As we have seen in the international as well as Israeli literature, it is impossible to deny the parents' place in the school system. From a consumer viewpoint, their children are its direct clients, and the parents themselves are indirect clients. But while parents have a great interest in their children's interactions with the teachers, it is hard for them to establish a formal connection with the teachers or any other party in the system, and influence them. Therefore, parents sometimes organize themselves as pressure groups in order to influence decision making and functioning at the administrative level. However, it may be assumed that even if the parents succeed in influencing decision making at a higher administrative level, this will not necessarily

lead to a change in the interactions between the teachers and their children, the students in the classroom (Goldring, 1988, p. 5).

2.1.1.3 Confrontation and cooperation

In the past two decades the character of parents' involvement in Israel has changed, and not just quantitatively. Parents have also begun to express opinions on educational issues such as the organization of the timetable, classroom management, the placing of students in streams, methods of pupil evaluation, punishment methods, social activities and the curriculum. According to Goldberger (1991), schools are not happy with this change, to put it mildly, but the fact that the involvement is growing and becoming a social phenomenon, is *inter alia* evident from press reports. A report in a local newspaper in a city in the center of Israel referred, for example, to parents protesting the placement of students from poor areas in their children's schools. The parents were quoted as saying, "They dropped a bomb on us, they sent a population of weak students from a low socio-economic background to our school. This damages the image of the school and creates a negative stigma" (Bentsur, 1999). Another newspaper carried a story about parents from Jerusalem seeking an elitist framework for their children and protesting against the state education frameworks. They wanted a private school. The response from the Ministry of Education, as quoted by the newspaper, was, "This trend is in direct opposition to our declared policy of integration and will lead to the fragmentization of state education". To this the parents replied, "If this trend goes on, the only clients of state education will be weak populations" (Rotem, 1999).

Givton and Zilberstein (1989) ascribe confrontations between parents and teachers to ambiguity in defining the parents' place and to the teachers' and principals' lack of awareness of the boundary between participation and intervention. To alleviate this problem, Goldring (1988) suggests the channeling of parents' demands in positive directions for the good of the entire system.

In her research, Noy (1984) points to the potential educational, behavioral and personal benefit for students in the case of cooperation between parents and teachers, and the benefit that may accrue to parents from this partnership, expressed in the practical possibility of expanding their interactions with their children. According to the studies mentioned above, the teachers, too, are likely to draw great benefit from

this cooperation, because their enhanced interactions with the children's parents may afford them both practical help and emotional support, thus helping to reduce professional burnout.

Most of the parents in Israel, at all social levels, attach great importance to their children's success at school and consider education as an essential basis for their future economic and social progress (Harpaz et al., Smilansky et al., 1986). The parents' view of the school's importance has changed somewhat in the history of education in Israel. In the past the school symbolized unquestioned authority and was regarded with profound respect by the parents. Today, following historical and social processes and out of the parents' increased involvement and growing awareness of the weaknesses of the education system, the school's value appears to have declined in the parents' eyes. Nevertheless, the school still seems to preserve a strong status as a professional and educational authority, as evidenced in the international literature (Lightfoot, 1981; McCann, 1992; Stouffer, 1992) and in Israel (Schvartzvald, 1979; Harpaz et al., 1985; Shapira & Haymann, 1991, pp. 290-291; Tsidkiahu & Tsidkiahu, 1993).

2.1.2 Mismatches between parent and teacher expectations

The interactions between the school and the parents are characterized by a high level of expectations on both sides. The parents' basic expectations focus on both learning and educational aspects. They expect the school to give the students knowledge, learning skills, working habits and thinking tools, and to educate them in universal and national values and good behavior. They expect the school to exemplify these values in its work and serve as an example for the students who come within its gates (Mizrachi, 1987, p. 23).

The prevailing opinion among teachers and the general public is that the students' family environment and personal traits constitute a major factor in their success or failure at school. This approach is expressed worldwide in the stereotypical attitude that "a good student comes from a good home" and a student who doesn't do so well comes from a home that is "not so good" (Smilansky et al., 1986; Harris, Ford, Wilson & Sandidge, 1991). This approach diminishes the students' responsibility for their situation, and places it on their parents' shoulders. It also decreases the school's responsibility or its contribution to the student's situation, and legitimizes the attempt

to improve the student's situation by helping the family through various parent involvement programs, as we also find in the Israeli literature (Goldring, 1988).

A comprehensive study by Smilansky and colleagues (1986) found that the educators' expectations of the parents focused mainly on the parents' interactions with the educational system (60%), but also included a broad view of the relationships between parents and their children in the family (35%), and even concerned the parent as a person and head of a family (5%). The three salient aspects regarding teachers' expectations of parents in their interaction with the educational system were: direct help by parents at all times in any area of activity of the educational system where help was needed; parents should have an attitude of trust towards the teacher, helping to foster in the student a positive approach towards the school; and the expectation for massive help for the child in his or her studies, supervising homework and solving disciplinary problems. The teachers' expectations in the area of parent-child relations included expectations for cognitive encouragement, for offering new and enriching experiences, giving emotional support and moral education in the family framework (on the tacit assumption that the values of the family were compatible with those of the school). The expectations with regard to the parents as people and heads of families emphasized the need to create a congenial home atmosphere without tension, characterized by qualities such as understanding, mutual respect and loyalty.

Although parents' expectations have not yet been surveyed in a comprehensive study in Israel, insights from literature elsewhere indicate that there are fundamental differences between parents' expectations and educators' expectations of the family. Meyer, Scott and Deal (1983), for example, contend that parents' expectations are more an aspiration than a basis for action, and are sometimes even expressed as a general ideal relating to the image of the student at the end of his or her studies. This type of action is what marks the outbreak of a dispute. In contrast to the parents' expectations, which are of a general nature, the educators' expectations of the parents are fixed and focused, and the educators' working methods are under constant criticism.

The combination of the two sets of expectations often creates difficulties. From the teachers' point of view, most of the difficulties seem to stem from insufficient knowledge and understanding of the parents' world (although most of the teachers are parents themselves), and from worry about coping with the parents' failure to meet

their expectations and demands. From the parents' point of view, most of the difficulties stem from the need to meet the teachers' expectations. Support for this statement may be found in the above-mentioned study by Smilansky et al. (1986), which included interviews with 132 parents of elementary school students. It emerged from this part of the study that many parents thought that the school made too heavy demands on the family budget, ate away at the parents' free time and was not aware of the burden placed on the parents in their daily life. In addition, it was found that the teachers' almost taken for granted expectation that the parents would help their children with their studies and supervise their behavior placed a real burden on the parents, especially on those who were unwilling or unable to do so. In fact, the teachers expected the parents to ensure that the child fulfilled the demands of the school - in other words, to undertake the teacher's role. Some of the parents found it hard to undertake this responsibility both physically and psychologically, although they too were convinced that it was for the good of the children (ibid., p. 33).

The teachers' expectations in the realm of cognitive fostering, enrichment and teaching values were "hidden" and generally not stated openly to the parents, and apparently for this reason they did not arouse special difficulties in the above mentioned study. The unrealistic expectations of a minority of educators for ideal relations in the family were almost certainly unknown to the parents, and were therefore not a source of struggle or bitterness over the invasion of their privacy. On the other hand, great difficulties arose in connection with the evaluation and assessment of their children's performance at school. In this matter the teachers, as an outcome of their expectations, tended to blame the parents for part of their children's failure. Sometimes they did not confine their criticism to the practical level, but passed judgment on the parents' ability to fulfill their role as parents: "As well as telling me that the child is out of line, they tell me that I'm out of line too - a mother who doesn't know how to bring up her own children" (ibid., p. 38). It is not surprising that this kind of approach leads to a feeling of discomfort and anxiety before every meeting of parents with representatives of the educational system.

The teachers' difficulties in interacting appropriately with the family stem from the large gap between their expectations and the reality with regard to the parents' functioning. Teachers cannot, and sometimes do not want to show empathy towards parents who do not meet their expectations and they put a great deal of pressure on them to increase their efforts to do so (Feitelson, 1969; Noy, 1984; Yahav, 1985).

Added to this, when there is a cultural difference or a gap in perception between the teacher and the parent, together with the need to struggle with a heterogeneous population of parents, the interactions between the two sides seem to present many difficulties (Sabar & Dushnik, 1997, pp. 394).

The parents' involvement in the school generates further difficulties on both sides. From the parents' point of view, over-involvement on their part is liable to be seen as increasing the already heavy demands on the educational system. And for some of the parents their connection with the school is problematic for reasons connected with their childhood experience as students (Noy, 1984). Furthermore, since the school is still perceived as a symbol of authority, particularly professional authority, and because people tend to obey authority, many parents express total faith in the school and have no desire to challenge it by intervening in what is supposed to be its exclusive professional field (Avinon, 1994).

From the teachers' point of view, deeper contact with the parents may be particularly problematic, as the literature indicates, both in Israel and abroad. Noy (1984) and Comer (1986), for example, state that this type of involvement is liable to threaten the teachers' professional status, expose their weaknesses and the gap between ideals and reality in the teacher's work. It could also delegitimize the claim that the teacher's professional existence balances the negative influence of the home on his/her students. Noy (1984, p.14) claims that teachers are afraid of finding themselves in an inferior position in their contacts with parents. Reasons for this include a lack of skill in negotiating with adults as a result of spending a long time in the world of children and the teachers' feeling of self denigration facing parents whose educational level or social status is higher than theirs.

Finally, it follows from the above that parents' involvement in the school may be effective for all sides, however it requires both from the parents and the school staff a high level of mutual adjustment, coordination and consideration of the difficulties involved for each side.

2.1.3 Parent involvement in relation to social status: changing perceptions in Israeli society

Parents are a heterogeneous group in terms of social status, occupational fields, values and norms (Smilansky et al., 1986). This heterogeneity is a world-wide

phenomenon which affects the relationships parents develop with the school staff, their motivation for involvement and their expectations of the school (Lambert, Millham & Bullock, 1973; Moor, 1991; Manning, 1992; Phillips, 1992; Morgan, Fraser, Dunn & Cairns, 1993, pp. 43-45).

Regarding the Israeli situation, researchers such as Arieli (1989, pp. 557-560) and Weinstein-Dintzman (1990) state that parents of high socio-economic status are well aware of the channels of communication that they can use in order to reach the teacher or the principal. Israeli parents of high socio-economic status therefore enjoy a clear advantage in the school environment. They usually have good jobs and contacts with loci of power in society that give them social status equal to the teachers or higher. Therefore they can communicate actively with them. In addition, they have the financial means and the ability to contribute to the functioning and maintenance of the school. As owners of material goods, leisure and more highly developed intellectual skills, these parents tend to initiate contact with the school and their involvement with it is extensive (Bashi, 1985; Schurr, 1992; Maital & Gabrieli, 1996).

Parents of low socio-economic status in Israel are less inclined to develop connections with the school due to lack of confidence concerning educational processes. They also reveal little interest because they possess no resources. They lack the personal contacts, the knowledge and the time, and their involvement is expressed mainly in receiving warnings and pressure from the side of the school (Elboim-Dror, 1985; Goldring, 1988). Previously their children were often described as "disadvantaged".

Generally, much was written about the so-called disadvantaged children in the 1970s. According to Frankenstein (1972; 1977), this term was used to define students who failed at school because of socio-economic or cultural reasons, and therefore needed educational fostering beyond the usual learning conditions provided for all students. The term was originally coined in the United States after World War II and expressed a perception that emphasized society's responsibility for the advancement of deprived groups and their integration in the educational, social and cultural systems. It also embodied the belief that, with the appropriate teaching methods, it was possible to combat underachievement in learning caused by the environment, and thus to help these students to escape from the cycle of poverty and, through education, fulfill the democratic goal of equal opportunities. The reasons for disadvantage were ascribed to the family upbringing, which did not match the western middle class

values, with their way of thinking, language and school culture. It was also argued that the family's poverty prevented its children from being exposed to sufficient stimuli at critical stages of their cognitive development and thus their cognitive potential was impaired (Frankenstein, 1972, p. 250; 1977). As a result, the children came to school unprepared, lacking both the tools needed for success and the mastery of appropriate behaviors for the school.

In western societies most of these children came from immigrant families and families of low socio-economic status. In Israel the phenomenon was identified in the late 1950s (Smilansky, 1975) and was attributed to the cultural difference, financial distress and low educational level of immigrants from Middle Eastern and North African countries. This definition of the phenomenon marked the departure from a policy of equality of inputs and the "melting pot" that characterized the approach of the Ministry of Education during the first decade of the state.

2.1.3.1 The notion of "disadvantaged" or "socially weak" populations emerging in the 1960s

Various researchers publishing in the 1960s and 1970s in Israel used different expressions to characterize socially weak populations. Frankenstein (1964), for example, emphasized that the depriving conditions in a weak population impeded activities, initiative and mobility. He stated that the problem of the weak, disadvantaged population lay not only in cognitive functioning but also in the affective components of the self, the result of conditioning and social projections that directly affected the readiness and the ability to adjust and learn.

a. Self concept in disadvantaged populations

Sharni (1976, p. 19) also developed the concept of the "self" in her review, stating that it could be seen in several ways: 1) as a projection of the individual's status in social systems; 2) as a development of social interaction; 3) as a product of constant interaction between its various dimensions: I in my own eyes, I in the eyes of others, the other in his or her own eyes, and so forth. Over time the weak population internalized and ascribed to itself those evaluations, labels and characterizations that were ascribed to it by the strong groups in society (Smilansky, 1975). Labeling was

associated with attitudes rooted in prejudice and seen as antipathy based on fixed and rigid generalizations directed against a whole community or an individual belonging to that community (Peres, 1972). Prejudice was a fact that had to be contended with, as it influenced the ethnic identity of members of minorities and their ability to resist the attitudes of the majority (Frankenstein, 1977). Resisting prejudice generated various reactions in members of minority groups, from a sense of deprivation to hostility and aggression (Peres, 1992).

Similar expressions that characterize low self concept in a weak population are found in literature referring to studies in other countries, particularly the United States. Coleman (1966) found differences in self concept between various social strata: the self image of people of low social status was lower. Minuchin, Montvalue, Gwiny and Rosman (1967) referred to low self image of parents from weak populations. The latter were characterized by lack of self esteem and a tendency to rely on outside factors to define their identity. The disadvantaged populations studied by Miniskimnus and Baker (1973) showed many signs of failure to adjust, including lack of self esteem, a negative self perception, a feeling of rejection and isolation. Bullough's study (1972) among mothers from slums found signs of an inferior self concept, a feeling of helplessness, hopelessness and social isolation.

People with a low self concept do not recognize their true talents, do not appreciate their ability and are skeptical regarding their chances of solving problems and coping with pressures in a constructive manner. To solve problems, protect themselves and neutralize anxieties and inner tensions, they recruit specific psychological defense mechanisms. They have a tendency to conform to external standards without question, particularly among minority groups defending themselves against the majority. They also tend to be highly sensitive and passive (Minuchin et al., 1967). Since these are responses to a long series of stimuli and ongoing life situations, it would be correct to say that in the course of time these mechanisms become typical behavior patterns and an integral part of the personality structure in weak and disadvantaged population groups. Sarbin (1967) calls this phenomenon "self transformation of social identity". According to him, a social system that labels an adult or child as disadvantaged creates attitudes, habits and conventions among those who have the legitimate power to label, and leads the labeled to take upon themselves the role with which they are labeled.

Weak populations appear to develop a pattern of weakness of the individual and collective self, functioning according to the weak label and thus reinforcing the prejudice and creating another cycle of prejudice, labeling and behavior according to the label. In light of these tendencies, it is necessary to identify the "weak" stratum in Israeli society and its specific characteristics in order to understand the effect of the characterizations of weak strata in society and the attitudes of parents and teachers in relation to the educational system.

b. The eastern population as a weak social group

In Israel the term "eastern population" is used to refer to Israelis originating from the Middle East and North Africa. They are one of the two emerging cultures in Israel, the other being the East European tradition dominating the state school system (Kashti & Izikovitch, 1996). This does not mean that the majority of teachers are of European or western origin, but that they have internalized the attitude of the dominant tradition. Ethnicity and status are often linked, which means in Israel that the disadvantaged population, in quantitative terms, is largely equivalent to the eastern population and the low social stratum.

In the international literature status is often defined in terms of education and occupation (or professional prestige and income). According to Mattrass (1984, pp. 180-228), the research literature dealing with factors that determine status attainment grew in the western world, and was particularly influenced by Blau and Duncan's (1967) status attainment model referring to American society. Among the determinants of status, ethnic origin (religious, linguistic, national and racial) stands out as important (Duncan, 1969). Ethnicity can affect status both directly, through mechanisms of discrimination, and indirectly, when combined with other factors such as time of arrival in an immigrant society.

Stael and colleagues investigated the equivalence of the disadvantaged population (status) in Israel and the eastern population (ethnicity) with low social stratum. They noted that this equivalence was further emphasized by many studies which, for lack of other clear unambiguous criteria, defined their population in terms of ethnicity or economic status (Stael, 1973; Stael, Agmon & Mar-Chaim, 1976). The result, according to Stael, was that many teachers identified ethnic origin with under-achievement at school and this gave rise to prejudice concerning these populations.

Many other researchers also clearly identified under-achievement at school with “eastern” origin (Minkovitch, Davies & Bashi, 1967, p. 68; Smilansky & Yosef, 1969; Levy & Chen, 1976). Parallel with the gap in learning achievements there was also a gap in other areas of life that reflected socio-economic status, such as living conditions, and income level (Samocha, 1978; Samocha & Krausz, 1983; Swirski, 1995, pp. 118-163).

In conclusion, after characterizing the “weak” population and identifying it in Israel as largely identical with the eastern population, the question arises: how does social weakness affect the parents' attitudes towards education and the system in which they find themselves? This question is particularly pertinent in light of the development of a feeling of deprivation that unites the eastern population and creates a situation that has important implications for the educational system: in face of the dominant East European tradition in the state school it is hard to introduce a parallel frame of content from the Middle Eastern tradition.

c. Attitudes of and towards disadvantaged and eastern parents

The problem of content in the school is exacerbated against the background of ethnic-social polarization. Thus the social process meets with the educational in the encounter between parent and teacher. The prejudice against eastern people that is prevalent among the general population exists also in the population of teachers. This is manifested in their attitudes towards students and parents, which is detrimental to the students' achievements and to cooperation with the parents (Stael et al., 1976; Samocha & Krausz, 1983).

To clarify the question, we can divide the potential ethnic-educational polarization into two types:

- a. Teachers' attitudes towards disadvantaged and eastern parents.
- b. Disadvantaged and eastern parents' attitudes towards the school and the teachers.

a. Teachers' attitudes towards disadvantaged and eastern parents

As stated above, many studies indicate that the teachers' approach to weak and eastern populations is often basically negative. Stael et al. (1976), in their article, *How teachers relate to disadvantaged students*, referred to the presence of negative

stereotypical feelings and prejudices among teachers towards their disadvantaged students and towards the ethnic or social group to which the parents belonged. The teachers, who were usually unfamiliar with the parents' culture, antagonized them by failing to treat them in a way that could help to change their attitude towards the school and failing to even consider enlisting the help of these parents (Stael et al., 1976).

Although these teacher attitudes, which were very prevalent in the 1960s, started gradually to change in the 1970s and 1980s, this kind of approach may still be discerned among many teachers. It may be assumed that if negative biases exist among the teachers concerning the eastern parents' ability to bring up their children properly, these teachers will tend to adopt the approach towards parent involvement that sees the parent as a low-level functionary in the educational system, a figure that has to be educated and trained to perform tasks to help the teacher.

Some studies have shown, as noted in this section, that the uncontrolled nurturing of these preconceptions will reinforce negative teacher attitudes towards eastern parents. The reactions of these parents, in turn, may further fuel teachers' views of inadequate parenting associated with projecting weakness and passivity, as we will see below.

b. Disadvantaged and eastern parents' attitudes towards the school and the teachers

The eastern parents' attitudes towards the school and its representatives have not undergone major changes since the 1960s. Stael (1979), analyzing the modern school through the eyes of the traditional parent, noted other components that were liable to create distance between the home and the school in the parents' view: disunity and lack of continuity between the home and the school as in the eastern tradition; resistance to change in eastern society; the social, cultural and professional otherness of the school and of the teachers.

According to Frankenstein (1977), this situation is typical of a modern society as a result of the breaking down of barriers between sub-cultures and traditional cultures. The clash between the unequivocal traditional values and the relative value system of the dominant modern society has a destructive effect on the integrative forces in the original tradition. Given the parents' ego weakness, this situation elicits impulsive, uncontrolled emotional reactions, expressed in rapid shifts between love and rage,

neglect and devotion, resulting in ambivalence in the parent's dealings with the child and the school.

Stael (1979, p. 269) noted that the situation among many of the eastern parents was that they wanted their children to learn (which is also an important value in Jewish tradition), but they were not capable of helping them properly, neither in their studies nor financially. This ambivalence created the way for change. Sharni (1980) noted in her study of disadvantaged parents of Moroccan and Yemenite origin that the disadvantaged eastern parent of the second generation was already a somewhat different parent. At the collective level there were still various deprivations such as poverty of language and educational conditions, but at the personal level there was a more positive self-concept, a basic sense of self-fulfillment, a tendency to believe in their ability to change things, and ego strengths to cope with threatening and uncomfortable situations. These are not the characteristics of a disadvantaged population.

The very fact that people from disadvantaged populations had managed to overcome the primary deprivations and models for identification with negative personal characteristics (low self-concept, dependence, passivity, etc.) suggests that they possessed healthy and vital psychological resources (Sharni, 1980). However, Sharni stressed that despite the positive picture at the personal level, negative objective facts such as poor vocabulary, little schooling and narrow range of knowledge limited the communicative ability and the ability to respond to cultural and educational stimuli that were transmitted through various channels.

This points to the danger that despite the positive subjective feeling, the cultural gap between this group of parents and others would grow. Referring to education in this population, Sharni (1980) said that the disadvantaged parents' emphasis on education compared with their parents represented a significant achievement. Perhaps it was actually education that accounted for their positive general feeling, as the education variable in Sharni's study had considerable influence on other variables. This corresponds with findings of American research that education was given considerable weight by both teachers and parents as a dominant variable in parent involvement, a variable that was linked to ethnic identity (Lindle & Boyd, 1991; Loucks, 1992).

2.1.3.2 Towards pluralism and equal opportunities from the 1970s to the 1990s

So far we have reviewed the concept "disadvantaged" as it developed in the 1960s and 1970s, when the educational reform and the centrality of integration in the educational system exposed this concept as labeling population groups on the basis of their origin. Studies in Israel related more to the ethnic component because this was a discernible (even physically discernible) characteristic associated with socio-economic and cultural difference. In research studies it was easy to identify the ethnic component according to the parents' country of origin as registered in official documents from the past. This situation created a stigma that limited their chances of extricating themselves from their situation (Chasin, 1975; Adar, 1978). As criticism grew, the use of this concept decreased and gave way to concepts such as pluralism in education and equal opportunities. These concepts refer to the meeting of different people in a shared educational arena, on the basis of mutual recognition, giving equal weight to each other's history and identity. In both the international and Israeli literature, the meeting between different people in these circumstances is regarded as helping to preserve and develop the students' original identity and culture and simultaneously developing their ability to be open to more than one identity, while sharing in each other's collective and private biography (Chambers, 1992; Kashti & Izkovitz, 1996).

In Israel the concepts of integration and pluralism acquired increasing weight in the educational system. More and more importance was attributed both to promoting social integration (unity) and to meeting individual needs (pluralism), that is, to enable parents to choose special frameworks for their children in school and outside of it. These two orientations could be seen simultaneously in one school, where the students from weak and strong populations studied the humanities together in the home-room class, and were separated into different classes for science subjects according to their scholastic ability. The demand for pluralism in the educational system grew in the 1980s as a result of parents' dissatisfaction with the schools. This was complemented by growing awareness of the parents' rights to determine the type of education their children received and to influence the schooling processes. Parents sought a way to define what was to take place in the schools (curricula and social activities). One of the solutions that emerged was the establishment of specialized schools. The specialized schools are characterized by reinforcement of ideological

aspects (e.g., the values of the Labor Movement or of religious studies) or by specialization in specific areas such as sciences, arts or technology. Some social scientists see these specialized schools as a way for parents to escape from the integration program (Chen, 1995). The development of these special frameworks was possible because a section in the State Education Law of 1953 stipulates that 25% of the curriculum can be determined by members of the public, including the parents. It should be noted, however, that these schools, even those that were founded on the initiative of parents or groups of educators, are owned and administered by the local education authorities (Kashti, 1991).

Finally, hitherto we have related to the characteristics of the weak population and the parallels between it and the eastern population, focusing on attitudes of teachers and parents in the changing perceptions that have occurred in Israeli society. The emphasis was social-ethnic, but in order to discuss the prospects of creating a situation whereby parents and teachers share in the educational process, we have to take into account the personal, psychological and professional aspects in the teachers' and parents' interactions.

2.1.4 Personal, psychological and professional aspects in teacher-parent relations

The literature, both in Israel and elsewhere, indicates that parents' and teachers' personal, social and psychological motives and sources are potential factors in the field that have to be taken into account along with the attitudes, behaviors and approaches in their encounters with each other. In the field, all these combine to form one psycho-social system. The very nature of the learning situation may place the teacher and the parent in a constant state of conflict and two-way pressure (Adler & Ormian, 1969).

Various psychological processes affect the teacher's response to the parent:

- a. Social desirability - the need to exaggerate the positive self esteem and deny undesirable traits on the scale of social desirability (Chen, 1972; Smilansky et al., 1986; Noy, 1992).
- b. The tendency to adapt to the market, described by Erich Fromm (1947) as a "market personality" — external enslavement to the demands of others due to conformity.

- c. Alienation and attraction to conformity, which impedes both intra-personal and inter-personal communication (Abraham, 1972; Darom, Darom & Sapir, 1982).

Other factors add to the teachers' frustration: the hierarchical nature of the school and the fact that they are representatives of society and the only adults facing a class of youngsters. Parallel with this, the feminization of teaching lowers its professional status and the nature of the training is mainly theoretical without practice in concrete situations in which the professional self has to be actively involved. These processes may lead to tensions, anxieties, frustration, recalling unpleasant childhood memories, the need to be defensive, a feeling of ineffectuality, lack of status and so on (Noy, 1992).

In addition, teachers may see the parent as a powerful rival who can undermine their authority in the school. They know that parents often use the teacher as a tool against each other by recruiting him or her as an ally. There are parents for whom the meeting is an opportunity to release tensions, anger and disappointment with their marriage or friends. Some parents are afraid of the teacher and the school and are full of fear and hostility as soon as they walk through the gates of the school, which sometimes reminds them of experiences of failure in their childhood. Or they may see the teacher as an authority figure, and this arouses resentment, aggression and animosity towards authority in general, or contempt, conciliation, dependence, surrender and confusion (Noy, 1992).

If teachers cannot cope with these processes and are not aware of them, or cannot take criticism, their self-esteem is weakened and a feeling of guilt develops. These feelings may strengthen projection mechanisms and then the educational environment (including the parents) becomes the target of various accusations. In relations with others they will also be estranged for fear of upsetting the desired image, and this estrangement will be reflected in the fact that their aims are no longer clear to them and the initiative to make decisions is weakened (Ahrak, 1997, p. 33).

2.1.5 Sociological motives in teacher-parent relations

Yahav (1985, pp. 29-35) proposes another model of level of parent involvement by socio-economic distribution. According to this model, the weak stratum is indifferent to involvement in the school for lack of understanding of the nature of education. The wealthier classes also reveal indifference, but that is based on the

confidence that the child will overcome the "education hurdle" with the parents' (mainly financial) help, and in any case the parents have no time for this kind of activity. Those who are most willing and ready for involvement and participation are middle class parents, due to their heightened awareness of their ability to act in the field of education. Evidence for this is found in a study by Peres (1992), which refers to three types of parents:

- a. High level parents who can contribute and positively influence the school.
- b. Uneducated and disadvantaged parents, who can integrate and add "warmth", but cannot contribute in terms of quality.
- c. Parents who have nothing to gain from the school. These are people of high social and economic status who perceive the school's limited resources and contents as a necessary evil and therefore prefer to send their children to special expensive courses outside the school. The idea of involvement and participation in the school is foreign to them.

Darom et al. (1982) examined the link between various home and family factors and the quality of life in the school as perceived by the student. The quality of life at school was defined on three levels: 1. general satisfaction; 2. attitude to studies; 3. attitude to teachers.

The home and family variables were presented on four levels: 1. family socio-economic factors; 2. the family's attitude to the school; 3. patterns of family life; 4. general values and attitudes.

The assumption was that the child created the two-way link between the parents and the school. The findings emphasized differences between families whose children evaluated the quality of life at the school as high and those whose children evaluated it as low. A typical family profile related to a positive evaluation was: young, small, fairly high educational and socio-economic status of parents, a cohesive family who cooperated with each other. The parents' contact with the school, too, was on their own initiative and not necessarily due to problems with the student.

In contrast, where the children evaluated the quality of life at school as very low, the parents had many expectations of the school, perhaps because they lacked confidence in their own ability to function adequately in the child's socialization process and to take responsibility for his or her development. They did not cooperate. This type of family's attitude to the teachers was ambivalent: on the one hand they supported them in cases of conflict with the child, and on the other hand there was no

hint as to the teachers' status as high or low. Family attitudes were characterized by lack of differentiation in connection with general satisfaction and satisfaction with the functioning of the school and the child.

Support for this is also found in the international literature. For example, in a study on two populations of parents (Americans and immigrants) in one school, Alexsaht-Snyder (1992) found a similar phenomenon of indifference on the school's side. The school did not want any contact with the immigrant parents, did not reach understanding with them and did not clarify to them their child's situation in the school. However, they maintained various types of contact with the American parents. The reason teachers gave for this situation was the immigrant parents' lack of knowledge of the language. In the author's view, the school's attitude stemmed from inadequate understanding and gaps with the culture of these families and the school's unwillingness to bridge the gaps.

Smerkar (1992) also found that American middle class parents tended more to take part in school events and learning tasks than lower social strata. He suggested setting varying levels of participation for parents according to their ability and wishes. In another study, Smerkar (1993) stressed the importance of interaction between parents and teachers as a vital support for the organization by maintaining contacts between the school and the community services.

2.1.6 Attitudes of teachers and parents towards parent involvement in schools

The international literature cites many characteristics of parent involvement as described by the parents themselves. Loucks (1992), Fenwick (1993), Barber and Patin (1997), Hartman and Chelsey (1997), Todd and Higgins (1998, p. 235) and Maclure and Walker (2000, p.16) all note that parents expect closer contact with the school, which will lead to a more positive attitude towards the school. They suggest strengthening the contact by various means such as:

1. More written messages and phone calls from the teachers.
2. More opportunities for personal meetings of parents and teachers.
3. More opportunities for parents to take part in their children's learning processes.
4. Parents sharing with the teachers in solving problems rather than receiving ready-made solutions from the school.

5. More precise guidance of parents in helping their children to improve in studies.
(Parents remark that they sometimes receive a message that the child is not doing well in school and that they have to help him or her, but they do not know how to do so without suitable preparation.)
6. Communication in a language and terms familiar to the parents and not just to the teachers.
7. Increased possibilities for parents to observe their children in the education process.
8. Increased possibilities for parents to learn how they can help their children with homework and questions of behavior.

Williams (1991) and Thompson (1996) present research conducted in the US and report findings on parents' attitudes towards their areas of responsibility in the school. Among other things, the parents said that they should be allowed involvement and influence in the following areas: choosing methods for imposing discipline in the school and the classroom, choosing textbooks, setting methods for evaluating students, hiring and firing teachers, deciding about sexual education in the school, evaluating the standard of teachers.

In the Israeli literature we found similar approaches to the above. Gal (1989), who did a case study in a community school, referred to the gaps between the teachers' and parents' attitudes towards the extent of involvement in planning the teaching. The parents wanted to be more involved in professional issues (choosing subject matter, teaching methods, contents, appointing teachers), while the teachers expressed totally different attitudes. They saw involvement as meaning organizational, social, class, and community activities, committee work, lectures or help in the classroom.

The findings of Givton and Zilberstein (1989) revealed similar discrepancies between teachers' and parents' attitudes. Although both sides agreed on involvement in terms of organization of events and social life, and also agreed that involvement was not to be desired with regard to choice of teaching and learning methods (the researchers explained this by the parents' recognition of the teachers' expertise), that is as far as their agreement went. The disagreement between teachers and parents referred mainly to two areas of involvement:

1. determining contents to be learned (parents 41.5%, teachers 7%).
2. setting the school's educational aims (parents 60%, teachers 33%).

According to these researchers, this difference in attitudes was liable to be a potential source of friction and conflicts.

Teachers' fear of parent participation appears to be one of the main factors contributing to the significant discrepancies that were found between the two groups' views with regard to what is considered desirable in terms of the nature and extent of the involvement. The teaching staff feared invasion by the parents into their private territory - the classroom (Gal, 1989) - and intervention in determining the face of the school (Givton & Zilberstein, 1989) - matters for which even the most "open" teachers were apparently not prepared.

In conclusion, we may describe an overall picture based on studies by Litwak and Meyer (1974) and Gal (1989), who argue that participation will occur in the case of a school with a cohesive educational team acting according to "open" approaches that see the student and the parents as the focus of its activities and is therefore prepared for dialogue and participation, combined with caring parents acting as a cohesive group that wants participation but knows its limits. These parents know how to make use of the "open door" that the school permits them, but try not to cross the narrow line between constructive involvement and harmful intervention. Naturally, even the best combination may have disadvantages and drawbacks, but they can be overcome with dialogue between the sides and a sincere wish for shared creativity. According to Swick and Broadway (1997), this kind of approach creates a positive supportive environment for teachers, students and parents.

2.2 Formal frameworks and structures for meetings of teachers and parents

The previous section dealt with parents' expectations regarding their involvement in the scholastic and social aspects of the school setting. This section will relate to the frameworks and structures that the Israeli school is obliged to maintain in order to provide for interaction between the school and the student's family. These regulations are documented in the *Encyclopedia of Education* (Adler & Ormian, 1969) and Friedman (1984) and provide for teacher-parent meetings, parents' visits to the school, home visits by the teacher and parents' days.

2.2.1 Teacher-parent meetings

General teacher-parent meetings of each class in the school take place once a year, mostly at the beginning of the school year. At these meetings the teachers review their working methods in the class and the curriculum they wish to implement, and inform the parents of the names of the teachers who will teach the class the various subjects. The educational counselor talks briefly of his or her work (this is practiced especially in the junior high school, where the class is taught by a large number of teachers). This meeting is also devoted to technical and administrative matters such as choosing a "parents' committee" and ways of raising money for various purposes (outings, parties, etc.). Usually the teacher reads a summary of the school regulations if one is available. At the end of the meeting the parents are able to ask questions or make comments.

There are schools that hold general meetings of all the parents in the school, in most cases once a year and some even more. Usually, more parents take part in the meetings of the individual class than in the general meetings of all the parents in the school. The aim of the latter kind of meeting is to provide information to all the parents together, and the feedback received by the teacher is very meager.

2.2.2 Parents' visits to the school

Many schools in Israel have regular weekly hours for parents to meet individually with teachers and discuss their children's progress at school. These hours are very helpful for mutual consultation and exchange of information on the child's life at home and at school, and they help to create an atmosphere of mutual trust and release of stress caused by problems, whether severe or mild.

2.2.3 Home visits

Although home visits are recommended by the Israeli education authorities as an activity of prime importance in attempting to bring teachers and parents together, they are not practiced in most of the schools, and have yet to become part of the teachers' routine. Perhaps the fact that many of the teachers are young mothers who do not live near their work places makes it more difficult to undertake this important activity.

2.2.4 Parents' day

This is one of the most common patterns of meeting in all the schools in Israel (and in many other parts of the world). These meetings take place three times a year (at the end of each term, close to the time when the students receive their school reports), usually in the afternoon or evening. In the elementary school the meeting with the parents is conducted by the class teacher alone in most cases. In the junior high schools, where each class is taught by a number of teachers of different subjects, all the teachers take part. The class teacher (also called the home-room teacher) talks with each child's parents separately and reports to them on the child's learning achievements and social standing at the school. Most of the parents come to the meeting in each class, and usually no precise time is set in advance for each individual meeting. Parents wait a long time outside the teacher's door and the meeting itself is quite short. This talk serves as an opportunity for discussing ways of helping a child who has difficulties. If necessary, the parent is directed to the teachers of various subjects or to the class counselor. The conversation also provides an opportunity for the parents to express their wishes concerning the need for treatment of special problems of the children, or at least to bring them to the teacher's attention.

I will relate to the parents' day framework in further depth, since, as noted in section 1.6, the research questions were examined in the context of the official parents' day.

2.3 Aims and techniques of parents' day

The professional literature has hitherto not devoted much space to parents' day activities. Studies by Noy (1984) conducted in Israel, and by Maclure and Walker (2000) in England, refer to some of the techniques and aims that characterize parents' days:

- a. to provide information on students' achievements in school, learning and social position
- b. to exchange information with parents and learn about students' home environment and parents' attitudes

- c. to discuss and counsel parents concerning ways of helping a child who has difficulties in various areas
- d. to bring about desired changes in the student, his/her attitudes and behaviors, following a change in the parents' attitudes and behaviors towards the child.

In order to understand the effective ways of achieving the aims of the parent-teacher meeting, my study examined the relative power of each side, the dynamics of the discussion, the degree of cooperation between them and the results of the meeting.

2.3.1 The dynamics between teachers and parents on parents' day

The dynamics that take place between teachers and parents can be seen on two levels: the roles that teachers assign to parents and parents' feelings during this encounter (Noy, 1992; Walker, 1998; Maclure & Walker, 2000). These are discussed in more detail below:

2.3.1.1 *Roles that teachers assign to parents*

The teacher in certain situations sees the parents as tools whose main task is to reinforce at home the line of action that s/he takes at school. The parents are called to the school in order to hear the teachers and receive instructions from them without question. They have to follow these "orders", and often even to impose punishments which affect the child much more strongly than any punishment the teacher might impose (such as denying the child bicycles, sports or TV viewing).

The meetings with the parents often involve deep personal feelings. The teacher, being a human being like any other, wants confirmation and some degree of praise. Teachers like this call the parents to a meeting in the hope that they will appreciate their work and success, and admire them for it. And when such teachers have difficulties with their students they seek a scapegoat, and the most convenient victims are the parents, so they try to put the blame on them.

Many teachers do not like meeting with parents because they feel uncomfortable with them. Their feeling of confidence and control may be shaken when they face the parents, especially middle class parents. These are their rivals, the child loves them. Moreover, there are teachers who tend to react towards the child's parents as if they were their own parents. They want very much to speak confidently with these adults,

but their own childhood memories may creep into the conversation and attach themselves to the image of the interlocutors (see discussion in section 2.1.4).

2.3.1.2 Parents' feelings during the meeting with the teacher

The parents are emotionally involved in these meetings, especially because of their personal need for continuation. The child's success is their success, and the child's failure is a blow to them. It is not surprising, therefore, that the expectations are high and if they are not met the disappointment is bitter (see discussion in section 2.1.4).

2.3.1.3 Insufficient preparation for parents' days

In conclusion, the educational aims of parents' day include exchange of information between parents and teachers, discussion and consultation concerning ways of helping a child who has difficulties, and achieving desired changes in the student's attitudes and behavior — sometimes through changes of attitude in the behavior of teachers and parents towards the child (Cronin, 1992; Walker, 1998). Psychological forces rooted in the participants' perception of the role of the "self" and the "other" (see section 2.1.3.1) are involved in the dynamics between parents and teachers at these meetings. These "function concepts" sometimes disrupt communication between the sides (Wilson, 1995).

In my experience there is not sufficient emphasis in teacher training on the application of theoretical knowledge of techniques of communication in the actual meeting with the students' parents. The limited time frame creates pressure and tension on all sides and is not conducive to in-depth understanding and discourse. The parents' day sometimes becomes an occasion for merely giving and receiving technical information. This kind of meeting makes the teacher a supplier of information (Williams, 1992; Power & Clark, 2000, p. 44), as will be shown later in this work.

2.4 Conclusion

This review presented the place of parents in the educational system from the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 to the end of the century. Table 2-1 gives an overview of academic writings on teacher-parent relations during this period. In the first stage there was alienation of both sides: the education system and the family setting. Towards the 1960s the problem of the disadvantaged grew, creating two cultures. To deal with this problem, the Ministry of Education launched an integration program that permitted all the students at every level to study in the same educational setting. In the 1980s and 1990s parents of higher socio-economic status began more and more to intervene in the study and social aspects of schooling in order to influence the character of the schools. Concurrently, the education system allowed more pluralism in education by permitting more choice, not only between state, state-religious and independent schools (see section 2.1.1), but also by becoming a partner in schools specializing in the sciences, arts and so forth in response to the demands of students from the affluent classes. Chapter 3 will discuss the research approaches existing in the literature, emphasizing the relevance of the interpretive approach to the present study.

Table 2-1 presents a review of the Israeli literature on teacher-parent relations.

Table 2-1: Review of the Israeli literature on teacher-parent relations

Educational policy	Main research Findings	Methodology	Central idea	Author & year
Parents choose school 1. State 2. State-religious 3. Independent	Stage of "alienation and defense" on the part of parents – for both strong and weak/ disadvantaged social classes	Surveys (questionnaires)	<u>1st stage</u> Creation of equality, centralization and uniformity in education while absorbing waves of mass immigration on the part of the teachers and the educational system	<u>1950s and 1960s</u> State Education Law 1953 Frankenstein 1964
Integration between weak and strong social classes in school	Beginning of the formation of gaps between strong and weak/disadvantaged social classes. Attempts at equalization through integration. All levels of the education system were to admit students from weak and strong origin	Surveys	<u>2nd stage</u> Change Growth of a demand on the part of middle class parents to redefine aims Sharpening of the term "disadvantaged" and the emergence of two cultures in Israel	<u>1970s</u> Frankenstein 1968 Feitelson 1969 Peres 1972 Stael 1973, 1976, 1979 Adar 1978 Frankenstein 1977
Equality and pluralism	The school is perceived by the parents as part of the community – a perception that gives them legitimization for intervention in the study and social aspects of the school	Interviews, questionnaires, observation	<u>3rd stage</u> Integration of community education – parent involvement in the school life	<u>1980s and 1990s</u> Sharni 1980 Samocha 1983 Kashti 1983 Reshef 1984 Friedman 1984 Noy 1984 Yahav 1985 Harpaz, Hadad et al. 1985 Bashi, Ellboim-Dror 1985 Smilansky 1986 Goldring 1989, 1991 Givton & Silberstein 1989 Gal, 1989 Goldberger 1991 Schurr 1992 Gur-Zeev 1997

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH PARADIGMS — FROM A POSITIVIST TO AN
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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PARADIGMS — FROM A POSITIVIST TO AN INTERPRETIVE-CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH

This chapter will review some of the prevalent research approaches in sociology in general and educational sociology in particular in recent years, in order to provide a broader explanation of the research approach chosen for this study.

On the methodological level, the use of qualitative research methods alongside or instead of quantitative methods is becoming more prevalent if not dominant. The different methods spring from different theoretical rationales based on different perceptions of the reality investigated and different ways of understanding this reality.

In the past two decades a subjectivist interpretive approach to reality emerged and became the basis for the development of qualitative research methods, as opposed to the objectivist positivistic perception of reality that underlay the previously dominant quantitative methodology. Recently, the theoretical discussion has become more complex, yielding a variety of conceptions that spring from the interpretive approach.

Positivism is described by sociologists (Kerlinger, 1973; Dane, 1990) as a paradigm, namely an overall scientific approach with its own characteristic epistemology and ontology that serves as the basis for the construction of a specific research methodology. Guba and Lincoln (1998, p. 195) define a paradigm as the basic belief system or worldview that guides the investigator. The paradigm, say Guba and Lincoln, represents a world view that defines the nature of the world, the individual's place in it and the range of possible relations towards this world and its parts. Research paradigms define the researcher's spheres of interest, what is included in the boundaries of legitimate investigation and what is outside them.

Although a particular paradigm may relate to more than one field of disciplines (for example, the positivist paradigm relates both to natural science and to the social sciences), it cannot be said that there is a clear division of paradigms in the various sciences; furthermore, even within one scientific discipline there may be different paradigms which exist side by side or replace each other in the course of time. The

paradigms described in this chapter refer only to sociology, although positivism, as mentioned above, relates to a broad scientific approach, and constructivism, as a competing paradigm (Rabinow & Sullivan, 1979; Lincoln, 1990; Phillips, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) appears in several of the social sciences. Within each paradigm various, even conflicting, theories may develop. For example, within the positivist paradigm we may find functionalist theory, exchange theory and systems theory, while the interpretive paradigm, which is used in the present study and will be discussed further, includes interactionist, phenomenological and ethnomethodological theory.

After a short presentation of the positivist and constructivist approach, I will describe the various approaches in sociological thinking that led, each in its own way, to the consolidation of the interpretive paradigm. Finally, I will explain the contribution of the constructivist interpretive paradigm to my research.

3.1 From positivism to interpretation in sociological research

The quantitative research method in the social sciences was based on foundations of rationalist experimental science that developed in the west over many generations and consolidated since the 17th century around several elements which were barely questioned until the middle of the 20th century (Shlasky & Arieli, 2001). In the mid-19th century, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who invented the term “sociology”, named the general scientific conception of his time “positivism”. He defined its characteristics as follows (Schon, 1983, p. 32):

- a. Empirical science is not just a form of knowledge but the only source of positive knowledge about the world.
- b. Positivism seeks to cleanse people’s minds of mysticism, superstition, and other forms of pseudo knowledge.
- c. Positivism seeks to extend scientific knowledge and technical control to human society and introduce them to the political and moral sphere.

Comte (1838) believed that it is possible to discover the rules of social behavior using the same thinking and research tools that had succeeded in the study of natural phenomena, and thus also to predict social processes. Furthermore, he believed that these tools could be used to organize and build a better, more efficient and just

society, just as understanding of natural phenomena can be used to improve the exploitation of nature for the benefit of mankind.

In a very slow, gradual process beginning at the end of the 19th century and reaching fruition in the second half of the 20th century, a new voice began to be heard in the social sciences, particularly in sociology and research methods. This voice emphasized the importance of rational processes, hidden from sight, that motivate people's social behavior. According to the new voice, which had a strong impact on the study of education, sensory observation (mainly through the eyes) of how people behave in given social circumstances, and finding order in the manifestations of this behavior, are secondary in importance to understanding the **meaning** that people impute to their actions and how their understanding guides their behavior. Hence the concept of the detached researcher is gradually being abandoned in favor of research oriented to action and emphasizing social criticism. This new voice led to the development and establishment of qualitative research methods in the social sciences which were distinguished from the quantitative research methods associated with the positivist approach.

The proponents of this approach differ from each other in the sources of their thinking and in their argumentation, and they are known by various names, the most prevalent today being the interpretive or constructivist paradigm. Rabinow and Sullivan (1979) coined the phrase "interpretive turn", while Lincoln (1990, p. 67) speaks of a "paradigm revolution" in referring to the change that has occurred in the way the social sciences perceive the world and themselves in relation to it, and consequently, the way they investigate the social world.

In the present study, I chose not to use a positivistic approach, because the point of departure of that approach is the view of reality as objective and it thus takes a stance of distance from the actors, whereas for me as a researcher it was important to relate to the actors and enter into their world, seeing the contexts in a holistic micro-social approach, as the interpretive-constructivist approach does, as we will see below.

Four different approaches that emerged in different fields of the social sciences, particularly in sociology, coalesced into the interpretive paradigm (Von Glaserfeld, 1984, p. 17, 1998; Erikson, 1986, p. 121).

The four basic approaches are:

- a. Weberian sociology: the point of departure of this approach is that all the meanings that are ascribed by individuals to their activities are vital for their understanding (Weber, 1949).
- b. Phenomenology: phenomenologists base their investigation to the best of their ability on pure experience, without preconceptions or concepts derived from any other source, “bracketing off” the factors behind the experience (Schutz, 1971, 1972, 1984; Parsons, 1979; Woods, 1979; Barber, 1988; Crossley, 1996).
- c. Ethnomethodology: the proponents of this approach are interested in the daily events of human life, the study of the subconscious routine by which people lead their everyday lives; for example, what happens to teachers and students when a teacher enters the classroom at the end of the break and the students respond by standing up (Garfinkel, 1967; Lacey, 1970; Hargreaves, 1972; Hargreaves, Hester & Mellor, 1975; Hilbert, 1992; Coulon, 1995).
- d. Symbolic interactionism: this approach emphasizes that people act on the basis of the meaning that things have for them, that the meanings arise from the actions of the other, the partner to the interaction, and that the meanings change in the course of the interaction (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1971; Hargreaves, 1972; Charon, 1989; Denzin, 1992; Engestron & Middleton, 1996).

3.2 A combined interpretive-constructivist approach

The reasoning of the four approaches described above merged, in the course of their development, into one approach that includes paradigmatic and methodological elements and is generally known as the interpretive-constructivist paradigm. Following social and cultural changes, as well as developments within the social disciplines themselves, in the past two decades this paradigm has gained acceptance as one of the central ones in the social sciences. Meanwhile, alongside the convergence into one paradigm, some other developments occurred: the various social sciences (as well as other sciences) discovered earlier trends inside themselves indicating this approach which now gained favor, expanding and deepening the basis of the discussion. The proliferation of theoretical and methodological discussions led to new (although not always innovative) formulations of the basic approach and to the spreading use of the concept constructivism instead of interpretation. And above all,

differences were revealed which led to the growth of new trends and perhaps also to new paradigms. These developments will be reviewed briefly below (Shlasky & Arieli, 2001).

The approaches known today as constructivist, which are the continuation of the interpretive paradigm, cross various disciplines. Phillips (1995, pp. 5-12) refers to a number of trends that express constructivist ideas today or contributed to the consolidation of these ideas in the past, such as Piaget (1980) in psychology, Dewey (1969) in the philosophy of education, Kuhn (1992) in the philosophy of science and Von Glaserfeld (1991, pp. 36-44) in scientific education and teaching.

The shift from interpretation to constructivism denotes expansion not only of the field of discussion but also of the sources of influence. In the past twenty years or so these concepts from critical, postmodernist, feminist and post-colonialist discourse have become increasingly visible.

3.3 Contribution of the interpretive-constructivist paradigm to the present research

The present study examines the interactions between teachers and parents and the meaning they attribute to each other's actions, the strategies they use and the agreements they reach in the negotiation processes in order to achieve their aims.

3.3.1 Construction of reality by the actors

The interpretive paradigm emphasizes the interactions of people as individuals who shape a social order among themselves in their everyday life and create routines. As rational creatures they do this on the basis of meanings that they give to their actions and those of others, while conducting negotiations with them and trying to form shared definitions of situation. Social individuals are perceived as active subjects who construct the social order according to their views while interacting with other subjects (in other words, they maintain inter-subjective relations), and not as objects of the social order who are shaped by "society" as an abstract body and lack a clear definition of the sources of power that guide their actions. The major concepts that prevail in the social analyses of the proponents of this school of thought are "action", "meaning", "process", "negotiations", and "definitions of situation". This is

in contrast to the positivist paradigm (whose main representative in sociology is the functionalist school) which emphasizes components such as “structure”, “function”, “institution”, “system”, “consensus” and “norms” in analyzing the social order. Hence the interpretive paradigm’s focus on processes occurring in micro-social units and in the everyday life of people, as opposed to the positivist paradigm, whose focus of research is the large social structures and institutions as organizational systems or transcendent systems in the awareness that regulate people’s social behavior. In the latter approach the subject, the human as a social actor, a social agent, is missing. The human is shaped and set in motion by the social order. In interpretive educational research the interest is in classroom interaction, in teacher-student relations, in relations within the school staff, in the participants’ action strategies, in the meaning of “disruption” in the classroom, in teachers’ careers, in life in the staffroom and in teacher-parent relations, as in the present work. On the other hand, functionalist studies (which are always quantitative) are more interested in subjects such as the school as an organization, the link between socioeconomic background and scholastic achievements, the link between education and occupation, or the spread of education in society (Shlasky & Arieli, 2001).

3.3.2 Human knowledge and its link to reality

The interpretation and construction of reality according to people’s conceptions give a central place to the question of human knowledge and its link to reality. The interpretive conceptions emphasize that human knowledge, whether it is public knowledge such as the sciences or whether it exists as individual cognitive structures such as ways of thinking, is actively constructed by the social agents. Even when someone adopts existing knowledge and does not invent new knowledge, it is the active decision of a human who chooses to adopt this particular knowledge. Our knowledge of reality is interpretive. Reality is perceived subjectively, according to the conceptual world of the actor who looks at the world and experiences it, on the basis of a particular culture and according to its concepts and values. As Von Glaserfeld (1998, p. 39) says, constructivism is deliberately cyclic, and never claims to be objective. He adds that it would be impertinent of us to believe that we are capable of “knowing” the world that created us and our ways of thinking, although we can

determine whether a certain way of acting or thinking is “right”, because it fulfills or does not fulfill our expectations.

This means that social realities are constantly constructed and changed by the actions of human beings as autonomous subjects, as social agents guided by their developing and changing awareness in their contacts with other agents. Moreover, we cannot speak of one reality but of many realities. Guba and Lincoln (1998, p. 206) argue that realities are perceived in the form of many mental and psychological constructs, which are socially and experientially based, and are local and specific in nature. Therefore, every society and every culture has to be perceived according to its own concepts, according to the awarenesses shaped by its members. This is a relativist view of reality.

These processes of construction and change are mainly processes of discourse, of dialogue, in which the participants act on each other. Through language we are both the signifiers and the signified.

In methodological terms, the researcher acting on the basis of the interpretive-constructivist paradigm seeks to reach construction of the reality investigated based on interpretive negotiations with the subjects investigated, leading to an agreed structure that is wiser and richer in knowledge than before. The researcher’s interest is in the meanings that the social actors ascribe to reality and the processes of change that occur, and the focus is on the local and specific. We may speak of two levels of interpretation, that of the subjects who construct their daily reality and explain their world to themselves and to the researcher, and that of the researcher who creates his or her own interpretive description as one who observes the phenomena from the sidelines, linking these findings to other knowledge and seeking to say something more general about human actions. Hence the researcher’s action is also construction of reality according to his or her perception and beliefs. As Guba and Lincoln (1998, p. 207) say, the researcher and the object of the research are perceived as linked interactively so that their “findings” are created in the full sense of the word, as the research proceeds.

3.3.2.1 *The approach to knowledge in educational research*

In educational research the question arises: what is the essence and the status of classroom and school knowledge? This relates to several aspects. Four of them, which have been discussed extensively for many years, are:

- a. the knowledge taught, namely the knowledge that is included in the curriculum, both official and concrete, overt and covert
- b. the teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach
- c. the teachers' knowledge of the ways of transmitting knowledge (teaching, education)
- d. the teachers' knowledge of the nature of their students, their learning ability and their achievements, or, as in the present study, the teachers' and parents' knowledge of each other.

Interpretive sociologists, from the 1960s onwards, dealt extensively with the investigation of interactions and survival strategies in the classroom. For example, they examined survival strategies of teachers and pupils in their encounters in the classroom and the school (see, for example, Woods, 1980a, 1981). This is similar to the present study's examination of interactions on parents' days. These researchers did not declare that teachers and pupils had the right to equal status, but neither did they speak of pupils' "disruption" as negative action but as contest between subjects in a field of action, each side with its own interests and difficulties. They spoke of "disruption" as a definition of situation imposed by one side (the teachers) on the other side (the students) (see Hargreaves et al., 1975; Denscombe, 1980). The dominant social order determined that the teacher was the one who defined a certain type of activity of the students as disruption of the lesson rather than an attempt to increase their understanding of the subject matter or perhaps a call for attention. The interpretive sociologists questioned the self evidence of this order, saying that reality can also be seen from the angle of vision of other participants. Reality is multifaceted, there are no absolute truths which, if "discovered" (preferably through research), can serve to institute the right social order. The social order, they said, is established through negotiations between the parties, in which both sides recognize each other's point of view. This is the basis of the relativist approach (Shlasky & Arieli, 2001).

As more studies based on this paradigm were published and its prior assumptions were examined in the spirit of the times, there was growing criticism of its basic

conceptions. In a certain generalization it may be said that the criticism emerged from two different, though not dissimilar, schools of thought, and focused on two major points. "Critical theory", whose sources are in various versions of Marxism and neo-Marxism, mostly attacked the constructivist paradigm's relativist stance, while postmodernist theories questioned this paradigm's view of the actor. These major theories, which may be seen today as paradigms in themselves, will be discussed below.

3.4 The critical paradigm

As stated, one critique of the constructivist approach was the relativism embodied in the attempt to understand the sources of action of various social agents acting in different cultural contexts. Relativists believe that they should not judge the subjects they investigate and they refrain from indicating a desired direction of action. As noted by Carspecken (1996, p. 189), it is seldom that constructivists and relativists criticize their subjects for their ethnocentrism; they simply save that kind of criticism for other methodologies. The critical paradigm argues that this relativist stance justifies, at least tacitly, the continuation of the existing social order, even if it is to the detriment of the weak or contradicts values of natural morality.

Guba and Lincoln (1998), presenting the critical paradigm, remark that in ontological terms it relates to the perception of reality as historical realism and not as a set of subjectivist perceptions, as the constructivists see it. Reality is perceived as something that was flexible and malleable in the past, but in the course of time was welded by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors, and became reified in a series of structures that are now (erroneously) accepted by those who live in this reality as "real", that is, natural and fixed. For all practical purposes the structures are real, they are imagined or historical reality.

In epistemological terms, the researcher and the object investigated are perceived as being interactively connected, with the researcher's values inevitably influencing the investigation. Therefore the findings are mediators of values. Hence, the researcher has the role of facilitating social change by contributing to the restructuring of the awareness of the object investigated.

In terms of methodology, this paradigm is characterized by dialogue between researchers and the object of their investigations, which is intended to be dialectical,

that is, influencing and changing reality, in which the researcher points to forms of social oppression and seeks to evoke a new awareness of reality and of the possibilities of criticism and social change. Carspecken (1996) emphasizes the reciprocal influence of the researcher and the object, the intercultural dialogue between the world of the researcher and that of the object, creating a new cultural horizon when it attains popular agreement.

Kincheloe and McLaren (1998, pp. 260-262) characterize critical researchers as scholars who seek to use their work as a means of criticizing the society or culture, on the assumption that power relations in society which have become fixated in historical processes shape the thinking that argues that facts are never separate from ideology and values, that language is a major factor in shaping awareness, that certain groups in every society have privileges while the oppressed largely accept this situation as natural and inevitable and that the research methods that were dominant (and still are to some extent) contributed, even if not consciously, to the reproduction of the oppressive class structure.

The critical research paradigm was not chosen for the present study, because its purpose is not simply to criticize or judge but to seek ways of improving the reality investigated.

3.5 The postmodernist paradigm

Postmodernism, an approach that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, breaks down the idea of the autonomous subject as a transcendental unity capable of discovering and creating knowledge and changing society and culture wisely and morally (McLaren, 1994, pp. 167-170; McLaren & Giroux, 1997, pp. 16-18).

In contrast to the critical tradition, based on Marxist conceptions, which expresses commitment to an ideological attitude, the postmodernist approach refrains from commitment to any defined ideology. Further, it is wary of all grand ideologies, seeing them as tools of enslavement and oppression in the hands of some power group or another in society.

The postmodernist approach also challenges one of the fundamental ideas of constructivism, the idea of the existence of a human being as an autonomous subject who constructs the social order and changes it. While the concept of "subject", according to the perception of modern enlightenment, expresses the demand to release

humankind from every situation of oppression, and regards the human aspiration for autonomy and the modern reality as an irreversible process of actualizing this value, the postmodernists perceive the subject as expressing power and appropriating the power of other objects, that is, as justifying the oppression of others who do not possess the characteristics of the "subjects" (Gur-Zeev, 1997).

In my research I chose not to use the postmodernist approach because I ascribe great importance to the subjects (teachers and parents), in the spirit of the interpretive-constructivist approach, as opposed to the postmodernist approach, which deconstructs the subject, thus in effect paralyzing him or her and rendering him or her incapable of taking part in constructing reality.

3.6 Conclusion

Thus, we see how different sociological views created a new interpretive view of social reality and how this joined with broader trends of thought adopting the name of constructivism and emphasizing that social reality is constructed and changed by the way it is perceived by the social agent who is able to act on the world around him/her. Constructivism in its narrow sense emphasizes the autonomy of the actor and his/her construction of society. The social reality is relativistic; there is no clear statement on the character of this society.

In its broad sense the orientation of constructivism is towards the circumstances that act on individuals in the processes of constructing their autonomy, towards their ability to cope with those who control knowledge/power in society. More radical approaches, such as the critical and postmodernist paradigms, argue that it is not possible for an autonomous subject to be constructed without creating a subdued "other". Despite the growing awareness that education is largely recruited by the hegemonic groups in society to the reproduction of the existing power structure, it appears that today's society cannot exist without educational mechanisms. As Howe (1998) remarks, educational work by definition requires the existence of guiding systems of values and beliefs, and, many believe, also the creation of a subject. Constructivism, in the sense of processes of constructing the individual and society, is therefore inherent in education. Therefore, I chose to relate in this study to the interpretive-constructivist paradigm.

CHAPTER 4

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH MODELS

As we saw in chapter 2, the formal parents' days in Israel provide a major context for interaction between a teacher and one or both parents, and it is interesting to examine this micro-social situation using an interpretive-constructivist approach, as discussed in chapter 3. This approach is based on the claim that people's actions in the social context are guided by judgment. The actors ascribe meaning to the social situation in which they find themselves. The social world is built and exists in their awareness and has no existence outside it (Glazer & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1978). The teachers and parents do what they do to each other not simply in response to stimuli. Their behavior is guided by a purpose and by shared interests which are reflected in the negotiations they conduct with each other.

Interpretive-constructivist social research proposes various models for tracing the different stages of the interactions and the meanings of these stages. In this work I used mainly concepts and research methods suggested by Hargreaves (1972; Hargreaves et al., 1975) and Strauss (Strauss et al., 1963; Glazer & Strauss, 1964; 1967; Strauss, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I chose these two models because I consider that they have been successfully used in previous studies (Kashti, Arieli & Harel, 1985; Bar-Tal, 1986) for tracing interactions similar in their basic structure to the interactions studied in the present work, and from these two I could construct a third model adapted to my work.

Hargreaves (1972, 1975) deals with interaction in the classroom and the school. Although his works deal principally with school staff and students and not with parents, the broad use made of his model in the study of interactions including teachers, seemed to be productive for my study dealing with participants in interactions and their definitions of situation.

Strauss (1963, 1978) deals with interactions between professionals and their clients, recipients of service, such as hospital staff, patients and their relatives. His approach to the contact between service givers and patients' families is applicable, at least partly, in my work, which deals with negotiations between the teachers and the school's clients, namely the students' parents.

Although they may appear somewhat outdated, these two models (of Hargreaves and Strauss) are considered as seminal works in the field (within particular strands of an interpretive-constructivist approach). The subject of teacher-parent relations has not been extensively dealt with in research, and therefore it seemed to me to be advisable to use a reliable compass in exploring this largely uncharted terrain, particularly in view of the fact that the research literature does not appear to contain any more updated models that are appropriate for this type of study. Therefore I decided to construct a new model which integrates these two models and shows the mutual flow of interactions and the dynamics existing between the actors.

4.1. Hargreaves' model

Hargreaves (1972, 1975) presents a model for analyzing interactions in the classroom, and he uses the terms "definition of situation" and "presentation of self", which were prevalent among many sociologists in the 1970s. In investigating the structure of interactions, Thomas (1972) used the concept "definition of situation" to note the influence of definitions and imputed meaning on the structure of human action. What sociologists call "culture" may be seen as a set of collective definitions of situation. Interactions can take place only when a number of participants have at least a partially shared definition of the situation. Schutz (1972), in defining interaction, speaks of a common communicative environment. According to him, the everyday world of the individual is not a private world but an interpersonal world common to the individual and others. The socio-cultural world in which the individual exists is also the social environment of others.

In addition to collecting data about the other, individual A, on entering the interaction, has to struggle with another important question – how s/he wants to be perceived by individual B. Because B is busy collecting information about A, the latter is in a position that gives her/him a degree of control over the information that B collects about him/her. A can influence the way in which B perceives him/her and the

way in which B perceives A's perception of B by the information that A transmits to B through his/her behavior. This, in fact, is the task of presentation of self (Woods, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1983; Denscombe, 1985).

According to Goffman (1971), in their presentation of self, actors have to behave consciously and unconsciously so as to express themselves with all the means at their disposal (speech, movement, gestures, facial expressions and so on) and in such a way that the others will be capable of forming their impressions. Individuals have to make sure of presenting themselves in a way that will cause the others to form the impression they aim for.

Goffman (1971) calls the "expressive equipment" that the individual uses in the negotiations a "front". This is the part of the individual's behavior that serves as a definition of situation for the other. To create the front, the individual can use accessories, scenery, decorations, clothes, manners of speech, facial expressions and body language. By constructing the front, the actor helps to define the situation by supplying the other with information about his/her roles, aims and the way in which s/he intends to act during the negotiations. Sometimes actors try to create the impression in the other that their performance is ideal.

Goffman (1971) distinguishes the front from the backstage. The performance takes place in front and the impressions to be made are planned backstage. But here the actor can also step out of the character and relax, rest from making an impression and behave as s/he wishes (Aviram, 1981, p. 40).

In analyzing classroom interactions Hargreaves (1972) relates to two main factors that create the definition of situation: the first — the teachers' role and aims, which are influenced by their range of functions, their personality and background; the second — their conceptions concerning the students and concerning the students' conceptions of each teacher. The two elements of the second factor influence each other and also influence the teacher's role and aims. All of these together determine the teacher's definition of the situation. But sometimes an individual's definition of a situation, in a process of collective interpretation by actors in equal positions, becomes a shared definition. The shared definition of situation relates to the participants' shared perception and their awareness as to the appropriate ways of behaving in various situations. This concept is central in Hargreaves' approach, according to which the everyday world is not a private world created by individuals, but an inter-subjective world which they share with others. It is experienced and

interpreted by others who are part of the individual's environment, just as s/he is part of theirs. A person acts on others and they act on him/her. These mutual relations mean that they all experience the world that is shared by all, and experience it in a fairly similar way.

The definition of situation is formed partly by custom and all those aspects of the social system that supply the actors with typical solutions to routine problems that arise in the course of their interactions. These solutions serve as a shared schema of action which delineates how they have to proceed in order to achieve their aims and how to interpret and understand the actions that take place. This means that the definition of situation does not depend only on aims, roles and rules, but also on the perceptions of the participant in the interaction. But after all, people are different from each other. Each participant has his or her own unique style, personality, biography, aims and interpretations. And therefore, says Hargreaves, their personal definitions of situation are not identical but only similar or matching; they have common factors rooted in similar social experience and an identical role, but each participant, as stated, is a separate individual.

Some elements of the definition of the situation are given and they create the definition of situation that is agreed upon and taken for granted. Other elements are peculiar to the individual taking part, who has a personal version of the definition of situation, which matches but is not identical with the definition of the role partners. In the course of time, especially if considerable gaps exist between the personal definitions of situation, the participants have to negotiate over them and reach some kind of agreement in order for the interaction to continue to the satisfaction of all sides.

In order to further the analysis of the process of creating a definition of situation, I will relate to its various components, and then integrate them in a coherent and dynamic model of negotiations.

All the participants, on entering a given interaction, have a clear set of goals that they want to achieve. The range of these goals is infinite. Also, all the participants have a more or less clear perception of the role they plan to perform. This role perception is derived from their perception of the expectations of their role partners and from their own needs, personality and background details. The individuals' interrelated goals and roles will form the main contribution of their perception as to the way in which the situation has to be defined. Sometimes individuals enter an

interaction without their goals and roles being clear to them; these will be formed in the early stages of the interaction. At the stage of entering the interaction, and sometimes even before that, each participant collects information about the others and tries to examine and evaluate their roles, goals, intentions, personality, and so forth. The collection of data leads to the building of a perception of the others which influences the individual's behavior towards them.

When the teacher takes any line of action, there is at once a sequence of interactions. Her/his behavior arouses behaviors among those around her/him, and as a result s/he receives feedback on the results of this behavior and its effects on the student and the others around him/her. This feedback may lead to changes in the teacher's aims and roles. In this way the feedback "radiates" influence on the other components of the model. Of particular importance are the changes that occur in the teacher's definition of the situation and presentation of self. The behaviors of those around influence the teacher's perception of them, and consequently all the components of the model related to this are strengthened, or alternatively, changed. The longer the interaction continues, the more likely that the teacher's original definition of situation will change in order to reach working agreements with his/her partners to the negotiation (students, or for our purposes, parents). A certain degree of compromise over aims and personal needs is needed in order to reach a working consensus, and thus the working consensus is the product of negotiations between the partners.

According to Hargreaves, the "sequence of interactions" includes all the actual behaviors occurring in the field. On the other hand, the "definition of situation" and "working consensus" are concepts that describe only the social level.

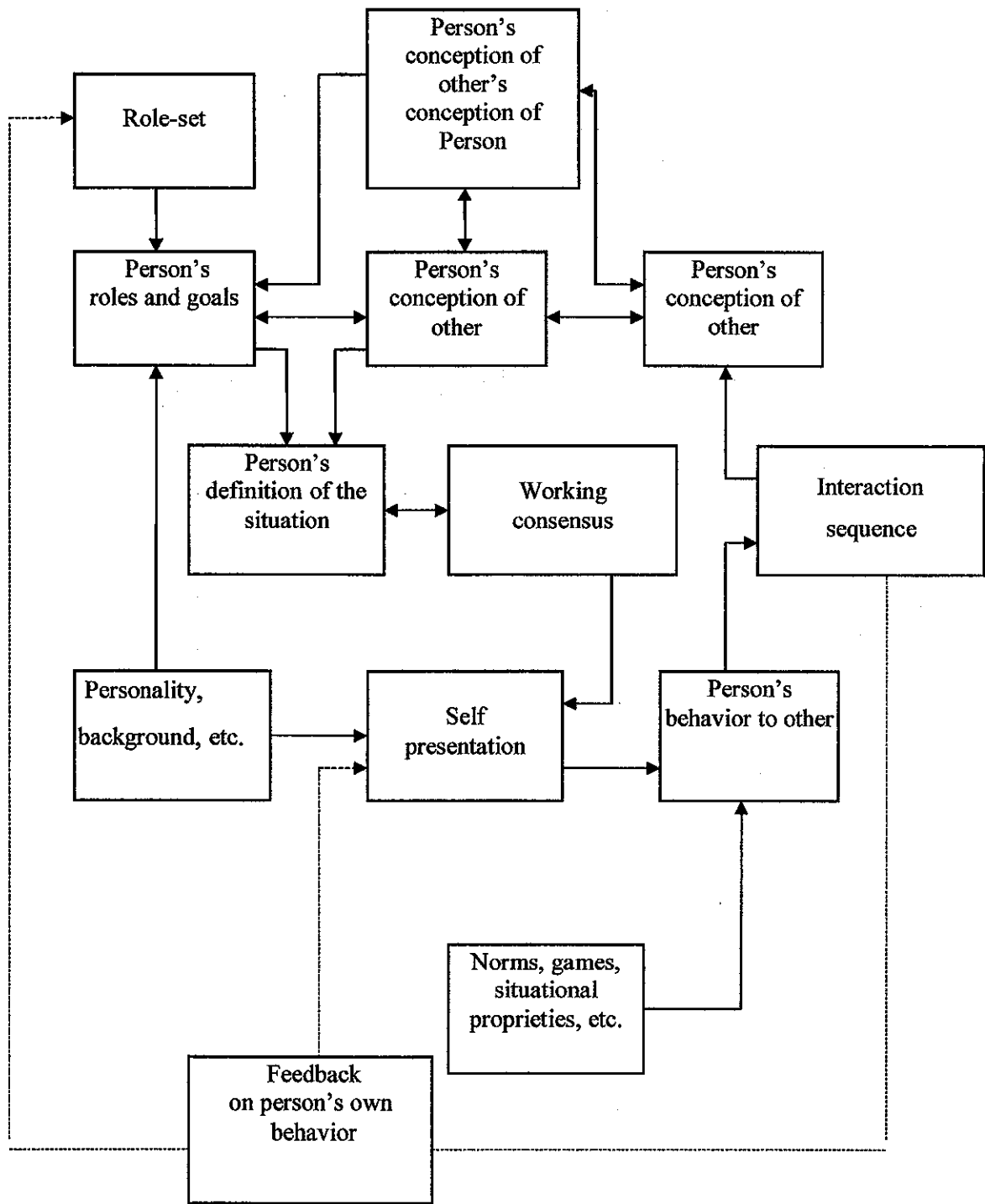
One of the central links in Hargreaves' model is the link of negotiations. In order for the interaction to continue, those individual definitions that are not compatible, especially between holders of various positions, have to be discussed in negotiations with the environment. This link includes several actions which are not a working consensus. During these negotiations, teachers and their partners in the interaction use a very broad range of behaviors, such as pretense, name-dropping, concealed threats, appeals to higher authority, evasion and delaying tactics, mention of agreements, flattery, moderating demands, coordinating aims, and so forth. Hargreaves explains that the bargaining process, which is conducted in an attempt to reach a working consensus or agreement between the participants, has three possible types of results:

- a. Concord — a high degree of agreement between the sides. In this case, the definitions of situation of the teacher and the student, or in our case the teacher and parent, converge or match to a great extent. This situation is satisfactory for both sides and both may profit from it.
- b. Discord — the definitions of situation are not compatible and there is a low degree of agreement. This situation is not satisfactory for either side and both sides lose.
- c. Pseudo-concord — here the definitions of situation are partly compatible. The situation is satisfactory only sometimes and the participants sometimes profit and sometimes lose.

Hargreaves believes that the extreme situations of concord or discord are quite rare. Situations are usually characterized by pseudo-concord and the extent of agreement in them is far from perfect. In other words, the definition of situation of the teacher and his/her partners to the interaction are only rarely so far from each other that no bargaining takes place and no working agreement is reached. At the same time, the two definitions rarely match each other so well that bargaining is superfluous.

Mostly, the students are not completely satisfied with the teacher's definition of the situation in the classroom, but in the end they adapt themselves to these definitions. That is why pseudo-concord is often seen as concord (Bar-Tal, 1986).

Figure 4-1: Hargreaves' model – dyadic teacher-pupil approach



4.2 Strauss' model

Strauss (1978) and Strauss and colleagues (1963; 1990) suggest an approach to micro-social research which focuses on the concept of negotiations (see Figure 4-2). This approach is guided by the assumption that people define and create a social structure, but at the same time the social structure defines and shapes their life circumstances. The structure is, therefore, the result of people's negotiations with each other, but also a factor that lies at the basis of these negotiations. In their view, people are both the creators and outcomes of the social structure in which they take part. They are created by the social structure, among other things, through the "awareness context" (Glazer & Strauss, 1964; 1967). The awareness context is the reservoir of knowledge, values and symbols available to a person on social and organizational subjects related to their career when they come to hold negotiations with others who are significant to their career. Therefore, micro-social analysis requires not only clarification of the process of negotiations and the strategy that guides it, but also knowledge of the awareness context from which the individual negotiates over his/her career (Strauss, 1978).

In order to clarify the meaning of negotiations in a broader social context, Strauss (1978) presents some basic assumptions, such as: the specific talks (who speaks to whom, when and about what) are not random but dictated by the structural conditions and can be studied on the background of those conditions. The character and the implications (for the individual and the organization), as well as the results of the negotiations (contracts, understandings, working agreements, etc.) are all bound to a certain time and are subject to changes in the future. The negotiated agreement has to be implemented in the concrete reality. The operative basis of the negotiated agreement should be updated and reviewed regularly. This, in fact, is a new order, which is the product of human procedures, and in the case in question, parents and teachers who construct the social reality.

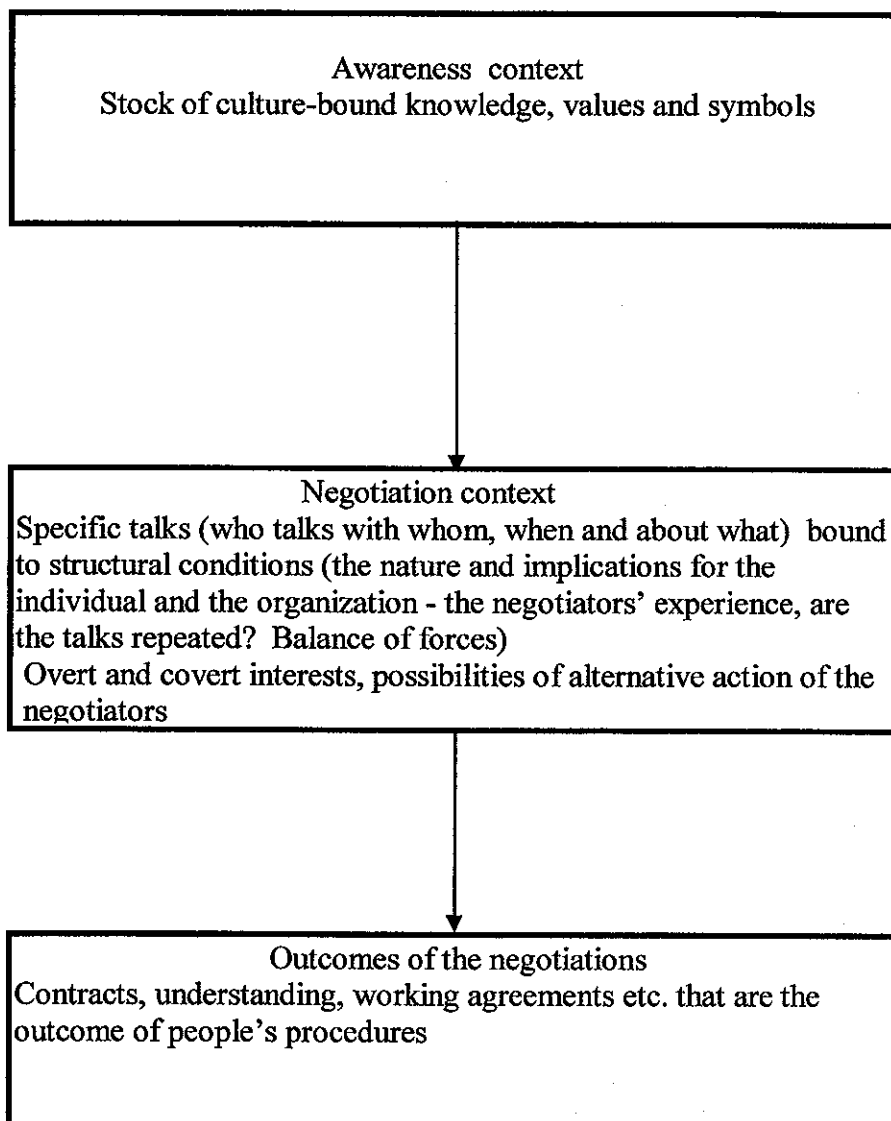
Just as there are different types of awareness contexts explaining the differential resources of participants, there are also types of negotiation contexts that explain the interactions between the participants. The interactions between them relate to the conditions described by the following questions: what is the number of negotiators? What is their relative experience in negotiating? Who do they represent? Is it a single discussion, or regular, frequent or ongoing talks? What are the relative strengths of

the negotiating parties, what is the reward they seek? Are the discussions held in secret or openly? How many subjects are discussed and how complicated are they? To what extent is there an option to avoid or leave the negotiations; in other words, what are the possibilities for alternative action by the parties?

The last point is highly relevant for an understanding of the course of the negotiations and their results. If the participants believe that they have an alternative, such as appealing to a higher authority, manipulative behavior and so on, this may influence their attitudes and behaviors during the negotiations or even lead them to avoid negotiations.

In conclusion, Strauss's approach is based on a view of the social order and individuals in society as being formed through constant processes of negotiations. On questions of setting the social order in general, many small-scale negotiations take place all the time in the context of large-scale arrangements. The latter tend to be slower and more hidden. The individual tends to perceive them as given and natural and not to discern their historic development. This is a theory that challenges the view of the organization as fixed, static and limited by rigid laws, well defined aims and an administrative hierarchy. Instead, the emphasis is on dynamic change.

Figure 4-2: Strauss' model – dyadic service provider-client approach



4.3 Teacher-parent interactions from an interpretive-constructivist perspective

The two approaches reviewed (of Hargreaves and Strauss) place negotiation interactions at the center of micro-social research, by which this study is conducted. While Hargreaves emphasizes the various stages (cognitive and behavioral) of this process, Strauss stresses the awareness contexts available to the partners to the interaction, with its major resources, and the alternatives to the negotiation arrangements. Both approaches guided most of my questions dealing with the study of negotiation interactions between teachers and parents in the framework of parents' days held in the school, as can be seen from the combined model that I constructed from the two approaches in Figures 4-3 and 4-4.

My combined model emphasizes the four central streams of the interpretive-constructive approach (discussed in sections 1.2 and 3.1) as these actions find expression in teacher-parent relations:

- a. Weberian sociology relates to the meanings that individuals ascribe to their actions.
- b. The phenomenological stream relates to teachers' and parents' definitions of situation.
- c. The ethno-methodological stream relates to teachers' and parents strategies and patterns of action towards each other.
- d. The symbolic interaction stream relates to actions taken by teachers and parents in order to manipulate each other.

4.4 Research questions

A review of the relevant literature led me to adopt the approaches of Hargreaves (1972, 1975) and Strauss (1963, 1978, 1990) as most appropriate for the analysis of interactions in micro-social situations. In the light of the interpretive-constructivist perspective the primary research question was: What factors shape the interaction and agreements between teachers and parents at official parents' days? This led to the following secondary research questions:

1. Teachers and parents have interests and goals that they seek to achieve through their meetings. What are these goals and to what extent do the meetings help to achieve them?
2. In the meetings between teachers and parents both sides give expression to the real and imagined resources they possess (socio-economic background and cultural resources). What resources do the teachers and parents use in order to achieve their objectives?
3. How do the teachers and parents perceive each other and how does each side perceive the other side's perception of him/her?
4. What are the parents' and teachers' definitions of situation in the meeting between them?
5. What strategies does each side use to achieve its goals?
6. The negotiations between teachers and parents yield working agreements that define the social reality that develops between them. What are the typical working agreements that emerge during these negotiations?

Figure 4-3: Combined model of Hargreaves' and Strauss' approaches placing the negotiation interactions at the center of micro-social research work

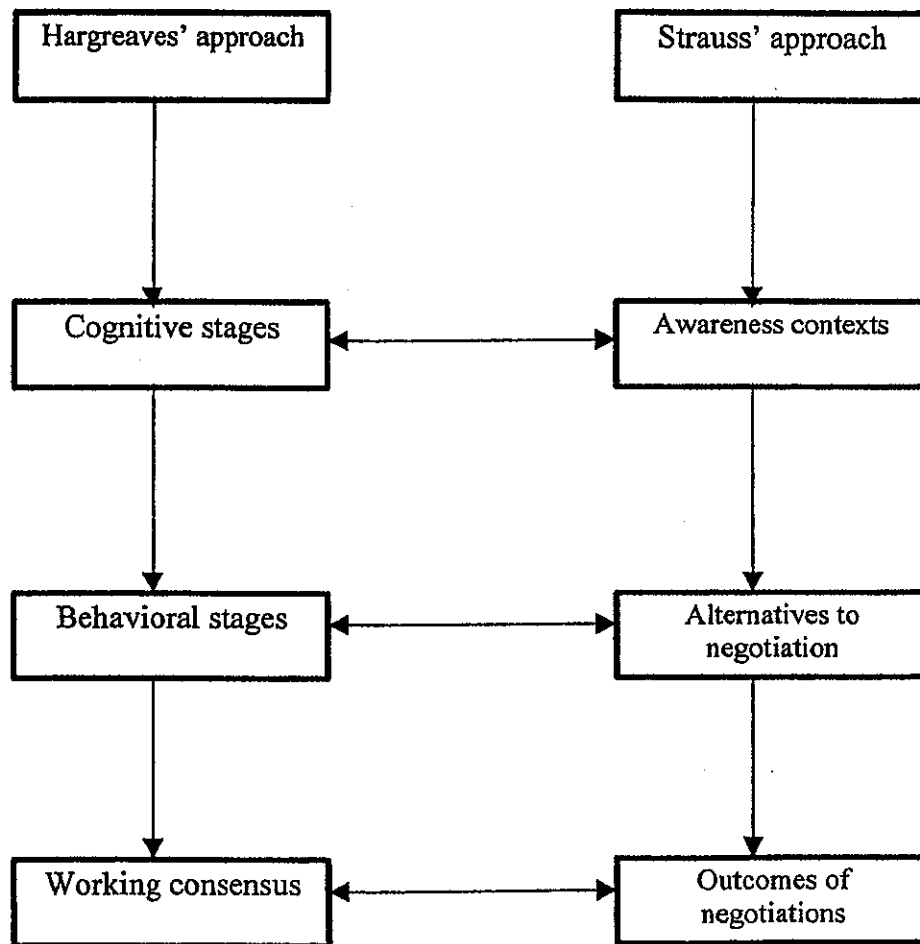
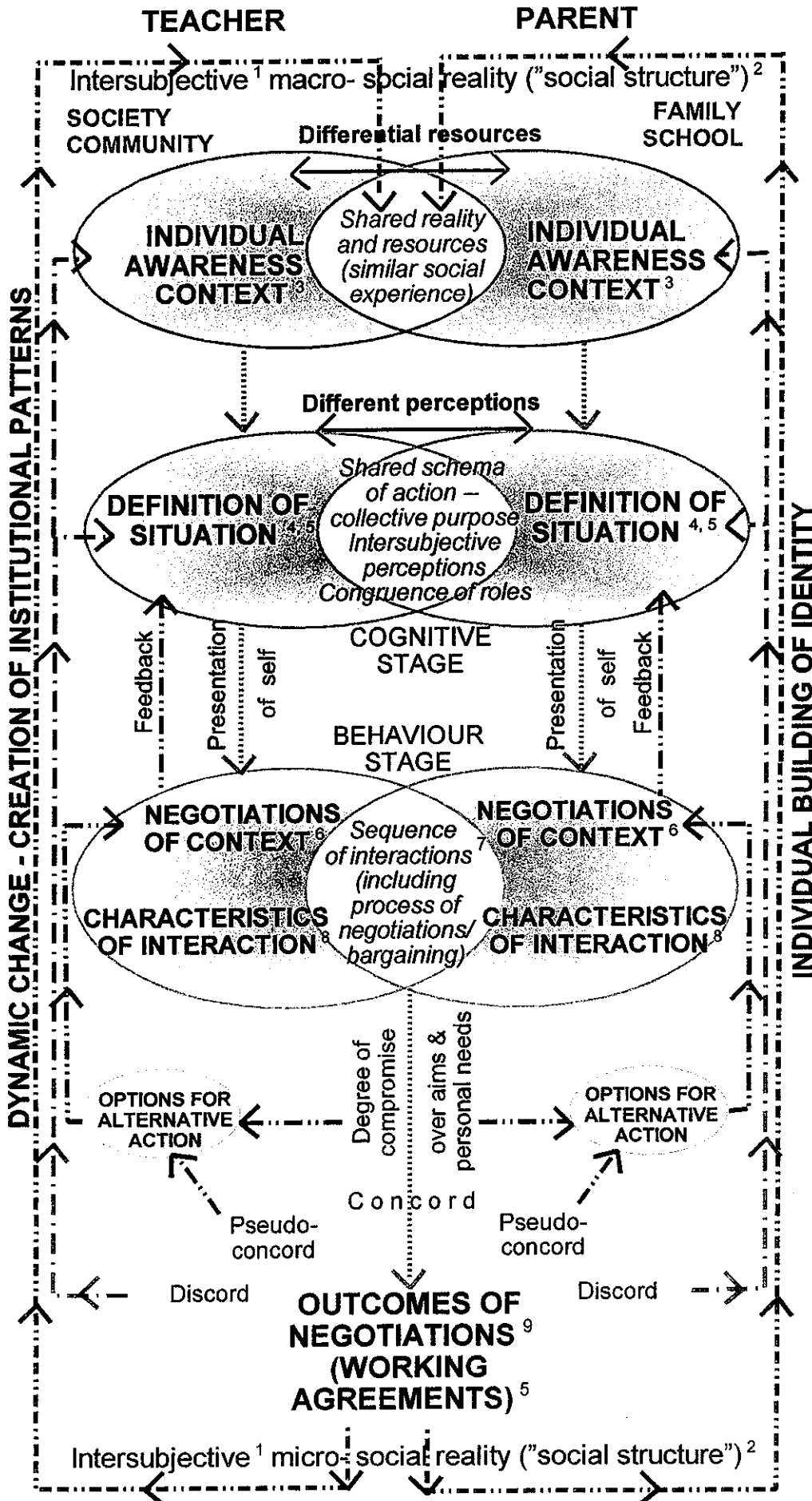


Figure 4-4: Combined model used in this study



DESCRIPTION

1 Point of departure: social world is built and exists entirely in the human consciousness

2 Social order is an outcome of people's procedures when they describe and report of social phenomena

3 Socio-economic and cultural resources
 - real
 - imagined
 Power factors (Reservoir of knowledge, values and symbols available to a person in negotiation with another)

4 Ideological goals and roles
 Personal conceptions, interests, style, personality, biography

5 Concepts at social level

6 Explanations of interaction - conditions

7 All the actual behaviours occurring in the field

8 Strategies used to achieve goals

9 Product of negotiations between parents and teachers

Overlapping ellipses dictated by structural conditions of negotiations

4.5 The combined Hargreaves-Strauss model integrated with the research questions

In this section we will explore the teacher-parent interactions with the aid of the combined model 4-4 and as they emerged from the research questions.

4.5.1 Teachers' and parents' goals

4.5.1.1 Teachers' goals

The teachers' role and their professionalism are expressed first and foremost in the actions they take to achieve the formal goals of the organization in which they work: they have to instruct and educate their students. For these purposes they may need or see fit to maintain contact with the parents. The literature relates to pedagogic, therapeutic and survival goals of teachers (Denscombe, 1985; Woods, 1980a).

a. Pedagogic goals

The school sees the parents as important partners in their child's progress and considers itself capable of helping the parents to know their children from angles that are not revealed at home but only in the company of their peers. In this way they can also learn about the child's limitations. Sometimes parents have unrealistic expectations which the child cannot fulfill, or which are in contrast to the child's inclination and desire; or perhaps they underestimate their child's ability. A balanced message, indicating that the teacher knows the child well and believes in him/her, is received with understanding by the parents. It helps them to see their children in perspective in various realms of behavior and love them for what they are (Carter, 1996; Maclure & Walker, 2000, p. 8).

b. Therapeutic goals

Teachers perceive their role as covering the therapeutic as well as the pedagogic sphere. Therapeutic activities find expression in the following: creating conditions

and promoting a climate in the school that will enable the students to develop according to their abilities and inclinations in studies, social and expressive activities; developing individual frameworks to match the various levels of the students; fostering awareness of the needs of the individual student and the social and emotional problems typical of the age group of these students as well as the special needs of individuals and groups; assisting students who have adjustment problems and counseling their parents on how to overcome these difficulties; assisting students in adjusting to the learning and social frameworks (Maclure & Walker, 2000, p. 8).

c. Survival goals

Some teachers believe that the students' progress at school is partly the responsibility of the parents and their involvement. But teachers in the school (like other professional workers in different organizational situations) sometimes tend to limit their pedagogic accountability by shifting it to other factors in the social structure and in the student's characteristics (Lacey, 1970), or to the parents. The shifting of accountability apparently reduces anxiety over failure or provides — or is perceived as providing — an "alibi" to protect them against anticipated accusations. In other words, in many circumstances teachers act for their survival in the classroom, the school and the teaching profession — not out of professional considerations (Woods, 1984; Denscombe, 1985).

4.5.1.2 *Parents' goals*

Smilansky and colleagues (1986) note that most of the parents in Israel attach great importance to their children's success in the school. This finding is salient among parents of high and low educational levels. Both are aware of the decisive weight of education in Israeli society. They see the school as one of the major channels for intergenerational social mobility. This finds concrete expression in the findings of a survey by Harpaz and associates (1985), who reported that 77% of the parents said they would be very sorry if their children did not obtain a matriculation certificate. Translated to individual parent-teacher interactions, it would mean that parents' interactions with teachers are guided by their goal for success for their child.

This is evident, for example, in the centrality of student achievement in parent-teacher interviews (Baker & Keogh, 1995).

4.5.2 Teachers' and parents' resources

According to Goffman (1971), in his work on presentation of self in everyday life, in the course of negotiations between the actor and significant others, the actor wonders what resources are available to the others that can serve them in the attempt to attain their goals or impose their definitions of situation on the actor. The others are aware of the actor's speculations and therefore seek to "impress" the actor with the extent of the resources at their disposal. This act of making an impression is done by presenting themselves as owners of real or fictitious resources in order to influence the actor's behavior. In addition to the impressions that each of the actors brings as a resource, Weber (1947) and Becker (1976) note the sources of power that may be imputed both to teachers and parents, as we will see below.

4.5.2.1 *Teachers' resources*

The resources and powers that are available to the teachers stem from three major sources (Noy, 1984): (a) their professional authority; (b) the bureaucratic authority vested in them by virtue of their status and role in the school structure; (c) knowledge they possess about the parents with whom they negotiate and about the parents' children – their students – who are the objects of their negotiations. In her paper, *Classroom knowledge*, Keddie (1971, pp. 133-160) refers to the power-giving significance of teachers' knowledge about their students. On the strength of this knowledge (socio-economic background, personality, previous attainments) teachers classify their students, not only into formal organizational categories (classes, tracks, streams, groupings) based on educational criteria, but also into informal categories (normal or disturbed, good children or trouble-makers) based on behavioral definitions.

Access to information can constitute a source of strength and influence in organizations. According to Mintzberg (1983), information is a source of strength for two reasons. Firstly, controlling the flow of information to a certain organization gives power to the individual who controls it. Secondly, the control of information

augments the influence of an individual who is in a central position. The person who controls the information can decide what information to pass on, how much and to whom.

4.5.2.2 *Parents' resources*

The parents, too, make use of resources in negotiations with the teachers. The parents' resources can be classified into three categories: (a) the parents' status as parents; (b) the parents' knowledge about the education system and about specific teachers; (c) the parents' socio-economic status (Lacey, 1970; Sharp & Green, 1975; Becker, 1976).

Sharp and Green (1975) note that the parents act to convince the teacher that they are interested in and support the teacher's working methods, although in fact they may be critical of the teachers.

The parents' social power increases with the rise in educational level. The higher their socio-economic status, the higher their scholastic aspirations for their children and the greater their ability to fulfill them. Therefore, it may be assumed that parents with high status will show more interest in the quality of the educational services their children receive and will intervene more in the work of the school, whether the principal and the teachers like it or not, and will even exert political pressure from outside (Goldring, 1989). In addition, in Israel's present economic situation the parents provide the school with many resources, particularly in terms of money, but also in the form of voluntary and support services.

In exchange for the parents' contribution, the informal balance of power changes. The schools depend on the parents for financial resources and support, and the parents demand a more influential position in decision making processes concerning the use of their money. The more the principals and teachers are dependent on the parents, the stronger the parents' influence and power over the school (Emerson, 1962; Malen, 1994).

4.5.3 Teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other

What do teachers and parents know about each other, and how do they perceive each other? Do they perceive each other through the role they fulfill in a concrete

social situation? Is the role content fixed or subject to change through negotiations between the role partners? This question was discussed by Turner (1962) in the context of the debate between the structuralists (fixed roles) and the interactionists (changeable roles).

Turner showed that roles are not always delineated and bound and their definition is not always clear and comprehensive. The question arises as to what is the fate of those exceptional cases in which a given role differs in several components from the ideal role.

Turner claimed that the role should not be seen as a passive entity but as something dynamic whose boundaries are set in negotiations between the participants and which is a product of the parallel forces acting on it.

Another question is: is the relationship between the actor and those acted upon, namely, the significant others, symmetrical or asymmetrical, in the sense that one side gives and the other receives, or do both sides perform active roles, both giving and receiving to some extent? Turner argues for symmetry, an argument which is perhaps more than predictable since his claim is that the question of "role" is subject to constant negotiations between the sides and that role in practice has to be agreed upon between us and has to match the texture of our understanding of it, our world view and the "awareness context" concerning each other that we carry with us (Glazer & Strauss, 1964).

In the context of teacher-parent interactions, what information that teachers and parents possess about each other do they use in their negotiations: concepts, roles, intentions (Hargreaves, 1972)? In other words, what is their perception of each other in their awareness contexts?

4.5.4 Definitions of situation as derived from the goals, resources and perceptions of teachers and parents

Teachers' and parents' definitions of situation are derived from their goals, resources and perceptions of each other (Hargreaves, 1972). After the definition of situation has been formed, it gives rise to techniques of presentation of self (Goffman, 1971), used by teachers to translate their definitions of the situation into concrete behaviors towards the parent. The teachers' actual behavior towards the parent is dictated, as stated, not only by their perception of the parent, but also by

their perception of the parent's perception of them. In addition to collecting information on the parent, the teacher faces another question: what kind of person do I want the parent to think me? Since parents also collect information on teachers, the latter can influence two things: how the parents perceive them (what do they think of me?) and how they see the teachers' perception of them (what do they think I think of them?). Teachers influence these by their behavior through "releasing" suitable information about the other. This is the self presentation of the other. Hargreaves (1972) describes this as the process of interpersonal perception and argues that the definition of situation is influenced by the impressions that individuals form of their partners in interactions, and by the beliefs that the individuals have of the impression that they themselves make on the other (Smith, 1997).

The meaning of these mutual relations is that everybody experiences a world which is common to all. The reciprocity in the definition of situation stems partially from social norms, practices and all the other aspects of cultural patterns, which through suitable prescriptions permit typical solutions by typical actors. These prescriptions serve both in the acting environment which the actors use to achieve their goals and in interpretive schemata through which the logic of the action can be understood (Goffman, 1971).

4.5.5 Teachers' and parents' strategies as reflected in the negotiation processes

In the light of the points that have emerged so far, the question arises as to how teachers cope with and react to the parents' growing influence in the organizational context in their mutual interactions, discourse and negotiations to attain their goals, and what strategies the parents, in their turn, use towards teachers in order to attain their goals.

Four main strategies of response that serve people in organizations have been enumerated: coalitional cooperation; cooptation; socialization; and blocking.

These strategies were investigated in relations between management and clients of various service organizations (Thompson, 1967; Scott, 1981; Goldring, 1989). In this study they will be examined in the sphere of relationships between teachers as providers of a local service and parents of students as their indirect clients.

a. Coalitional cooperation

This strategy appears at defined times, when members of an organization join together to achieve an agreed common goal (Mintzberg, 1983; Cronin, 1992). This cooperation is designed to achieve a purpose that is hard to achieve without coalitional cooperation, and if the cooperation does not become established, the coalition breaks up. In the context of teacher-parent interactions, for example, the teacher and the parent may form a coalition to achieve something with the child, usually to improve the child's achievements or behavior (for instance, the parent may undertake to ensure that the child will have extra tuition, while the teacher undertakes to check the child's homework more carefully, in order for the child to succeed in a specific subject).

b. Cooptation

According to this strategy, the organization absorbs the representatives of the environment into the system, institutionalizes their actions and gives them a role in the decision making process. In organization theory, cooptation is regarded as an effective strategy for preserving a reasonable link between the organization and the representatives of the clients. Its main disadvantage is the severance of the link between the clients' representatives who are integrated into the organization and the rest of the clients, who are excluded from it and are even more alienated, not only from the leadership of the educational organization but also from their representatives who have become part of the organization (Goldring, 1989; Wise & Wise, 1996). An example in the context of teacher-parent interactions might be the tendency of teachers to coopt parents of similar socio-economic backgrounds to their own, while largely ignoring those of different backgrounds.

c. Socialization

This strategy entails the process of inculcating into individuals the values, traditions and behavioral norms of the society in which they live, so that they will behave according to the requirements of that society. In schools, socialization relates not only to the norms of society but also to the particular norms of the school. In this sense, socialization is used by teachers as a strategy when they try to mold the parents'

attitudes and bring them closer to those of the school (which are not necessarily identical with those of society at large). The teachers guide the parents' expectations towards greater compatibility with their own as regards the results of the educational process in light of the means available to the school. They attempt to persuade the parents to identify with the school's goals, values and working methods. In other words, the school's teachers try to lead the parents towards the school's conceptual world. This activity often includes the shifting of the educational responsibility for the pupils' achievements from the school to the parents (Goldring, 1989).

Another kind of strategy used by teachers is defending the formality of the meeting by referring to the school's rules and laws, calling upon the parents to "respect" them and recognize the teacher's authority (Hammersley, 1984). This "respect" is part of the cultural adaptation that the teachers want to effect and is an important condition for controlling the parents. Despite the fact that teachers, by virtue of their role, have power and a strong supportive framework behind them (principal, Ministry of Education, etc.), this is not enough to ensure that the parents will conform. In fact, teachers who rely only on the use of power and the strong supportive system risk losing their good name and their power, because they are expected to know how to control situations for which they are responsible.

d. Blocking

Blocking is a strategy used in organizations to minimize interactions between the workers and the management. This is in contrast to the first three strategies listed above, which deal with contact initiated between teachers and parents. It aims to minimize interaction as far as possible, to reject it or transfer it to another party. Insofar as there is interaction it is given a formal, non-binding character.

This kind of strategy reduces pressures and involvement that the teacher cannot respond to and decreases the uncertainty caused by the parents' intervention. The teacher can also block the parents' demands by passing them on to a higher authority, such as the principal or the local authority, or "down", to psychologists or counselors, for example. Parents who are referred to counselors discover on the one hand that the aim of the meeting with the counselor is, among other things, to bring their approach closer to that of the school, and on the other hand they can receive support in their difficulties in exchange for a certain degree of agreement (Goldring, 1989).

4.5.6 Patterns of working agreements resulting from the negotiations between teachers and parents

The agreements, or the working consensus (Hargreaves, 1972), reached in negotiations between teachers and parents are influenced by the relative professional and personal power of each side and their approach to the work.

Agreement between teachers and parents concerning the definitions of situation on which they are trying to establish such an agreement inevitably involves each participant's awareness and acceptance of the other's roles and aims. This refers to agreement concerning the way in which each will treat the other and the creation of rules to standardize action. To reach a high level of agreement, the definitions of situation that each one intends or strives to fulfil must be similar. In the absence of similar definitions of situation, the sides may reach a working consensus, marked by a low level of accord; in this case, the interaction is subject to stress and conflict that can lead to one or more of the participants leaving. This may terminate the agreement or force the participants to reach some kind of compromise. Hence, in everyday life it is necessary to reach a compromise in most interactions concerning the definition of situation by one or all of the participants. To reach a consensus on the definition of situation each participant has to consider the demands of the others.

The teachers and parents can perform their roles in the way they choose in order to achieve their goals and needs only to the extent that the others allow them to do so. All the participants must reach some degree of satisfaction with the interaction. The satisfaction of each one depends on the satisfaction of the others; if one individual behaves in a way that suits the expectations of the other, the other will let him/her fulfill his/her aims, this individual will be grateful and will reward the other with a wide variety of rewards. But if an individual provokes conflicts with the other, the other will be angry and will withhold the rewards. Therefore, the teachers and parents have good reasons to try and please each other, because the satisfaction of the latter will help the former to achieve his/her aims. Thus, the teachers and parents have to reach some kind of agreement concerning the definition of the situation, an agreement that is a compromise between "having it all my way" and "having it all your way". The agreement is reached in terms of maximization of satisfaction of each of the participants. Since none of them is prepared to compromise on less than the

maximum, the agreement is reached through a process of negotiations between the teachers and parents.

Smilansky and associates (1986) noted that teachers who involve parents as active partners in agreements and as sharing responsibility in problem solving do this not in order to be helped by them in finding an educational solution to the problem, but in order to punish the child or remove responsibility from the school, or perhaps even to prepare the ground for transferring the child to another school. On the other hand, teachers who do not involve the parents in taking responsibility for solving problems do this because the parents are not capable of coping with the problem in any case, and the proof is the child's present condition. Therefore they prefer to undertake the responsibility themselves and encourage the parents to believe that their child is in good hands and that the educational staff taking care of him/her know their job. Others take this approach in order to implant in the parents the feeling that nobody blames them for their child's problem and they (the parents) are accepted as they are. In other words, these teachers do not identify the child's difficulties with their failure as parents, and they are confident that the parents do the best they can. This way ensures real cooperation and mutual trust. At all events, working agreements of these kinds prevent disputes and ensure that a considerable part of the teacher's demands will be met and that relations with the parents will be good. When the parents discover that their bargaining position is not strong enough, they are generally ready to concede.

4.6 Conclusion

Unlike a research framework that is guided by structural approaches, this work does not deal with the school organization, along with its teachers, students and their parents, as a miniature society whose members are subject to its constraints. The emphasis here is on a view of the school as an interpersonal interactive system in a given cultural and organizational context. The actors in this system, for our purposes teachers and parents, are constantly involved in negotiating definitions of situation and working agreements, and out of these negotiations institutional patterns are formed. People create society unceasingly through action and through the meaning they impute to it or construct for it. From this point of view the classic concepts of "teacher" and "parent" do not constitute a hierarchy of authority but are dependent

variables of the interaction (Silverman, 1993). In other words, it is meaningless to measure them as if they were independent of the human awareness that defines, creates and changes them.

As stated, one of the central concepts in this work is definitions of situation (Hargreaves, 1972; Schutz, 1984). For our purposes, both teachers and parents have an interest in influencing the definitions of situation of their partners in the negotiations and take actions to steer the others' impressions of the situation (Goffman, 1971; Charon, 1989) to make them match the interests of those who steer them. They do this by presenting themselves in a way they consider effective for manipulating the others' impressions of them. In fact, these actions are guided by strategies and negotiations in order to reach a working agreement and a shared definition of the situation.

The social process described here is the central concern of this work. The actors - teachers and parents, in this case - are largely free to choose a line of action that is not subject to the constraints of the organization, and through their shared awareness they take part in defining the social structure. In other words, teachers and parents have personal and collective purposes. To achieve these purposes they have to decide on a strategy (Woods, 1980a, 1980b, 1983) and then negotiate with others, who in turn have personal and collective purposes, on the definition of the shared social reality. In fact, the teachers and parents have considerable power to contribute through their negotiations to the definition of the social reality being formed between them in the micro-political field by exerting pressures to achieve their interests not only by virtue of their socio-economic strength, but also by their political power (Ball, 1981; Hargreaves, 1991).

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN

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CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH SETTING AND DESIGN

Since this work is concerned with examining an interaction process in a micro-social reality, as mentioned in chapter 4, I used the qualitative research method of constructivist interpretation (Guba & Lincoln, 1998). This approach, which is based on action theories, seeks to obtain its findings from reality as it unfolds, and therefore does not pose prior hypotheses and does not impose a structure on reality like the quantitative method. Therefore, I sought intimate contact with the data, which I acquired through direct uninvolved and non-participant observation of the interactions between the subjects, and unstructured interviews with some of them (Woods, 1979, 1980a, 1980b; Kashti & Yosipovich, 1985; Arieli, 1989; Hilbert, 1992), which are some of the main research strategies of the qualitative approach. After collecting the data, when deciding on a suitable and effective way to organize the findings, I constructed the combined model described above in Chapter 4, based on the theoretical and research considerations described there.

5.1 Research setting

As stated in chapter 1, this study examined three junior high schools, which are referred to as schools A, B and C respectively. Junior high schools were chosen because this is a critical period in the students' school life, as the decisions made during this period determine the direction of their future studies. Therefore, parents at this stage may be fighting over the future of their children. I had no previous acquaintance with the schools and chose them at random. (All the junior high schools in Israel have the same basic structure and operate according to the Ministry of Education policies, based on principles of integration in education - see Introduction). The principals of the three schools gave me their permission orally, without need for

any correspondence on the subject, as is customary in Israel. All three schools are situated in one of the older towns in the center of Israel with a heterogeneous population of high, medium and low socio-economic and occupational status, similar to the composition of society at large in Israel. Thus, the population of these schools is representative of the general school population in state education in Israel.

The three junior high schools in this study are associated with three high schools which have an academic track and a technological track leading to matriculation and to school leaving certification. These junior high schools declare that they let the students and their parents share in choosing the track, but in fact the final decision is made by the school management. Parents conduct negotiations with the teachers over their children's achievements and their placement in tracks because they are aware of the selection processes that take place at the stage of transition from junior high school to high school. The parents know that these processes determine the child's placement in an academic or technological track in secondary education and are cognizant of the fact that this placement largely determines their children's future.

Table 5-1: Characteristics of the schools in the study

	School A	School B	School C
Date of foundation	1976	1980	1982
Number of teachers	48	45	49
Number of students	625	588	630

The three schools investigated appear to be quite similar: they were established within a short time of each other (some ten years after the introduction of the school reform program in 1968), the number of teachers is similar and the number of students is also alike. The schools' orientation and focus is on learning achievements, as declared in various ways in the school bulletins. In addition, they state their aims as giving the students a quality education designed to broaden their horizons. However, it is possible to discern differences between the schools with regard to the place of the students and their parents in the school. From conversations I had with teachers, I

received the impression that there were differences in orientation between the three schools and decided that it was worth examining these differences in order to see whether they would be likely to influence the subject of this research, namely the negotiations between teachers and parents on parents' day. Following are some of the teachers' remarks that led me to this decision:

In school A the two teachers investigated in this study stated that the school was characterized by the fact that it placed the student at the center. Teacher 1 said, "The school offers many social activities in order to improve the students' self image and strengthen their self confidence, and above all, so that they will enjoy coming to the school." Teacher 2 in the same school said, "It is important for the school to bring out the potential of every student by placing them at a level suitable to their abilities and also by helping them." In school B, the teacher said, "The school is highly structured and not very flexible. Students are allowed to take part in social activities as a reward for good behavior and therefore one doesn't see much creative activity on the part of the students and the number who take part in voluntary activities is very small." In school C, the teacher said, "In the social activities the Students' Council has a central place; it represents the school and its members receive a lot of attention, such as close contact with the administration, with representatives of the Ministry of Education and the City Council. All the students take part in social activities arranged jointly by the administration and the Students Council."

The different emphases expressed in these remarks are also reflected in the school bulletins, therefore it seemed appropriate to analyze these differences in more detail. Among other things, the question arose as to how the school's attitude toward the pupils affected the place it gave to the parents in the school system and its attitude toward the parents in general. Therefore, I chose to examine these two dimensions:

1. Extra-curricular activities provided for the students
2. The parents' place in the school system.

5.1.1 Extra-curricular activities provided for the students

The schools enrich the curricula with additional activities beyond the formal framework, each school in its own way, as the school bulletins indicate.

School A: *The school attaches great importance to education beyond the formal frameworks (which have great educational value in themselves). The student takes part in seminars and educational tours, theatrical performances, folklore evenings, visits to exhibitions. There are various extra-curricular courses as well as the following social frameworks: a school journalism club, a students' council at the class and general level, various committees. The student is the focus of all the educational activity, and there are various levels of learning in a variety of subjects (Bulletin A, Hebrew text in appendix 2).*

School B: *The school conducts planned and structured social ideological activities. Each student takes part in a project with social-ideological content which lasts throughout the school year. At the end of the year he joins with others in writing an end of year paper. In addition there are the usual cultural activities: visits to the theater, concerts, films (Bulletin B, Hebrew text in appendix 2).*

School C: *The school has many social educational activities, such as extra-curricular courses, trips, professional tours, visits to theaters, cinemas, and so forth. In addition, the students' council shares in determining the character of the school (Bulletin C, Hebrew text in appendix 4).*

The impression derived from these statements is that schools A and C are fairly open and flexible towards the students, while school B is more rigid, allowing the student less freedom of expression. School A, for example, states it attaches great importance to education beyond the formal frameworks, lists the greatest variety of activities of the three schools in its bulletin and indicates that the student is the focus of all educational activity. The fact that the students' council in School C has a participatory role in "determining the character of the school" may point to the valuing of students' views. In contrast, School B appears to be more rigid. Activities are planned and structured along social ideological lines and the bulletin does not give the impression of student participation in this process. The use of the phrase "social ideological" reinforces this impression. This school has developed a mechanism to

control the informal education, for example, the students have to write an end of year paper about their activities.

Table 5-2 sums up the extra-curricular activities in the three schools based on the bulletins and on interviews with the teachers and principals.

Table 5-2: Extra-curricular activities in the three schools

Category	School A	School B	School C
Social frameworks	Students' council operates committees which deal with various subjects, e.g., planning trips & events, adopting community institutions such as clubs for senior citizens. The committees sit once a week.	Students' council deals with subjects such as <i>bar-mitzvah</i> ceremonies, end-of-year ceremonies & celebration of religious holidays. The council meets once a month.	Students' council deals with subjects such as planning trips, events and writing school newspaper. The council meets once a week.
Student activities	Journalism club records all the activities of the students' council.	Road safety club, cinema study club. Both meet once a week.	Art club, dance club. Both meet once a week.
Extra-curricular courses, seminars & projects	Students attend lectures on political issues, given by politicians representing Various parties. Community singing evenings. Both these activities are conducted twice a year.	Students take part in road safety project, week-long seminar 3 times a year. At the end of the year students write an end-of year summary.	Students participate twice yearly in a seminar on the history of Israel and the Jewish people, with emphasis on co-existence between religious and secular, and between Arabs and Jews.
Tours & trips	2-day trip in Israel once a year. 1-day study tour once a year relating to subjects studied that year, e.g., history of Israel in ancient and modern times.	2-day trip once a year.	2-day trip once a year. 1-day study tour relating to subjects studied that year, e.g., history of Israel in ancient and modern times.
Artistic & cultural visits & performances	Students attend a play, a dance performance, a musical performance and visit an art exhibition during the year.	Students attend 1 play, 1 film and 1 concert during the year.	Students attend 2 plays and 1 film, a dance performance or a musical performance concert, once a year.

5.1.2 The parents' place in the school system of each school

As can be seen below, the school bulletins indicate that each of the three schools allocates a different place to the students' parents. The references to the parents in the bulletins are quoted fully below.

School A: *The home-room teacher will report to the parents on the student's scholastic achievements.*

A student who is absent from a lesson or a school day will bring a note from his parents or from a doctor explaining the reason for his absence. Parent-teacher meetings of the entire year group are initiated by the school principal at the beginning of the school year. Parents are invited to initiate other meetings and will meet with a favorable response. Parent-teacher meetings at the class level are set jointly by the parents' committees and the class teachers.

One representative of each parents' committee will join the parents' council. The parents' council elects a secretariat and a chairman. The representatives of the parents' committee secretariat take part in all the discussions of the pedagogic council, apart from discussions evaluating their students, their achievements and so forth. (Bulletin A, Hebrew text in appendix 2)

School B: *Students are released (apart from sickness) only in response to a request from home.*

Clarification with parents after being noted for bad behavior and many disciplinary problems and late arrivals.

Regular contacts with the students' parents. (Bulletin B, Hebrew text in appendix 3)

School C: *You are able to study thanks to the efforts of your parents, the school administration, its teachers and staff, who are prepared to help you to succeed. We hope you will appreciate this. (Bulletin C, Hebrew text in appendix 4)*

Based on these bulletins, as well as on interviews with the teachers and principals, categories were determined for comparing the schools' attitudes toward the parents, and more specifically, the place of the parents in each school. The categories chosen were types of contact, structures to facilitate contact and the schools' expectations of the parents. Table 5-3 on the next page summarizes the parents' place in the school as measured by these categories.

The three schools allocate to the parents a fairly central role in a custodial-supervisory capacity: regular supervision of the student and his/her functioning in terms of learning and behavior. In all three schools the parents are responsible for the students' regular attendance and are required to provide written confirmation and explanation of every absence. Similarly, they have to come to the school for parents' day and receive a report of their child's situation in learning and in the social sphere.

We will now discuss what distinguishes between the schools in this domain, using the "closed door", "open door" and "balanced approach" (see also section 1.5.3). Although school B mentions "regular contacts with students' parents", real participation seems to be only in matters of student discipline. No involvement in student learning is mentioned. In school C the "parents' efforts" are mentioned without any explanation. Schools B and C appear to function according to the "closed door" approach, as can be seen from the structures to facilitate contacts with the parents - the school seeks minimal involvement of parents in the pedagogic and social domains. In contrast, school A acts more according to the "balanced approach" in its relations with the parent population. This approach states that intimate or distant relations between the school and the population of parents should be coordinated for optimal achievement of the school's educational aims (Litwak & Meyer, 1974). School A tries to bridge the distance between itself and the parents by involving them in the social aspects of their children's education, if only at the declarative level, but not in the domain of studies. In the latter domain it closes its gates. ("Parents are invited to initiate other meetings and will meet with a favorable response".) Thus a kind of "state of balance" is achieved between the "open door" approach, that permits involvement in all domains, and the "closed door" approach, which prevents involvement in any domain.

Table 5-3: The place of the parents in each school

	School A	School B	School C
1. TYPES OF CONTACT 1.1 Initiated by the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding the student • Regarding meetings 	<p>On parents' days, the parents receive reports on their children's achievements and behavior.</p> <p>The school initiates the parent-teacher meetings.</p>	<p>The school maintains regular contact with the parents and keeps them informed of the student's situation in studies and social aspects.</p> <p>The school does not initiate meetings with parents beyond the annual parent-teacher meetings.</p> <p>The school does not encourage the parents to initiate meetings.</p>	<p>The school reports to the parents on the student's situation on parents' days and during the year if the student's situation deteriorates.</p> <p>The school does not initiate meetings with parents.</p> <p>The parents initiate class meetings to discuss social and learning problems.</p>
1.2 Initiated by the parents and encouraged by the school	<p>The parents are invited to initiate other parent-teacher meetings, such as class meetings in coordination with the parents of the class and the home-room teachers, to deal with social and disciplinary issues.</p>	<p>A student who is absent from school due to illness will bring a note from the doctor; a student who is absent without a medical reason will bring a note from the parents.</p> <p>The school involves the parents only after three warnings on the subject of discipline.</p>	<p>A student who is absent because of illness will bring a note from the doctor; a student who is absent for another reason will bring a note from the parents.</p> <p>The school believes that cooperation between the home and the school will help the student to succeed scholastically and socially, and expects the student to appreciate this.</p>
1.3 Required from parents by the school <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absences • Behavior problems 	<p>A student who is absent from a lesson or a school day will bring a note from the parents or from a doctor stating the reason for the absence.</p> <p>The school deals with problems at the first stage and if the problem continues, it is reported to the parents.</p>		

	School A	School B	School C
2. STRUCTURES TO FACILITATE CONTACT			
2.1 Parents' committees	Class meetings on shared responsibility of home-room teacher and parents.	Class meetings on parents' responsibility.	Class meetings on parents' responsibility.
2.2 Parents' council	One representative from each class parents' committee joins the school parents' council.	One representative from each class parents' committee joins the school parents' council.	One representative from each class parents' committee joins the school parents' council.
• Representation			
• Office bearers	The parents' council elects its secretary and chairperson.	The parents' council elects its secretary and chairperson.	The parents' council elects its secretary and chairperson.
• Functions and powers	The parents share in planning trips, visits to the theater, dance and musical performances and also in the planning of parties and other events.	The parents share in planning trips, visits to the theater and musical performances and in planning parties and other events. At the meetings of the parents' council, which is under the responsibility of the principal and the chairperson, parents can raise pedagogic issues, such as disciplinary problems or problems concerning the school equipment and the students' welfare.	The parents share in planning trips, visits to the theater and cinema and in planning parties and other events. At the meetings of the parents' council, which is under the responsibility of the principal and the chairperson, parents can raise pedagogic issues, such as disciplinary problems or problems concerning the school equipment and the students' welfare.
2.3. Pedagogic council	Representatives of the parents take part in all discussions of the pedagogic council. In addition to questions of discipline and social problems, they also discuss issues concerning the students' welfare.	The school does not allow the parents to take part in the pedagogic council.	The school does not allow the parents to take part in the pedagogic council.

3. SCHOOL'S EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS	School A	School B	School C
3.1 Explanation for students' absences	The student's parents will give him/her a note from themselves or from a doctor explaining the reason for the absence.	The parents are responsible for providing a written explanation or a doctor's authorization for the student's absence.	The parents are responsible for providing a written explanation or a doctor's authorization for the student's absence.
3.2 Explanation before releasing the student	If the absence is known in advance the parent has to provide the student with authorization.	If the absence is known in advance the parents have to send a written request.	If the absence is known in advance the parents have to send a written request.
3.3 Parents' responsibility for good behavior	The parent is regularly informed of behavior problems and is invited to the school.	If behavior problems become severe the school seeks the parents' cooperation and sends for them to discuss the problem.	If behavior problems become severe the school seeks the parents' cooperation and sends for them to discuss the problem.
3.4 Students' achievements	The school expects the parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly and do their homework in order to help their progress in school.	The school expects the parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly and do their homework in order to help their progress in school.	The school expects the parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly and do their homework in order to help their progress in school.

5.2 The research population and sample

The research was conducted over a period of two years (1998-2000). It was necessary to continue it for two years because the number of parents' days in one year was not sufficient to saturate the data from the observations conducted at these meetings. The research in the first year focused on four heterogeneous home-room classes of 8th grade students (aged 14), and in the second year on the same group of students then in their 9th grade (aged 15).

The initial research population consisted of four teachers and 80 parents – 71 mothers and 9 fathers - selected by the teachers on the basis of their agreement to participate in the research. The overwhelming proportion of mothers is common in Israel, perhaps due to the traditional Jewish perception that the children's education is the mother's concern. Forty percent of these parents had completed secondary education, 20% tertiary, and 40% primary or partial secondary education. They lived in different neighborhoods according to their socio-economic status. The lower middle class parents were a group who had moved to the area of the schools from a poorer neighborhood and improved their social status.

Of these 80 parents, 20 had children in each of the classes investigated in the study. For purposes of greater ease and efficiency in maintaining regular contact with the parents, the numbers were reduced and five parents were chosen to represent each class. Care was taken to preserve the representation of socio-economic levels as well as the children's educational levels according to their placement in streams.

The group of teachers included four home-room teachers, that is class teachers, who also teach specific subjects:

In school A - two teachers, who will be called teacher 1 and teacher 2.

In school B - one teacher, who will be called teacher 3.

In school C - one teacher, who will be called teacher 4.

The teachers' characteristics are summarized in Table 5-4. As the table shows, the four teachers are similar in qualifications and in length of service in the profession.

They were selected on the basis of their position as grade 8 and 9 teachers who would be teaching the same class over the two-year period of observations. Home-room teachers were chosen because they are the ones who are in direct contact with the parents and with the other teachers in the school, and they are the ones who meet with the parents and report to them on their child's progress. All the home-room

teachers in the schools investigated were women. Before choosing these four teachers, I ascertained that they would continue with the same classes from the 8th grade to the 9th grade, in order to ensure continuity (this was also the reason for choosing two home-room teachers from the same school). Four was considered an optimal number for observations and interviews over a period of two years.

Table 5-4: Characteristics of the teachers involved in the research

Teacher	School	Age	Education	Experience
Teacher 1	A	36 (approx.)	BA	10 years
Teacher 2	A	30 (approx.)	BA	6 years
Teacher 3	B	30 (approx.)	BA	6 years
Teacher 4	C	35 (approx.)	BA	10 years

5.3 Stages of the research

The observation and interview techniques answered the needs of this work because the research focused on small details in everyday activity, in micro-social situations, and not in broad macro-social processes for which there are other more suitable methods of investigation. The observations were conducted in the following stages:

5.3.1 Pilot stage

At the beginning of the school year - in September 1998 - I began with the 8th grade, with a series of observations of the four teachers and 80 parents (20 in each class) in the three junior high schools. These observations were conducted on two parents' days that took place during the year, with the consent of the parents and teachers. From the data collected at these meetings I sought to discover patterns in the parents' and teachers' actions and their deviation from these patterns, as a basis for the second stage of the research.

5.3.2 Unguided observations

The observations of the original 80 parents were conducted on the third and last parents' day, which took place in the first year of this study. At this stage I began to focus on characteristic patterns that emerged in the interactions between teachers and parents. I endeavored not merely to identify and describe these patterns, but to ascribe meanings to the actions observed.

At the end of this stage I attempted to classify the patterns of action according to general categories derived from the research model discussed in chapter 4, namely goals, socio-economic resources, teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other, definitions of situation, strategies as part of the negotiation process and the final product - working agreements (see also Figure 4-4). In order to reduce bias as far as possible, at this stage I held preliminary interviews with the four teachers and with five parents in each class who revealed clear-cut patterns of action. These clear-cut patterns were identified as characteristic of the interactions between teachers and parents at the pilot stage and at the stage of unguided observations. In the interviews with the parents they told me about their educational background and place of residence, which served me as an indication of their socio-economic status.

5.3.3 Guided observations

This stage took place in the second year (1999-2000) and focused on two parents' days in the course of the year. The observations focused on the 20 parents identified in stage b and the four teachers who taught the class in the previous year and the current year. At this stage I examined how far the patterns observed in the previous year recurred in the second year. Where patterns recurred I attempted to impute meanings and intentions to them. In the case of behaviors that revealed change from the previous patterns, I examined the deviation and its meaning. During this stage I again conducted open-ended interviews with the four teachers and 20 parents. In these interviews I asked questions concerning the patterns that had emerged in the observations, in order to confirm and expand the information I had accumulated and to receive their interpretation of their actions, and thus clarify how far my interpretation of the meanings of the meetings for the participants matched the meanings they ascribed to these meetings.

5.4 Data recording

The research method used in this study was one commonly used in interpretive-constructivist research, that is, direct observation as a major means of data collection. The observation method permits the researcher access to information and to social situations as they are occurring that cannot be obtained through structured questionnaires, either because the researcher cannot forecast everything that may happen, or because the information revealed to him/her is not known to the subjects or they tend not to expose it for various reasons.

In addition to the observations, I held interviews and conversations with the actors (teachers and parents) in order to understand the meaning they ascribed to their actions. Both parents and teachers were interviewed individually due to the personal nature of their interactions, on the assumption that they would feel freer to express themselves openly and fully without the presence of others. The observations and interviews were recorded by taking notes in the course of the interactions, as well as by audiotape. Tape recording was employed mainly in the personal interviews with the teachers and parents, when they were expected to relate to my questions more extensively and it was important for me to be attentive to them rather than be busy writing while they were talking, and thus possibly lose contact with the interviewee. To complete the information I needed I analyzed documentary material such as circulars distributed by management, notices on bulletin boards and so forth.

At the beginning of the research the teachers explained to the parents that I was conducting research on parents' days. The parents included in the research were those who agreed to take part. When the time came for interviews and observations the parents in question were again asked for their permission. For example, when I sought permission to be present at their meetings with teachers on parents' days, the parents agreed without hesitation, and gave me permission to take notes and/or tape the conversations.

My presence in the schools while the situations investigated were actually taking place, from early evening until late at night, enabled me to absorb the atmosphere of the events. In addition to the observations and interviews, I "spied" around in order to comprehend as many details as possible, such as the details of the school building, the look of the corridors, the classrooms, the blackboard — which served as the scenery

for the interactions observed between teachers and parents. I studied the spirit of the place, its procedures and customs, and scrutinized relevant documents such as regulations and bulletins. The unguided observations enabled me to locate the recurrent patterns, and to tentatively classify them into general categories such as goals, resources, strategies, negotiations of teachers and parents. This categorization was validated in the interviews with parents and teachers.

After much deliberation as to the procedure I should use in the interviews (in stage b), where, whether to tape them or take notes, whom to interview first – teachers or parents, I chose an approach designed to reduce anxiety as much as possible. I began with the teachers, a group with whom I felt more confident, as I am very familiar with the teaching profession and the school organization. With their permission, I tape-recorded the information, which yielded copious transcripts. The atmosphere during the interviews was generally relaxed and the teachers spoke freely and easily. From time to time they expressed surprise at a question: “I’ve never thought of that”.

In the interviews with the parents, the question of how to record the information - by taking notes or audio recording - did not bother them. In the end I used both methods in all the interviews. It was usually the mothers who were interviewed, though in some cases the fathers were present. On the whole they spoke freely, and each interview lasted about two hours, as I found that after two hours they began to repeat themselves and show signs of tiring. The questions asked in these interviews (after the unguided observations) were designed to confirm the patterns identified in the observations, which served as the basis for classification of the interactions between teachers and parents.

In the interviews after the guided observations, I focused my questions on the patterns previously identified in an attempt to verify these patterns and complete the information that arose in the guided observations, thus enabling me to see to what extent my interpretation matched the parents’ and teachers’ interpretations of their interactions on parents’ days. The questions I asked the teachers and parents were based on the research questions, and whenever I felt that the discussion was straying too far off the subject I returned to ask about a specific aspect of the research questions.

5.5 Data analysis

All the data collected from the observations and interviews were recorded in writing or by audiotape and later transcribed. The data were classified into the following categories: goals, resources, perceptions, definitions of situation, strategies and working agreements, based on the theoretical models of Strauss (1978), Hargreaves (1972) and the combined model that I formulated for this study.

5.6 Logistics

The main questions in this context were finding a suitable place and time for the interviews with teachers and parents. After I telephoned the teachers and asked to interview them, weeks passed until a suitable date was found. Whether this was because of the teachers' work load or because of anxiety concerning the interview was not clear to me. The interviews took place in cafes and in the teachers' homes, whichever was more convenient to them, at the end of their work day. I took care not to seek interviews with the teachers during working hours so as not to disrupt their day.

When the time came for interviews with the parents, the question again arose as to how and where to hold the interviews. Two of the teachers suggested that I should contact the parents directly by telephone, and the other two wanted to ask for their agreement before I contacted them. Later the fourth teacher changed her mind and chose the direct approach -- that I should simply call the parents myself.

In the phone conversation I reminded them of my research aims, and the parents agreed to be interviewed. The parents thought that the interviews should definitely take place in their homes, perhaps because being in one's own territory decreases anxiety. The interviews took place in the evening, at the end of their working day.

5.7 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

In this research I acted as observer and interviewer and was present in the research field for a long time, which permitted me to gather a great deal of data over a continuous period and adapt the scientific categories to the living reality of the

research population. In the process, I included a number of strategies and approaches to enhance the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the study:

Lincoln and Guba (1985, 301-305), discussing activities designed to ensure that credible findings will be produced, refer to three such activities: prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation.

- a. Prolonged engagement: the investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes, such as learning the “culture”, testing for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the self or of the respondent, and building trust. I spent two years in the research field, during which time I was in regular contact with the schools, teachers and parents.
- b. Persistent observation: the purpose of persistent observation is to identify those characteristics and elements in the situation that are most relevant to the issue being pursued and focusing on them in detail. The observations were conducted in a natural setting, the school, in order to gather as many data as possible which would reflect the reality of the participants’ lives. During the stage of guided observations I focused on the 20 parents identified previously and the four teachers who taught the class in the previous year and the current year. At this stage I examined how far the patterns observed in the previous year recurred in the second year, and where patterns recurred I attempted to impute meanings and intentions to them.
- c. Triangulation: this technique is used in order to improve the probability that findings and impressions will be found credible. Denzin (1978) refers to four different modes of triangulation: use of multiple sources, methods, investigators and theories. Three of these four are relevant to the present study: use of different sources, methods and theories. For the purpose of cross-checking of sources I examined alternative conclusions and explanations of the data obtained. For instance, I described to colleagues interactions between teachers and parents that I had witnessed, in order to see if they arrived at a different interpretation of the events. This permitted me to see the similarities and differences in the interpretations given by researchers and their subjects to the same phenomena, as seen in the literature review and in the models used in the research procedure. With regard to methods, the techniques used included observations and interviews. Three theoretical approaches provided the major guidelines in this research, those of Hargreaves, Goffman and Strauss. Hargreaves (1972, 1975),

studying teacher-student interactions in the classroom, emphasized the concepts “definition of situation”, “perception of the other” and “working agreements”. Goffman’s approach (1971) viewed the world as a stage and referred to “presentation of self” as a major aspect in human interactions. Strauss (1978) described human interactions in terms of negotiations.

In addition, it is important to mention the following points:

- a. Language used. In the interviews, which are important tools for collecting data, I took care to formulate my questions as closely as possible to the linguistic register of the participants. Some examples of questions were: “Does the meeting on parents’ days help to achieve shared goals of teachers and parents?” “What do you think are the parents’ resources that empower them in their negotiations with teachers over their child’s study and social situation at school?” (This question was also addressed to the teachers in interviews with them). I expressed interest in the parents and clarified to them the concepts used in my study, such as parent involvement in the school, school-based curriculum, goals, strategies, working agreements and so forth.

Although the study was conducted in Hebrew, this work was written in English from the beginning, including the theoretical parts, the data reporting, analysis and conclusions. In this way the likelihood of misinterpretations or limitations in understanding was reduced considerably.

- b. No claim to generalization. I do not presume to see this study as a generalization, because in human reality it is possible at most to reach only partial generalizations, since every situation contains several realities and the actors in it have different backgrounds and diverse motivations. I myself, as a researcher examining the same phenomenon at different times may reach different conclusions. Therefore, it is important that any conclusion derived from my study be regarded as a hypothesis for further examination, and that readers of this thesis decide how they relate to the findings on the basis of their personal experience.

Despite the above measures, there still remained some problems to overcome, as will be discussed below.

5.8 Limitations and ethical issues

- a. My influence as a researcher. My actual presence in the research field might have led me to deduce answers from the participants' responses or determine prior attitudes and assumptions based on my own experience in the teaching profession instead of letting the data collected in the field speak for themselves. To overcome this I chose three schools with which I was not familiar, and spent a long time in each of them collecting as many data as possible. I also tested myself constantly to ensure that I was preserving some degree of distance and separating my role in the research from my role in the educational system, without going to the extreme of severing myself, which might lead to indifference or even hostility on the part of the informants and thus prejudice the reporting. In recording my observations and interviews I took care to separate factual descriptions from remarks and impressions of either the interviewee or myself.
- b. Data obtained from certain informants only. This could have produced distortions and therefore I constantly re-evaluated the reliability of the data with the help of questions for clarification.
- c. The influence of the selection processes. It is not possible to observe every event and every activity at every site; therefore I selected particular settings and interactions to investigate and chose to focus on the parents' days and on the population of teachers and parents.
- d. Changes in the research group. In order to avoid problems that might stem from changes in the size and composition of the research group, I ensured in advance by receiving the participants' verbal consent that the research population would be available for me to investigate for two years.
- e. Mistakes in determining the contexts of the phenomenon investigated. After considering all the above, I was still concerned that distortions might occur in determining the contexts within the phenomenon and about the possibility of different explanations for the same phenomenon. Therefore I attempted to verify any assumption I made about the participants in order to find the real contexts of the phenomenon (see f below).
- f. Validation for the purpose of verification. In order to verify or reject findings I collected as much evidence as possible in the form of observations and interviews,

as well as printed material such as the school bulletins, circulars to the parents, and so forth.

To sum up, I attempted to create conditions of reliable data collection in an atmosphere of trust. I spent extended periods of time in the research field and presented myself in a language understood by the participants. I also assured the interviewees that I would respect the confidentiality of everything said to me in the interviews. It is important to note that my entrance into the research field was approved verbally by the principals, teachers and parents (in Israel it is not customary to request written permission for educational research, and the participants' oral agreement is normally considered adequate). Moreover, my presence was welcomed both by teachers and parents. This perhaps stems from the importance of the subject in their eyes, as well as from the open Israeli character.

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I described the characteristics of the schools in which the research was conducted, as well as the characteristics of the teachers and parents who participated in the study. The stages of the research were described in detail, explaining the methods of data collection and data analysis, paying attention to questions of validity, reliability and trustworthiness and relating also to ethical issues and limitations of the research.

In the following chapters I will describe my entrance into the research field in order to study at close hand the goals of the teachers and parents, the resources and perceptions that they brought to their meetings with each other, and the definitions of situation derived from these goals, resources and perceptions. I will also relate to the strategies and patterns of action that were revealed in their mutual negotiations.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

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CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter will discuss the parents' and teachers' goals, resources, perceptions of each other, definitions of situation, strategies and working agreements as revealed in the actions and interactions that take place during meetings on parents' days. The questions to be examined were laid out in the research questions in section 4.4 and summarized in Figure 4-4, and the procedure followed appears in chapter 5.

The chapter will start with an examination of the teachers' goals as reflected in the observations and verified in the interviews and then go on to view the parents' goals. From here we will go on to look at the teachers' and parents' resources. Both sides have resources which they present or emphasize in the course of the negotiations and they use the information they possess about the other side according to the "awareness context" in the sense referred to by Glazer and Strauss (1964, 1967). This concept expresses those contents in the actors' awareness that are relevant for them in the course of the action and interaction, as we will see in the research findings presented here (summarized in the tables in section 6.7) and as described in Figure 4-4, throughout the process which continues from entering upon interaction with the other, through the definitions of situation, the forming of a strategy, to the performance of behaviors derived from this strategy. The actors, teachers and parents, enter negotiations leading to the formation of working agreements which are influenced by the differential resources each side brings to the meeting (Hargreaves et al., 1975). In the course of my observations and interviews in the schools I did not find substantial differences between the three schools with regard to goals, resources, perceptions and definitions of situation. Therefore the analysis in this chapter does not distinguish between the schools in this regard. However, differences were found between the schools with regard to strategies and working agreements reached between teachers and parents, and these are recorded and discussed in the analysis.

6.1 Goals of teachers and parents as reflected in their mutual negotiations

The teacher-parent meetings observed were routine events similar to those that take place in all Israeli schools (parents' days). The instruction to convene the meeting comes from the school principal. However, as my observations show, the actors (teachers and parents) did not behave as subordinates in an organization, following its orders and fulfilling its requirements in a purely formal manner. Rather, they appeared to be guided by goals that they had adopted quite autonomously – whether before the meetings or in the course of them – and that reflected their diverse interests. These goals may be divided into three categories: pedagogic, therapeutic and survival, as we saw in depth in section 4.5.1. They derived from the participants' awareness context of the situation on the basis of their knowledge and beliefs about each other. Based on their awareness context, teachers and parents defined the social situation in which they acted (see Figure 4-4). From their definition of situation they chose a line of action that would be most effective in achieving their goals.

These goals, as expressed in the actions observed in the parents' day meetings, will be presented below.

6.1.1 Teachers' goals

In the observations and interviews with the teachers, the goals that emerged in the pedagogic sphere were to report on the students' situation at school, emphasizing the students' difficulties in studies and behavioral problems and asking the parents for help or advising them. In the therapeutic sphere the goals were to reassure the parents and help to solve problems by referring them to the counselor. In the sphere of survival it appeared that the teachers' goal was to shift responsibility to the students' parents.

6.1.1.1 *Pedagogic goals*

As seen in the observations, the teachers' interactions with the parents relate to the students' weak points rather than their strong points, hence the message conveyed to the parents about their children is not a balanced one (Carter, 1996).

a. Focus on students' problems

According to the parents from both high and low socio-economic levels, when they are invited to the school the teachers focus mainly on the children's failures in studies and inappropriate behavior. The teachers talk to them about all kinds of adjustment problems of the children, the most important ones being **learning difficulties, homework and disciplinary problems.**

Children's failure in studies, referred to in terms of low grades, was often attributed to a lack of hard work, either in class or on the homework.

Mother: *I see that he's not doing so well.*

Teacher: *History – weak, he needs to work harder. It's not a question of understanding, there are problems, he has low grades, doesn't do anything. Your son will have a severe warning in his school report if he doesn't improve his grades.*

Teacher: *She's capable, but she doesn't work enough. Her grades are low because she simply doesn't do her homework.*

Mother: *It's not like elementary school. Here they have to do homework and it's not so easy.*

Sometimes the discussions around low grades did not spell out the reasons for the grades so clearly or did not hint that a different strategy was needed.

Mother: *I wanted to telephone you but he wouldn't let me.*

Teacher: *It's your right to do so, you are his mother. It is important to me that you stay in touch, this is his future. There are some teachers of different subjects who particularly want to see you. A change is badly needed and it depends on you.*

Mother: *I'm worried about his English.*

Teacher: *It's serious, there has been some slight progress but not enough. It's a sad situation, low grades.*

In some of the above cases the teacher placed the responsibility for the child's difficulties directly on the parent. Her words conveyed a tone of threat as to what would occur if the mother did not help the child to improve.

Also with regard to **inappropriate behavior**, teachers hinted that discipline was the parents' responsibility, even if there had been sufficient progress in learning.

Mother: *He thinks about other things instead of his lessons.*

Teacher: *Your son has begun to be disruptive and it is important for him to listen and not be busy with other things.*

Mother: *Has he made any progress in studies?*

Teacher: *I have a problem with your son. Although there has been a change, he has accumulated five bad behavior points. He has made progress in studies but there are disciplinary problems.*

In the first case above both mother and teacher focused in the behavior problem. However, in the second case the mother's goal was to discuss academic progress, whereas the teacher's goal was to discuss the disciplinary problem.

b. Clarification of the student's situation

In my interviews with the four teachers, the **clarification of the student's situation** was a major pedagogic goal. The teachers believed that the school could help the parents to know their children from points of view that were not always visible at home but might be revealed in the context of the school. Equipped with this knowledge, the teachers believed, the parents would be in a better position to take responsibility for their children. Teachers said:

On the parents' day we have to convey information about the child, give the parents our evaluation of the students' grades in order to get to the root of the problems.

It is important to explain the child's situation to the parents, so that they will not complain afterwards that they did not know.

On parents' day it is important for the parents to know everything so that they can take responsibility for their children

In some cases, the teachers **asked the parents for pedagogic help** for the students, sometimes by referring them to the subject teacher, but mainly by suggesting that they send their children to private teachers for extra tuition. The parents can help their children at home or send them to a private teacher, focusing on the child's special difficulties and thus helping the teacher, who has little time to devote to individual help for each child. In addition, the many hours that the child spends at home in the afternoon and evening permit learning in "small doses" at times that are convenient for both parent and child. Beyond this, the parents' interest in the subject matter that the child is learning may contribute positively to the pupil's motivation to study.

The parent's compliance with the teacher's request for help is then interpreted by the teacher as the response of a caring parent taking up her responsibility to prevent her child from dropping out.

Mother: *The problem is mathematics, always has been.*

Teacher: *If the problem is mathematics, I have a teacher whom I can recommend.*

Your daughter can improve, it's not too late. I can suggest two things. Go to the mathematics teacher, and show that you care and that you take it seriously. Ask what area your daughter has difficulty with. And the other thing is to take a private tutor. I have an excellent teacher whom I always recommend. Tell him I sent you.

In the interviews, the teachers confirmed this pattern of recommending private tuition, although they were aware of the distinction that this created between poor and affluent families. Additional references to the need for pedagogic (or psychological) help appear in the section on survival goals (6.1.1.3).

The parents' physical help is important to me mainly in giving private lessons. If students have difficulties in a certain subject, I ask the parents to provide a private teacher, or help the children themselves, so that they will not finish the term with bad grades. I do this a lot, because I know from

experience that when students help each other it is inconsistent and ineffective, and it doesn't work in the end. Years of experience have taught me that in mathematics, for example, if you don't take a private teacher you don't achieve anything. I don't just speak vaguely, I tell the parents that the child needs to make efforts. But there are parents whose socio-economic status is really low and they don't even ask us for help. Here in the school we offer them supplementary study frameworks in English and mathematics in order to prevent them dropping out.

In this interview the teacher referred to four sources of help, which may be divided according to where responsibility is placed: on the home or on the school. In the former case the help in studies may be given by the parents themselves or by private teachers hired by the parents. However, these solutions are perhaps relevant only to parents of established socio-economic status, whose educational level permits them to help their children and/or whose financial standing enables them to pay for a private tutor. The other two sources of help relate directly to the school. One of these, help given by other students, is not effective according to the teachers and therefore not recommended. The other one, help provided by the school in supplementary study frameworks, is offered mainly to parents of low socio-economic status. The danger of this kind of support is that while it helps the students to advance in their studies, it might also help to perpetuate the social gap.

An important point that should be mentioned here is that a large part of the help mentioned by the teacher is the help that the school expects from the parents in solving problems that may be seen as stemming from the school's failure, namely the students' poor achievements. The teacher said: *Years of experience have taught me that in mathematics, for example, if you don't take a private teacher you don't achieve anything.* Here she appears to take for granted that without outside help the school cannot achieve its basic aim of educating the students. At the same time, the school's aim of closing the social and educational gap does play a part, in the fact that students of parents who cannot afford private tuition are offered supplementary tuition in the school.

The pedagogic goals, as they emerged from the observations and the interviews with the teachers, were expressed mainly in explaining and clarifying the student's learning and behavioral problems to the parent, focusing on the parents' responsibility

for resolving these problems. The pattern that emerged was the teachers' shifting of responsibility to the parents.

6.1.1.2 Therapeutic goals

The salient therapeutic goal that emerged was to calm the parents by **sending them and their children for counseling**, thus giving them the feeling that their problems would be dealt with by someone who could help them. The teachers scarcely intervened in the family context in matters concerning therapy. Again and again teachers told parents: *Speak to the counselor. Go to the counselor.* And in interviews they explained that in family matters they referred parents to the counselor. The following illustrates this pattern:

Mother: *There are problems at home, perhaps that's why he's not doing so well at school.*

Teacher: *As regards the family problem, come to the school one morning and speak to the counselor.*

Mother: *I took him to the psychologist and he was diagnosed.*

Teacher: *Go to the counselor, she deals with referrals, although we work together.*

In the interviews the teachers confirmed this observed behavior, remarking that they referred therapeutic problems related to family matters and emotional problems to the school counselor. The reason they gave for this was lack of time and suitable conditions.

Parents' day is not a place for heart-to-heart talks. There are parents waiting outside, there is a lot of pressure on me, and it would not be serious to talk about the family problems in these circumstances. Sometimes there's no choice; if the subject comes up we talk about it if it's not too complicated. But if it's a complicated therapeutic problem I refer them to the counselor.

The therapeutic part does not usually come up on parents' day because there are many people waiting and each parent is allocated barely ten minutes. If necessary, I refer them to the counselor.

In the excerpts above there is some indication of a willingness on the teacher's part to be involved in helping to solve the problem if the circumstances are appropriate. Others appear to have a more "distanced" approach, as is also evident from the use of words like "deliberately" and "intervene".

I don't intervene in the family context but refer them to the counselor or a therapeutic service such as the family counseling service.

I deliberately don't go into family matters.

The teachers confirmed that their major therapeutic goal was to refer the parent to the school counselor or appropriate counseling service. As we saw in the pedagogic goals, where the teachers tended to shift the responsibility to the parents, here, in the case of emotional problems, the solution they found was to refer the parent to a counselor, again shifting the responsibility away from themselves. This bears more than a suggestion of survival goals.

6.1.1.3 Survival goals

The major survival goals that emerged were **reduction of the teachers' pedagogic responsibility** and **shifting it** to other factors, such as the students' characteristics, the parents and other teachers. In the researcher's presence the teachers did not readily acknowledge that some of their actions were determined by the wish to survive. However, for their interactions with the parents, framed by a definite time limit, teachers tended to defer problems by referral to other actors for confirmation. Parents were referred to subject teachers for confirmation of the problem or the solution the home-room teacher proposed.

A teacher was observed saying to parents:

It's worthwhile talking to the subject teacher to find out if the private tutor is doing a good job. Perhaps your daughter needs two lessons a week, perhaps you should encourage her more.

With me your son is all right, but there are problems with other teachers and you should speak to them.

One teacher referred the mother to her son as part of an explanation for achieving a therapeutic goal.

Ask your son about his homework. He has problems and that's why he referred him to the psychologists, something is bothering him.

Subtle blaming of parents for their children's problems appeared frequently during interactions. The following two excerpts illustrate this observation.

He has behavioral problems at school, how does he behave at home? You back him up about his absence from school.

Your son should apply himself to his studies more. It's a pity you didn't come to the parents' day, I understand you were abroad.

Perhaps the teachers' observed avoidance of praising the children to the parents stemmed from the fear of committing themselves, so that the parents would not blame them later, saying, "You said he was making progress", or "You misled us", or "You yourself said that he is a good boy, so what happened?"

The interviews with the teachers also indicated that their behavior was guided by survival actions, even to the extent of getting the parents to sign a statement that they had received full information about the child's grades and their situation at school, thus absolving both the teacher and the school of all blame for the students' failure. This is aptly described by one of the teachers:

I'm not apologizing, but with some students you feel that you have done everything you can; you have invited them, spoken to them, they promised, and nothing happened. And then you say, I've tried everything possible, now I wash my hands of it. I also get the parents to sign that they know that their child has not fulfilled the requirements. In this way I don't take responsibility for their success in studies, and even if a child who has ability fails, it's not my fault. Sometimes there are situations where the child needs help and I try to involve the parents, to persuade them to take a private tutor. Sometimes the teacher is to blame for a student's failure, but the teacher will never admit it.

To sum up, it emerges from the observations and interviews in all three schools that alongside the goals that guide the teachers in their interactions with the parents – pedagogic and therapeutic goals whose purpose focuses on the students - there are also survival actions for the teacher's own needs (Woods, 1984; Denscombe, 1985). Teachers want to “survive”, to continue in their daily work, to hold on in face of their students, colleagues and the parents, regardless of status differences, and it may be that in many cases pedagogic and therapeutic goals are combined with survival goals.

6.1.2 Parents' goals

The parents' actions that were observed can be divided into the following categories: requesting information in order to understand the child's situation, discussing difficulties connected with the child's education, asking for help in school and family matters, limiting their own areas of responsibility by clarifying their expectations of the school and reducing the danger of the child's rejection by the school. These categories can also be interpreted in terms of pedagogic, therapeutic and survival goals. It is important to note that although the parents' goals focused on demands relating to scholastic matters, I observed a pattern of restraint in expressing these demands, apparently for fear of angering the teacher and thus jeopardizing the child's continued career at the school.

6.1.2.1 Pedagogic and therapeutic goals

Parents see the role of the school not only as teaching and improving their child's learning achievements but also as dealing with therapeutic matters such as the students' emotional problems or problems related to the family. The parents regard the pedagogic and therapeutic aspects as intertwined and expect the school to deal with both aspects, while the teachers tend to distinguish between the two and confine their involvement to pedagogic aspects.

a. Identifying the student's problem and discussing difficulties

In the observations parents were heard to say things that were designed to learn more about their child's study situation or to discuss their own difficulties with their children's education. In approaching the teacher, parents of different social classes used different utterances.

Parents of lower social status tended to express themselves in **short, vague utterances** in requesting information in order to understand their children's situation, discuss difficulties in their education and ask for help both in pedagogic and therapeutic matters:

She needs to be put on the right track.

English is a problem

Together with the request for help, parents also expressed confusion as to how the child arrived at this situation:

I don't understand what is happening with her.

She was a good student in primary school.

Some utterances reflected veiled criticism of the school and the teachers:

She works hard.

She really does study.

The parents' attempt to defend their child also expresses survival goals on the part of the parents (see 6.1.2.2).

The short, vague utterance reflects conflict, apparently related to the parent's wish both to reflect the child's problem and to hide it from a teacher whose organizational power might damage the child's career; a parent of low socio-economic status has no tools with which to fight such a teacher.

Middle and upper class parents used a pattern of **clear, detailed utterances** in requesting help in learning and family matters, thus reflecting either pedagogic or therapeutic goals or both. The parents revealed more self confidence and knew how to express their demands, as is illustrated by the excerpt below. The parent demonstrated a pedagogic goal by relating her initiative in arranging to meet the physics teacher before the parents' day to discuss the child's problem, and did not wait for the teacher to raise the problem and refer them to the physics teacher.

We arranged to talk to the physics teacher. We like to do that before the parents' day. Our son's last grade was 85, I don't understand how the teacher works out the average! He told me that if my son improved his grade would be corrected.

Parents also referred to therapeutic goals and voiced the expectation that teachers would also deal with the children's emotional difficulties.

You know that he develops slowly and it's good when the teacher encourages him because it helps him to make better use of his potential.

The clear, detailed utterance is unambivalent and yet it contains a hint of clever manipulation, as in the excerpts quoted above: *He told me that if my son improved his grade would be corrected.* And: *It's good when the teacher encourages him because it helps him to make better use of his potential.*

Both types of utterances by parents from different social backgrounds served for similar goals. In the first place parents wanted to identify their children's problems. In the way they expressed themselves, there was also indirectly a request for help. This is further elaborated below.

b. Request for help

The parents' request for help appeared in a variety of forms, sometimes in the form of a statement expressing helplessness or inability to cope, while in other cases the request was expressed outright, sometimes even as a demand.

Outright demands were used by parents to pursue both pedagogic and therapeutic goals. Pedagogic goals included recruiting the teacher to find a private tutor for the student.

Get her a good mathematics and physics teacher.

In other cases, the parent instructed the teacher to intervene actively.

I want my daughter to move to a different grouping.

Parents furthermore assigned the teacher a **mediating role** between themselves and another teacher.

It's important that you [as her home-room teacher] speak to the English teacher.

Parents' expectations of teachers acting as mediators extended beyond pedagogic goals. In the last example above, the parent also sought the teacher's **therapeutic assistance** in mediating with the child.

The teacher picks on her and she's tired of it, that's why her grades are going down; advise her what to do.

In other instances the therapeutic element dominated, where the parent requested the teacher's help in mediating with the child or another family member:

She has problems, she needs help, we have communication problems with her. I'm asking you, as her teacher, to report to my daughter on her studies as well as to me.

I've tried talking, to find out what happened to him, but he said it's not my business. But he's my son, perhaps you can speak to him.

Requests for help with other family members also occurred.

Perhaps you could speak to the father and calm him down, because he reacts without listening.

These outright and assertive requests, uttered by middle and upper class parents, indicate a higher self image, linked to social status, while the vague indirect requests in the two extracts quoted below indicate helplessness of parents with lower social status in face of the establishment.

*What can be done to improve his grades?
You know he is shy.*

Perhaps, by asking the teachers for help, the parents were already expressing survival goals. Expressions such as *She works hard* or *He is shy* tend to shift the responsibility onto the teacher or to some innate characteristic of the child.

6.1.2.2 *Survival goals*

There were also indications of other types of survival goals. Some parents tended to react to their children's failure at school with accusations. This tendency grew when the school emphasized the children's failures and also when the parents themselves perceived the situation as failure. However, although parents tended to accuse the school overtly or covertly, they were quite restrained in their language; this was discerned in the observations of parents of all social classes.

One pattern that emerged was to refer to the child's **good academic history** in primary school, implying that the school was failing in doing some things correctly.

In primary school she was excellent in algebra; now she fails over every little thing.

Other accusations related to **poor interpersonal relationships**.

What about the literature teacher? I know she has a bad opinion of my daughter.

Or the **teacher's abilities** were questioned.

The teacher doesn't explain properly.

In the researcher's interviews with the parents they also complained of **inadequate functioning of the school** as a reason for their children's problems.

There is a lot of absenteeism of teachers in the school, and that's why the students miss lessons.

We [all the parents] should get together and write a letter to the principal.

These interviews confirmed furthermore that the major survival goals of parents were not only to shift responsibility and blame to the school, but also to seek information from the teacher. Both of these will be discussed in more detail.

a. Shifting responsibility and blame

Sometimes the parents tended to shift the blame to the teachers, the school or the organization of the curriculum. This approach was found more among middle class parents, although it also appeared in interviews with lower class parents in a somewhat different form.

Middle class parents tended to view the education of their children as a shared responsibility between the parents and the school. They portrayed themselves as "good" parents, having their children's well-being as priority. On the other hand, teachers were portrayed as the "failing" partners not fulfilling their side of the educational "contract".

If there is a problem, I expect the teachers to inform me in advance [“good” parent] and not to wait for parents’ day. I think that the parents should bring up the children properly at home and the teacher should follow it up [shared responsibility], but this doesn’t always work. The teachers choose the easy way out [“failing” partner] – to send for the parents and report to them.

I don’t go there for fun, but to see how my daughter is doing at school. And if there are any learning problems or social problems, I try to solve them together [“good” parent] with the teacher and my daughter, because it is a shared responsibility [shared responsibility]. If there is a problem with the teachers [“failing” partner], like this year, for example, it is not my problem but the school’s. We parents complained and they dealt with it. It is my problem if my child is not always well-behaved, is cheeky or does not fulfil the requirements of the school.

In the second excerpt the parent also spells out the responsibilities of each side in the “contract” – the school needs to solve behavior problems of teachers (e.g., poor teaching, absenteeism), while the parents need to solve behavior problems of their children (e.g., lack of discipline).

Lower class parents were less explicit in their blame of the school, and less assertive in their interactions with the teachers. This was also the case in their interviews with the researcher.

If a lot of students failed the geography test, whose fault is it?

I think it is the teachers’ responsibility, but I don’t tell them that, because it would be like telling them they don’t do their job properly.

In the interviews with middle class parents, they tended to express their responsibility and acknowledge that their children might cause problems (academic and behavioral). Lower class parents, possibly because of less self confidence in understanding some of the complexities of child behavior, tended to focus on the good things their children had been doing, in other words a more defensive approach.

My daughter has a lot of responsibility, she is active in the students' council and in the youth movement. She devotes a lot to these things and doesn't have time to complete all her scholastic commitments.

Thus, middle class parents expressed their lack of faith in the school more freely and explicitly than did lower class parents, both in their interactions with the teachers and in the interviews.

b. Seeking information

Information seeking behavior was observed in almost all the interactions between parents and teachers. In the interviews, however, middle and upper class parents, the wealthier classes, were more inclined to articulate the information seeking approach as part of parenting. Their motivation for attending the parents' day meetings was more to demonstrate that they were "good" parents in control of the situation. They merely sought *authoritative information*, not for the purpose of requesting the teacher for help but for using **other avenues of seeking help**, which they perceived to be better.

It is important to me to go to the parents' day to hear how my daughter is doing in studies and socially, that's all. I don't think that the teacher can help me, because whatever she knows I know; we both work in the same field, and that will stop me from telling her anything bad about my daughter. However, if there is a specific problem I will talk to the counselor or the psychologist. I know who is most suitable.

It's important for me to receive authoritative information about my son's situation at school. I don't ask for help from the school, because I don't think the teacher can give anything outside the usual school hours. I need to do some things by myself, like getting help. I do what I think the child needs. The school lacks budgets and I can afford to pay for services that cost money. Not that I have too much money, but my order of priorities is based on our urgent needs.

In seeking information from the teacher, the parents themselves therefore tended to **withhold information** from teachers and to avoid discussing the child's problems with them.

I don't mention my son's problems, I go to listen.

I don't discuss difficulties or ask for help, because my child is against that.

In the interviews with parents it was evident that they used survival behavior patterns. They protected their children by withholding information from the teachers in order not to reveal their child's or their own weakness.

Their words also reveal a lack of trust in the teacher's ability to solve the problems they encounter with the child, and this feeling reinforces the parents' behavior pattern of avoidance of revealing information.

6.1.3 Summary: teachers' and parents' goals as reflected in their interactions

As we saw above, in their mutual interactions teachers and parents emphasized pedagogic, therapeutic and survival goals.

The teachers' emphasis on pedagogic goals was expressed in the issues they raised, such as difficulties encountered by the students in the course of their studies, problems with homework and discipline. They expressed therapeutic goals in referring children for counseling in the case of family problems or personal problems of the child. Survival goals were manifested by tactics designed to reduce their own responsibility and shift it to the parents, for example, in the case of disciplinary problems, or by suggesting private tuition and referring the parent to other teachers.

The parents' emphasis on pedagogic goals was expressed in the subjects they raised, such as seeking information regarding their child's situation in learning and behavior problems. They expressed therapeutic goals by requesting help in personal and family matters. Survival goals were expressed in seeking information on the child's situation in order to find a solution, often blaming the school for their children's failure. This accusation was articulated more vaguely and indirectly by

lower class parents, while middle and upper class parents, who possessed more power and self confidence, tended to state their criticism more clearly.

6.2 Teachers' and parents' resources as reflected in their negotiations

In the interactions observed the teacher and the parent functioned as the actor and the other, in the sense described by Goffman (1971) in his work on presentation of self in everyday life (see chapter 4, section 4.5.2). Each side had different real or fictitious resources that they considered worthwhile to present or emphasize in the course of their negotiations and which impacted on the course of the interaction.

6.2.1 Teachers' resources

The teachers' resources may be divided into three categories: their professional authority, their bureaucratic authority and their knowledge about the parents, following the categories identified by Noy (1984) in discussing the major sources of teachers' power (see section 4.5.2.1)

6.2.1.1 *The teachers' professional authority*

The teachers possess knowledge, professional experience that is recognized in the community, academic degrees and teaching diplomas. Their professional knowledge and experience have two aspects: they are educated in the behavioral sciences and pedagogy, but also in the subjects they teach. Even if they are not considered experts in adolescent psychology and in their subjects, they undeniably possess the status of being knowledgeable in these areas. Only in rare circumstances, when the partner to their negotiations is a known expert in the behavioral sciences or in one of the subjects they teach, might the power they derive from their professional knowledge be called into question (see parents' resources, section 6.2.2).

In answer to a mother who said of her son, *No-one can know him like I do*, the teacher summoned her **professional training**, which provided her with psychological and pedagogic tools.

Mother: *Yes, you are the teacher, but he is my son, I have lived with him all these years, and with all due respect to you, no-one can know him like I do. You need to be patient with him, a person who is patient with him can achieve almost anything.*

Teacher: *I have every respect for you, but as a mother you look at your son's problems subjectively, and that's natural. To understand what is happening with him you need psychological and pedagogic tools, that's what we teachers are here for. What is needed here is perspective, understanding, a little distance and a lot of knowledge.*

Sometimes, when teachers could not call upon their sources of authority - pedagogy and knowledge of the subject - they tended to focus on their **authority in an area where the parent was not considered an authority**. Thus, in replying to a mother who was a psychologist, a teacher said:

I know that you understand in psychological terms what is happening with your daughter, perhaps better than me. You are a professional. But to make real progress in the subject I teach, she needs characteristics and abilities that I'm not sure she has.

And to a father who was a scientist, the teacher said:

Mr. A, perhaps I'm not such an expert in the subject, but believe me, I know how to teach it, and that is where the problem lies with your daughter.

Teachers thus referred to their professional authority when they felt threatened by parents of higher professional status, adapting their response each time to their interlocutor. As we saw above, if the parent emphasized her status as a parent, the teacher referred to her pedagogic and psychological training. When the parent came equipped with a professional specialization such as psychology or science, the teacher emphasized her teaching skills.

6.2.1.2 *The teachers' bureaucratic authority.*

The teachers possess bureaucratic authority by virtue of their position (status and role) in the school structure. The school is an organizational structure in which the teachers work, and they are able to use the system by virtue of their status as teachers and their knowledge of the school procedures, which gives them power vis-a-vis the parents (see section 4.5.2.1).

In their interactions with the parents, teachers used the **organizational structure** of the school to back up their decisions. This could also be seen as a means of delineating territory and ensuring that parents do not overstep in intervening in matters which teachers see as their sole domain (see also 2.1 and subsections).

Look, Mrs. B, in this school I decide how much time we devote to homework in my subject, not the mother.

Ron is a very good boy and I admire his wit and sense of humor. I would like him as a friend to my own son. But this is a school and when his witty remarks constantly disrupt the lesson I have to decide, and sometimes it's either the lesson or Ron. In these circumstances I have no choice but to use my authority as a teacher. I hope you understand, I don't have much choice.

In an interview the latter teacher described to the researcher how she reinforced her power by enlisting the **backing of higher authorities** such as the school management, supervisory structures and the teachers' union.

Sometimes when the parents come with their whims they drive me crazy. A mother asks me why I don't respect the note she sent with her daughter. Parents can't just give their children permission to stay away from school with all kinds of silly excuses and expect the teacher not to react. Let her complain; I rely on the principal and on the supervisor. And if not, there is the teachers' union. So just let that mother try anything with me.

Although the teacher demonstrated self confidence and authority in facing the parents, her last remarks also revealed insecurity and awareness of a threat to her survival: *Let her complain... Just let that mother try anything with me.* She seemed to be testing her own strength.

In the interviews teachers also relied on their positive **contribution to the system** to justify their bureaucratic authority.

I'm able not just to advise these parents but to give them real help – in the supplementary lessons that the school provides. And I also take part in placing the students in the various groupings in mathematics, English and science.

Thus, their bureaucratic authority serves the teachers as a resource in situations where they feel threatened or insecure in their interactions with the parents.

6.2.1.3 *The teachers' knowledge about the parents and their children*

Knowledge concerns the world, humanity and knowledge itself. A teacher can have influence over parents if she possesses information about their children, such as their grades in a test that the teacher uses in making decisions regarding those children. The teacher is largely free in deciding on the relevance of the information in her interactions with parents. The parents, too, can have influence over the teacher if they possess information about the school or about the teacher that they can pass on to those in charge of administration (see section 6.2.2.3). This can constitute an alternative means of influence in the parents' direct confrontation with the teachers.

The teachers' knowledge goes beyond information about the children and often includes items relating to the parents: their socio-economic situation and sometimes the state of their relationships, between the parents themselves and between the parents and their children.

In the extracts below, the teachers refer to matters relating to the children's previous school record, psychological difficulties and even to personal issues between the parents, such as the father's absence from home.

Mother: *I don't understand why he succeeds in all the other subjects, and only fails in this, in your subject.*

Teacher: *So far as I understand, he didn't do too well in my subject in elementary school. [previous school record]*

Mother: *He usually doesn't cause trouble.*

Teacher: *I understand that he was in therapy. Why did you stop it? [psychological difficulties]*

Mother: *Since he was moved to the C group he has been very dispirited.*

Teacher: *But perhaps that is because of the problems you have been having at home lately. Forgive me for intervening, but it is partly my job. I mean your husband's extended trip abroad. [personal issues]*

In an interview with the researcher the latter teacher said, in justification of what appeared to be a gross intervention in the parents' private affairs:

Parents of higher socio-economic status defend their children and I have to devote more efforts to make them my partners.

As we have seen, the teachers apparently make use of their various resources to achieve their goals. Sometimes their use of their professional authority, their role in the bureaucratic structure, or their knowledge about the students and their parents is designed to serve pedagogic or therapeutic goals, but sometimes it serves for their own survival as teachers in the school organization or as an advantage that gives them power in their struggle with the parents.

6.2.2 Parents' resources

The parents' resources, as revealed in the observations and interviews, can be classified into three categories: their status as parents, their knowledge of the education system and about specific teachers, and their socio-economic status (Lacey, 1970; Sharp & Green, 1975; Becker, 1976).

6.2.2.1 *The parents' status as parents*

It emerged from the interviews that parents saw the formal role of the parent as a powerful resource. As one of the parents said, relating to their status according to the **family stability and values**:

A child from a stable, happy family with decent values, norms and behavior will presumably function in a positive way, both at home and outside.

Parents who possessed this power used it when they negotiated for what they expected from their child and from the school, emphasizing another resource they had, which was **knowledge about the child**:

I know my child's behavior and ability better than the teacher.

And, in a meeting observed with a teacher (section 6.2.1.1), a mother said:

Yes, you are the teacher, but he is my son, I have lived with him all these years, and with all due respect to you, no-one can know him like I do.

However, in such cases, the teachers sometimes called upon their professional authority to overrule the parents' advantage based on their status as parents, as in the teacher's reply to the mother quoted above:

To understand... you need psychological and pedagogic tools, that's what we teachers are here for.

6.2.2.2 *The parents' knowledge of the education system and the operation of schools*

A powerful resource possessed by the parents is knowledge they have about teachers in general and about the specific school in particular. Different types of knowledge of what the school expects were identified as resources in the observations and may be summed up as follows:

a. Knowledge about the teaching methods used in the school and the pedagogic rationale behind them

Teacher: *We have new, modern teaching methods to help the students to advance.*

Parent: *I have heard of the teaching methods used in the school. I am not used to them, but it is the teachers' job to choose the best for our children.*

In the extract above the parent demonstrated awareness of the fact that the school had introduced new teaching methods while disclaiming any concrete knowledge of them. Parents' direct and indirect concession to teachers that they did not have detailed knowledge about pedagogical innovations may appear as a weakness, giving the teachers an opening to bring in more powerful resources from their side. However, parents used their basic awareness of new directions as leverage to put pressure on the teachers to fulfil their expectations.

b. Knowledge of the school's requirements of the students

Teacher: *What do you do to help your son?*

Parent: *I know that it is important to sit for the matriculation exams, and therefore I encourage my son all the time to study although that is the school's job.*

High-status school-leaving examinations such as the matriculation examinations put a lot of pressure on teachers to help their students perform adequately as these examination results are often used as a public barometer of how well a school and its teachers are doing their job.

c. Understanding teachers' expectations of parents

I think the teachers should be responsible for the children's studies, but I don't tell them that, because it would be like telling them that they aren't good, and I take responsibility for myself, as the teachers expect me to.

In their interactions with the teachers parents revealed their understanding of what was relevant to the teachers; what the teacher thought they should do or shouldn't do, how they should behave towards the child and towards the teacher, in other words, playing the role of the good parent in a way that matched the teacher's definitions. At the same time, some were also hinting to the teacher that s/he was not a good teacher.

Teacher: *Depend on me that I know my job.*

Parent: *It is your job. I'm prepared to help if necessary, but not to intervene.*

In the examples quoted above, we can see clearly that the parents made use of the knowledge they possessed about the school, its teaching methods and the teachers' expectations and demands in order to clarify to the teacher their own expectations as to what the school and the teacher should do.

6.2.2.3 *The parents' socio-economic status*

There is a prevalent assumption in Israel that parents have social power that stems from their socio-economic status and their social prestige, which derives, among other things, from their occupational status. In order to examine this assumption, the parents were asked in the personal interviews how they would divide the parent population into groups. They mentioned various characteristics, but not economic status or education. Their answers were: caring – not caring; cynical, aggressive – polite; involved, initiating – uninvolved; bitter and demanding – easy-going and accepting; concerned – unconcerned, indifferent; pressuring – not pressuring; violent and tough – gentle and understanding. When they were asked directly if education or economic status was a characteristic that distinguished between parents, they said certainly not.

In the two extracts below, parents of low socio-economic status argued that more highly educated parents were sometimes indifferent to their children's needs, while others of low economic status sometimes invested more in their children's education.

Because there are educated parents who are indifferent and contribute nothing of their knowledge to the child; on the contrary, they don't respect the school and don't care that their children will have to go out to work if

they don't study. And there are educated parents who take private tutors but that doesn't change the student's achievements.

There are some parents with low economic status who invest a great deal in their children's education. They are concerned and encourage the child to study. And wealthy parents can employ a private teacher but it doesn't always help if the child has no motivation and doesn't get the right encouragement at home.

Some parents also referred to their own social movement from lower to higher socio-economic status and the effect that it had on their children.

I grew up in a poor family and my parents weren't educated and I did well at school. Today I belong to a higher economic status and my husband and I are educated and the child has no motivation to study, so what is the effect of status and education?

Parents of medium to high socio-economic status also asserted that socio-economic status was not the major factor, emphasizing the importance of parenting skills and personal qualities.

Economic status and education are not an influential factor either on the child or on the teacher's attitude to the child, because there are educated parents of high status who treat their children badly and beat them, or are busy with other things. What is important is not status but the way you treat the child.

It's true that life is easier when you have money, but we have never misused our status, and we have always attached more importance to personal qualities than to status.

Regardless of status, parents emphasized that money could not buy good outcomes for a child or improve achievements. They did, however, believe that parent support and motivation of the child were major driving factors.

It emerged from the interviews that the parents did not see their socio-economic status as a resource or a tool to be used in advancing their interests in the school. And in the observations, no instances were found of parents using their socio-economic status as a resource in their interactions with teachers.

The teachers supported this view in their interviews and claimed not to see socio-economic status as a characteristic resource.

I don't ask the parents about their socio-economic status.

However, some of the observations revealed a slightly different picture, namely how an awareness of the parents' socio-economic background permeates the process of interaction, as will be discussed below.

Parents give too much to their children and are prepared to buy them whatever equipment they need to help them in their studies even if it is hard for them financially.

It also appears that teachers had different experiences with parents with regard to parents' pressurizing them on the grounds of their higher socio-economic status as a resource.

I haven't met parents who used their connections to achieve goals.

There are parents who ask me if I can use my connections for them regardless of their status.

Although both parents and teachers denied that socio-economic status was a relevant factor in the interactions between them, expressions used by both teachers and parents testified to the presence of this factor. One teacher, for example, said:

I know that you understand in psychological terms what is happening with your daughter... You are a professional.

And to a father who was a scientist:

Mr. A, perhaps I'm not such an expert in the subject, but....

Parents with a higher socio-economic background also hinted to this effect in their interviews with the researcher (in subsection 6.1.2.2):

I don't think that the teacher can help me, because whatever she knows I know... However, if there is a specific problem I will talk to the counselor or the psychologist. I know who is most suitable.

The school lacks budgets and I can afford to pay for services that cost money.

Perhaps the parents' and teachers' denial of the relevance of the socio-economic factor stems from the expectation that each person will be treated as an equal in a modern democratic society, particularly students and their parents in the state education system, which professes to educate according to these norms. And in Israel there is no legitimization, at least on the formal level, for discrimination on a socio-economic basis.

6.2.3 Summary: teachers' and parents' resources as a means of achieving their goals

Teachers and parents use the resources at their disposal to further their interests during their mutual negotiations.

The teachers' resources - professional and bureaucratic authority, knowledge about the parents and their children - help them to achieve their pedagogic, therapeutic and survival goals. Their use of these resources is mainly revealed through arrogant behavior and power struggles with the parents.

The parents' use of their resources - their status as parents and the knowledge they possess about the education system and about the school - is done mainly through hints, as was seen in the observations. Parents appear not to use socio-economic status as a resource often.

Although parents may have a critical attitude toward teachers, they use various resources and relate to the social structure as to a mobile world in which you have to play the game regardless of your private feelings if you want to get on in their world.

In interviews with them they allowed themselves to speak more openly, although not on the subject of socio-economic status. This may be explained by denial or by their wish not to hurt other parents. In the process of these negotiations the parents strive to increase their influence on decision making processes with regard to their children's future, which is largely influenced by their academic and social achievements.

6.3 Teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other

The teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other are determined by their awareness context (Glazer & Strauss, 1964), as discussed at length in chapter 4, in the models of Hargreaves (section 4.1) and Strauss (4.2) and the combined model (4.4). These perceptions, in turn, help to form the actors' definition of the situation.

The observations and the interviews indicated a wealth and variety of teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other. The variety undoubtedly stems from the differences in the worlds of both sides. Teacher A, for example, perceives mother A differently from the way teacher B perceives, or is likely to perceive, her. Similarly, mothers A and B may perceive teacher A in different ways. Nevertheless, fairly regular patterns of perception in two areas could be identified from the observations and interviews: the actor's (teacher's or parent's) perception of the other and the actor's perception of the other's perception of him/her (the actor).

6.3.1 Teachers' perceptions of the parents

The teachers' major perception that emerged was that parents often had **unrealistic expectations** with regard to their children's achievements and their ability to effect **inter-generational mobility**. Concerning inter-generational mobility, one teacher, for example, remarked:

They don't just want the child to succeed but to pull all the family up.

Parents' imbued belief in their children's ability led, according to teachers, to different kinds of behaviors and views. One of these is parents' inability to see and accept their children for what they are and even blaming the teachers for the child's disposition.

This may lead to unrealistic expectations from the school.

Most of the parents think that their child is a little genius, and the fact that he has not been discovered is the child's own fault, the parents' fault, but also our fault, the teachers'.

Another teacher's perception was that parents became irrational when their child's well-being at school was at stake. A teacher referred to the discrepancy between the parents' functioning as rational beings in their working life and their disproportionate expectations concerning their child's success at school.

You could see our main problem with the parents in a conversation I had with Gari's mother. You speak to people who are supposed to be rational, who take important and responsible decisions in their working life. But when it comes to their children they often lose their sense of proportion. What makes that mother think that a child who has failed in her English tests three or four times in succession is gifted at languages?

In the excerpt above mutual blaming was also implicit. This blaming can take on an even more explicit form, with parents doubting the validity of examination results.

Sometimes parents 'argue' with the school's recommendations, that are based on exams, in an attempt to get their children into a more attractive track.

The teachers perceived the parents as incapable of rational judgement when it came to their own children's ability, saying that the parents tended to blame the school for their child's lack of success, rather than any possible inability or failure to try on the part of the student (see also the upward displacement of blame in section 6.5.2.a). The teachers, on their side, did not appear to recognize the possibility of any lack of objective judgment on their part.

6.3.1.1 Teachers' perception of the parents' perception of them

The teachers believed that the parents often thought that they (the teachers) possessed resources (see previous section) that could help their children to advance more, but that they withheld their support. In other words, the teachers thought that the parents often saw them, the teachers, as **not fulfilling the parents' expectations**. The purpose of the meeting on parents' day (according to the teachers' perception of the parents' perception of them) was to reach a working agreement with the teacher based on pseudo-concord (see section 4.1 and Figure 4-4) between their interests (to help the children to advance) and the teacher's interests (to be "sparing" in letting the children advance).

One teacher described a typical situation of negotiation of context by referring to how parents attempted to achieve such agreements on parents' day, using aggressive bargaining methods more appropriate to other situations (e.g., trade).

Sometimes it's not a relevant discussion but simply bargaining. The mother uses pressure to get what she wants. She pressures me until I agree or throw her out of the room.

The above indicates a situation of discord where both the parent and the teacher lose face. The same teacher continued, describing the inner conflict of parents who might have liked to use similar aggressive methods, but were prevented from doing so by their own behavioral norms.

Refined mothers don't use pressure but they want to, and this conflict between wanting very much to use pressure and the cultural norm that says it's not nice to do so puts a strain on them and makes them feel uncomfortable in our discussion.

The following extract, on the other hand, illustrates a situation where pseudo-concord could be established, with both sides negotiating the context to come to a working agreement (see also 6.6 and sub-sections). Where discord leads both sides to be dissatisfied, pseudo-concord results in a more positive feeling.

One of the mothers informed me that she had come to parents' day but that would be my first and last meeting with her, because she is the teacher of a subject. I didn't want to confront her and I told her that if she didn't want to come I couldn't force her. We reached an agreement about her working with her son at home. There was a covert power struggle between us, but it ended in a draw and I came out of it with a good feeling.

In the teachers' eyes, the parents perceived them as not furthering their child's interests and thus it was necessary to put pressure on them. In this matter, the teachers did not appear to distinguish between parents from different socio-economic backgrounds.

6.3.2 Parents' perceptions of the teachers

Parents often perceived teachers as being **entrenched behind the authority** granted to them by virtue of their profession and their bureaucratic role.

Sometimes I feel that they are imprisoning the child, and I have to look for the opening of the tunnel.

This perception caused two opposite reactions. One group was overwhelmed by these resources that teachers brought to the situation, and thus felt helpless in their contacts with the school. Many parents tended to assume that in matters of education, teachers as professionals knew what was good for their children, and that they, the parents, had to trust them just as they trust other professionals in their special fields.

The meeting on parents' day is short. There are not many opportunities to exchange opinions. Sometimes the teacher knows the names and nothing more, I have no expectations because I know the teachers won't tell me anything new. I don't think the teacher is interested in me, she simply wants me to persuade my child that it is worthwhile for his sake and mine that he learn and function properly in the school.

I am invited to parents' day to clarify to the child and to myself what is required of him as a student at the school, not to get to know me and my child better. There's no time for that, and I'm not complaining, that's how the system works.

On the other hand, there were parents who were liable to **react to authority** in two ways. Some revolted, complained and attacked the school.

They are in favor of open discourse but when I contact them they get angry.

They say, if there's a problem come and talk to us. But if I do, they shout. You just have to put up with it...

Others tried to avoid contact with the school and its teachers because of their perception of teachers being arrogant and unwilling to listen and because of their fears of professional authority, which the system represented for them.

That teacher thinks she's better than anybody else. I don't really feel like going to the parents' days when there's clearly no chance of convincing her of anything. She knows. She decides.

In all the extracts in this section, the mothers' disappointment and despair regarding the possibility of any meaningful exchange with the teacher is evident. The parents' perception of the teachers stemmed partly from the organizational structure whereby regular times were set in advance for the parents without seeking their agreement, when the time allotted to each parent was usually short and the parents felt pressure that did not permit them to express themselves freely but simply to listen to the teacher's pronouncements.

6.3.2.1 Parents' perception of the teachers' perception of them

Sometimes the parents thought that the teachers saw them as having **unrealistic expectations** for their children (which is, in fact, the case sometimes, as we have seen above).

It's not pleasant to see that they think you're just a stubborn nuisance.

Other parents indicated that teachers saw them as using their best bargaining skills, referring explicitly to or hinting at their resources, to achieve these expectations through the discussion on parents' day. For example, one mother (a psychologist) complained that the teacher persisted in thinking that the mother used her professional status, which she thought was not the case:

That teacher thinks I mention my profession just to make an impression on her. That's not true. Perhaps my professional training helps me to see things even in the case of my own child, but I tell the teacher what I think, not what I want to achieve. But go talk to her. She keeps telling me, 'I know you are a professional'. There's no need for her to say that to me, I don't bring it up and there's no reason for her to.

The parents felt that the teachers' perception of them was based on lack of respect for their judgment with regard to their own children, which resulted in unrealistic expectations along with readiness to use all the resources at their disposal in order to promote the child's interests.

6.3.3 Summary: teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other as guiding their mutual interactions

It is evident from the observations and interviews that the relationships between teachers and parents are characterized by contrasts, contradictions and power struggles against the background of a potential incompatibility between the school system and the parents, regardless of social class differences. This incompatibility could lead to the formation of an educational gap that might affect the character of the relationships between teachers and parents and the extent to which they are open, flexible and willing to change attitudes in the course of their mutual contacts.

There is a marked difference between the style of discourse observed on parents' day and the style of speech used in the interviews by both parents and teachers. On parents' day both sides are somewhat cautious and calculated in expressing

themselves, while in the interviews they are more outspoken and blunt. This difference reflects the mistrust and power struggles existing between them.

In addition, the teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other shape their definitions of situation and the way in which they plan to act in the course of their mutual negotiations.

6.4 Teachers', parents' and the researcher's definitions of situation

The teachers' and parents' definitions of situation, as derived from their respective goals, resources and perceptions, are reflected in their opening words in interactions, as described at length in section 4.5.4 (Goffman, 1971; Hargreaves, 1972; Smith, 1997). As we will see below, the teachers describe a situation whereby they control the interaction with the parents in order to achieve maximum efficiency in attaining their goals. The parents, on their side, collaborate with this approach of the teachers in order to achieve the goal of furthering their children's interests (pseudo-concord).

6.4.1 Definitions of situation as described by teachers in interviews

Teachers described the meeting on parents' day, including the techniques they used to identify the students and to reassure the parents. The excerpts below also reflect the teachers' confidence that they were in control of the situation. All four teachers described their general approach when parents entered the classroom, but also referred to how they would handle specific situations (rituals), like "matching" the parent(s) with a particular child's name, approaching parents they knew better, making parents realize their unrealistic expectations. They also confirmed one of the pedagogic goals discussed in 6.1.1.1.a, namely focusing on the student's (academic) problems. The teachers also considered themselves flexible by adapting to each interaction differently, trying to convey a positive image of themselves.

I'm not worried about what the parents will say. In my meetings with them I think how to express the things I want to say to them. If the situation is serious I think how to tone it down and emphasize the positive side.

Generally the parent comes in and sits down and I identify her by name; that makes me feel good. If I'm not sure of the name I use techniques like taking out the list and saying where is your child, and the parent says it starts with K and that reminds me. If it's someone I know better I ask, "How are you?" Then the feeling is more comfortable and I begin at once to discuss the child's situation at school, referring mainly to failures.

In fact it works like a conveyor belt, every ten minutes another parent comes in. Mostly I begin with information about the child's studies and I suit the style and content of my speech to the parents. With some parents I tell them gently that their son is not a genius, because otherwise they will simply feel bad. And sometimes I try to say a lot of positive things and less negative ones. It's important to understand the parent, some of the conversations are relaxed and others are harsher.

We see in these examples that the teachers structured the situation. They were mainly concerned with the children's problems and failures, and they used techniques to make the parents feel more at ease, such as "identifying the child by name", creating a comfortable atmosphere, talking about problems in a gentle manner, in order to gain the parent's cooperation and create the impression of achieving concord.

6.4.2 Definitions of situation as described by parents in interviews

Parents of both high and low socio-economic status, in describing these meetings, admitted that they were not completely open with the teachers because they did not trust them. They came mainly to listen and did not volunteer to share information with the teacher.

Parents of low socio-economic status defined the situation as an interaction between unequals. This inequality can take on the form of a passive, listening parent who only speaks when seeking clarification (see also 6.1.1.1.b).

Usually I am passive. I introduce myself as the mother of... I listen to the grades. If something is not clear to me I ask.

I'm calm in every situation. I don't like to complain. The teachers are the professionals, they have the ability and knowledge. I can ask them for help and talk to my child at home.

One parent also likened the inequality between the two sides to that between a judge passing sentence on an accused, thus indirectly reflecting the definition of the situation as one that instilled fear.

I know the whole story by the way the teacher raises her eyebrows. Usually my son prepares me too. When the teacher reads the grades I feel uncomfortable, almost as if I am being accused.

In the case of parents of medium to high socio-economic status the situation was defined similarly as above by some parents, whereas others defined it as an interactive session between two sides, both with strong resources. In the interactions, parents with lower socio-economic status tended to accept the teacher's authority more readily than their counterparts with a higher status. Whereas parents with lower social status accepted the ability and knowledge of teachers as professionals, parents with more socio-economic resources did not, even if they shied away from directly confronting the teacher.

One parent of medium to high socio-economic status defined the situation as follows:

I go into the classroom and don't say anything. I want to listen. Mostly I agree with the teacher, like with a doctor. Usually I say that the teacher is right and not my child, but it's not true; it's just so that my son will not have an excuse not to study.

Parents with more socio-economic resources also defined the situation as one that created fear, but they had more courage to speak up if they disagreed.

I introduce myself not by name but as the mother of... I tremble inside as I ask how my daughter is doing at school. If I have any complaints against the teachers I express my opinion.

In addition, the following extract illustrates how a process of “socialization” of parents into the rituals of parents’ days can change their definition of situation over time.

When we were ‘new’ parents we were excited at meeting the teacher, we thought of her as an educational figure, our partner in educating the child. We were quite nervous, what shall I say to her, what will she say, should I be open with her, will that harm or help? Over the years we have got used to it and we are very confident, and we, too, have something to say.

Most of the parents’ definitions of situation indicate that they generally accepted the teachers’ definitions of the situation and were prepared to adapt themselves to the teachers’ expectations. The parents felt uncomfortable in territory that did not belong to them and they expressed their lack of self confidence in different ways, some of them totally submitting to the teachers’ domination and others accepting the fact that the teachers had the upper hand and that it was worth their while to cooperate with them.

The compatibility between definitions of situation, as described by all the parents, reflects pseudo-concord (see section 4.1 and Figure 4-4).

We have no choice, the teachers are the ones who decide, so we adapt ourselves to them [parent with a higher socio-economic status].

And more than that, we behave as the teachers expect us to behave [parent with a lower socio-economic status].

6.4.3 Metaphoric definition of situation through researcher observation

My observations of the environment in which parents’ days take place in all the schools led me to an interpretation by means of a theater metaphor (Goffman, 1971; see 4.5.4). The teacher’s “front” was the classroom where the teacher received the parents to discuss their child. In this area the principal actors were the teachers and the parents. The room itself and its furniture served as the decor. They spoiled the front.

The room was dimly lit, spreading a gloomy atmosphere; the desks were usually covered with graffiti. The teacher's desk was small and around it sat the teacher and the student's parents, with the lists of grades spread out on the desk. Behind the teacher's desk, the blackboard still bore the contents of the last lesson, and on some of the walls hung placards reflecting various subjects studied in the class. This meager scenery compelled the actors themselves to be at their best in order to impress the other side. They did this by wearing elegant clothes and using appropriate language, and it was evident that the parents also prepared for this meeting and took pains over their dress and speech.

The backstage for the parents was the corridor in which they waited their turn to enter the classroom, some of them smoking, knitting, laughing and even expressing their opinions about the teachers and the school. Here they expressed their true feelings and views on a variety of issues relevant to the schooling system. Some of their comments related to the physical inconvenience caused by parents' days.

They keep us sitting out here for hours in the cold, there aren't even any decent chairs.

How long does that teacher go on talking? I was invited for 6 p.m. and it's already 7.00.

Others related to the quality of the teachers.

The Bible teacher is a real disaster, why don't they fire him?

Parents further expressed their lack of trust by openly criticizing teachers' abilities.

Usually I say that the teacher is right and not my child, but it's not true.

For the teachers the backstage was their staffroom. One of the teachers took a break for five minutes and went to the staffroom to make herself a cup of tea, meanwhile talking with some of the other teachers. She expressed her frustration over

the parents' unrealistic expectations and the inconvenience parents' day caused for her personal life.

What pests some of the parents are! They think they understand what is good for the children. If their child can't take the matriculation exams with five units in mathematics, they try to persuade me that he can. I hope I'll get home in time to see the film on TV.

The meeting with the parents was described by the teachers as an event taking place at a speed that required them to adopt a highly structured strategy in their interviews. They were not only an actor, but also the director - they opened and closed the discussion, they structured the entire action of the play as in a theater (see also 6.4.1). Parents not only had a role of a "supporting" actor entering and exiting after a few minutes, but they were at the same time the "audience", sometimes as a passive recipient of the main actor's dialogue. Teachers adapted their behavior and speech to the revolving audience in order to achieve maximum effect, and in the breaks, when they met backstage, they discussed their impressions of the audience, like actors in a theater.

6.4.4 Summary: teachers' and parents' definitions of situation as reflected in their interactions

Despite the differences between the two sides in perceptions, roles, needs and strategies, the teachers and parents shared a collective purpose: the success of the students (see Figure 4-4). In the interviews with parents they indicated that they were prepared to cooperate with the teachers in order to arrive at a shared schema of action for this purpose. The teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other and of the situation led to a shared definition of their complementary roles in striving to advance the pupils. Thus, the teachers' definition of the situation was accepted by the parents, at least ostensibly, for instrumental purposes (pseudo-concord).

6.5 Teachers' and parents' strategies as reflected in the negotiation processes

So far we have seen that there is a difficulty in teacher-parent relations that stems from their relative power. The interaction between the teacher and the parent is usually based on exchange of resources, information and support that define the power relations between them. This potential exchange serves each side as a source of influence over the other side.

The question arises: how do teachers cope and respond to the parents' growing influence in the organizational context when they interact, discuss and negotiate to achieve their goals? In other words, what are the characteristics of interaction and strategies used by both sides to achieve their goals? (See figure 4-4.) As we will see, an important factor that influences the teachers' attitudes and behavior in their interactions with the parents is the character of the specific school, but not only are the teachers influenced by this factor but also the parents in their interactions with the teachers.

6.5.1. Teachers' strategies

The teachers who were investigated in this work were similar in terms of education, age, years of experience at work, biography and educational perspectives. The factor that distinguished between them was the character of the school, which was examined in two dimensions: its attitude to the students and its attitude to the parents. In chapter 5, school A was described as taking a "balanced approach" towards the parents. That is to say, it allowed penetration of parents into the school domain within pre-defined boundaries, unlike schools B and C, which were described as having a "closed door" approach towards the parents. In other words, the parents were not considered partners in the work of the school.

The character of the school determined the teachers' choice of strategy in their negotiations with the parents. These teachers had undertaken a set of commitments towards the school and acted according to the organizational norms of that particular school. The teachers' decisions and the process of bargaining, as they were expressed in the field, were arrived at through a cognitive process that could not be observed by the researcher, but what could be observed was the behavior that resulted from these decisions. And, based on the teachers' definitions of situation, the observer could

impute meanings or interpret their actions and then confirm or reject these meanings and interpretations through interviews with the actors after the event.

It could, indeed, be clearly seen in this study that the teachers used strategies that suited the character of the school and the parents adapted their response strategies to those of the teachers. The interpretation framework for these strategies was discussed in section 4.5.5 and distinguished between four different strategies: coalitional cooperation, cooptation, socialization and blocking.

6.5.1.1 Teachers' strategies in school A

In line with school A's "balanced approach", its teachers followed strategies that allowed for parents to feel part of the school system, namely coalitional cooperation and cooptation (see also 4.5.5.a & 4.5.5.b).

a. Coalitional cooperation (teacher 1)

Coalitions of teacher and parents were identified in the observations of various meetings between teacher 1 and parents, with three main teacher strategies emerging, namely **expressing solidarity**, **empathizing** and **offering to intervene** on behalf of the child.

Solidarity with the parent was expressed in order to persuade her to follow the suggestion for the benefit of the child, as we see in the two excerpts below:

Teacher: *You know that the history teacher is not good at talking to people, I've had problems with her too. Talk to her and tell her that your daughter tries hard but doesn't succeed, and ask her to explain to you how she should learn. At least she'll know that you care, and if you come on a rainy day that will make a big impression.*

Mother: *Everybody has problems, not just me.*

Teacher: *There's always one teacher like that. It's hard to teach someone of 40 how to behave. The principal has already reported it. She's rude to us as well; she can't cope with certain things. You're on the committee, get together with a few parents from the class and speak to the principal about the way*

that teacher treats you. And you might try speaking to the teacher herself, and telling her that your daughter was hurt. You can exaggerate and say that she doesn't sleep at night, show her that you care.

Mother: *Tomorrow I'll write a letter to the principal and collect signatures.*

From these excerpts it is clear that one of the ways in which the teacher solicited solidarity with the parent was to acknowledge the parent as a **caring parent**. This was implemented by a suggestion to **do something extraordinary** like coming on a rainy day, mobilizing parents or even lying to the teacher about the effect her conduct had on the child.

Another strategy of this teacher that emerges from the above is **revealing empathy** towards the parent. By revealing empathy, the teacher puts herself on a par with the parent, implying that she, too, has been a victim of the "problematic" teacher's behavior - *I've had problems with her too* and *She's rude to us as well*. This approach was confirmed by the teacher in the interviews. She said:

It is important to me to cooperate with the parents, even against the teachers, so long as it is for the good of the child.

A third strategy of teachers is **offering to intervene** on behalf of the child. In the following extract the teacher promised to intervene if the other path she suggested to the parent proved unsuccessful.

Mother: *Please speak to the math teacher and ask her to postpone the test.*

Teacher: *You try to speak to her and if there's a problem tell me.*

The last coalitional cooperational strategy is the **mutual sharing of views and approval of actions** in following an agreed common front.

Teacher: *She can do better, I don't think she studies enough at home and I'm glad you think the same.*

Mother: *We'll speak to her.*

Teacher: *Shake her up a bit without punishing her.*

Mother: *Of course, it's easy to blame the school, but my daughter should study.*

In this latter excerpt the teacher recruited the mother to share her view of the situation. She then approved the mother's plan of action of speaking to the child, giving the parent the impression that it was her own idea rather than the teacher's.

b. Cooptation (teacher 2)

As the observations showed, the teacher made the parents part of the organization by involving them in the child's problems, by coopting them in making decisions about the child's activities during school time, and by valuing their opinion.

The following excerpt illustrates cooptation by means of **involvement with the problem and decision making about the solution**:

Teacher: *She is a good student but is absent a lot during the day, perhaps because of the meetings of the students' council. Perhaps she should cut down some of her activities, what do you think?*

Cooptation also took place by means of asking somewhat rhetorical questions, giving the impression that **parents' opinions were valued**.

Teacher: *He disrupts the lesson, what do you think we should do? Are there any problems with discipline at home?*

These strategies were mainly used to enable parents to say whatever was on their minds. In this way, when the parents felt that the teacher had understood their feelings, they, in turn, were ready to appreciate and respect her position. In interviews with the teacher these behavior patterns were verified in various ways, more or less overt, indicating a number of techniques teachers use to **manipulate parents into cooperation**.

When I feel that there is tension between the parents and the child I try to stroke and encourage them and then I can get what I want.

One of the objectives of this manipulation was to draw the parent into the circle of the school, bringing them closer.

It's important to me to have the parents share in decision making about their children. If a child who has problems with studies has a chance of succeeding, I leave it to them to decide about taking a private teacher, and if the child has little chance of succeeding, I tell them the facts as they are, to make it clear that the child has no place with us. I do not moralize to the parents, but speak to them in a way that will bring them closer to me.

I try to understand the parents, to be direct and clear and share information with them about their child's situation at school. I use the carrot and stick method -- first I tell them the good things and then I tell them what I want. I use manipulation to achieve my purposes.

Both the teachers in school A stressed the importance of the parents' sharing in decisions about their children's schooling. By using expressions like *I'm glad you think the same*, or asking, *What do you think?*, they tried to make the parents partners in decision making.

6.5.1.2 Teachers' strategies in schools B and C

The nature of schools B and C, the "closed approach", caused the teachers to adopt different strategies vis-à-vis the parents than in school A. In these two schools the strategies of socialization and blocking were more prevalent (see also 4.5.5.c and 4.5.5.d).

c. Socialization (school C, teacher 4)

The teacher attempted to shape the parents' opinion and bring them closer to her own and endeavored to persuade the parents to identify with the goals of the school, even if this identification was imposed on them by the teachers rather than being reached through the parents' own inner convictions. Observation of this teacher revealed various behavior patterns, including downward displacement of blame and

reference to school rules. Placing the responsibility on parents was also part of the teacher's pedagogical and therapeutic goals (see also 6.1.1.1 and 6.1.1.2). As a strategy it entailed the **downward displacement of blame**, manifested in a number of forms. One was to state a very specific reason - caused by the parent - for a child's behavior problems, such as coming late for school (i.e., giving the child chores to do or waking him up late).

He's late for school because you give him chores in the morning. You must stop doing that.

It's important that you wake him up in time to get to school.

Another form was to blame the parent for not seeking a solution for an academic problem.

His problem with arithmetic is your problem; you must think how to help him.

You must take a private teacher for your children.

He has difficulties with his studies. You need to get him private tuition to help him keep up with the class.

This pattern of recommending private tuition for the students is also referred to in subsection 6.1.1.1 in the discussion of teachers' goals.

And then there was the strategy of using a general question with an undertone of accusation referring to family conditions.

What is happening with your son at home? It's affecting his work at school.

Another behavior pattern observed in the case of this teacher was **referring to the rules of the school** in order to back up her decisions, some of which were related to rules of discipline and behavior.

The school has rules for dishonest behavior and it follows them. That's the law.

Any vandalism done by your children will have to be paid for by you.

Other rules were mentioned with regard to specific subjects, mostly relating to the way in which students were graded.

The sports teacher has tables of grades according to activities, so his grades are precise.

Your daughter has a problem with algebra. It will be better if you go to the teacher, not me, because I'm part of the school. That's the way we do it here.

The general academic activity of the teachers was also confirmed by this teacher.

The students have to adapt themselves to the teachers' way of working. The teachers will not adapt themselves to the students' demands.

d. Blocking (school B, teacher 3 and school C, teacher 4)

Unlike the strategies mentioned hitherto, which were characterized by contact between teachers and parents, the blocking strategy minimizes interaction, rejects it or shifts it elsewhere, so that where it does exist it acquires a formal and non-binding nature. Sometimes teachers referred the problem back to the parents.

If the test results are not good, that's your problem.

Then there were also cases where the teacher merely made a vague statement without offering a solution or reference.

Many students get poor grades from that teacher, I don't know why. There's a communication problem between the students and the teacher.

And lastly, teachers could simultaneously evade responsibility and also offer a ray of hope and encouragement.

I can't promise, but when there is improvement from one term to the next it is customary not to calculate the average.

The main blocking strategies teachers used were evasion of responsibility, mitigation of the situation and playing helpless. The strategy for **evading responsibility** was to refer the parent to another party to solve the problem, implying that the teacher was not qualified or not able to do so.

Go to the teacher of that subject and sort out the problem with her. I'm not the person to do it.

With regard to learning difficulties, speak to the counselor; I'm not qualified and not capable of dealing with that.

Another strategy employed by the teachers was **mitigating the situation**. Instead of attempting to solve the problem, the teachers reassured and encouraged the parents, telling them that it would all work out in the end. One way of reassurance was to indicate to parents that their children were not alone in their predicament.

A lot of the students got poor grades in this subject.

Another way was to make a direct relation between the child's efforts and his/her success.

*He succeeds when he tries.
Apart from that, everything is all right.*

A very prominent mitigating strategy was to defer the solution of the problem to the future.

He's a nice boy, I hope he'll improve his grades and it will turn out all right.

These grades are borderline, they can be improved. She'll get on the right track, it will be all right.

A third blocking strategy used by teachers was to **play helpless**, with reference to situations over which the teachers have no influence. In some cases the blocking was conveyed mainly by the tone and style of speech, as in the first excerpt below:

You can't do anything against that teacher. If you don't like it, put earplugs in your ears.

In other cases teachers expressed their helplessness to do anything, at the same time offering a mitigating argument for the existence of a problem.

The teacher is also the head of that subject department, so there's nobody above him to complain to, and he certainly has his own explanations for the situation.

In the interviews with teachers, they also explained how they used different socialization and blocking strategies simultaneously, even with some coalitional cooperation or cooptation strategies in between.

I use the school report itself to show the parents the factual, legal aspect and give explanations [referring to the rules]. Usually I refer the parents to the teachers of the various subjects [evading responsibility]. They try to bargain over the decisions of the pedagogic council and I explain to them that I have no authority to overrule decisions [playing helpless], or else I ask them to write a letter to the appropriate people [expressing solidarity]. I define the situation according to the parents' responses; some parents may be shocked to hear that their child was late five times, so I tell them in a less meaningful tone, and if the child has a grade of 6 (pass), and that's terrible for them, I explain that the whole class got 6 – if it's true, of course [mitigating the situation].

What the blocking strategies have in common with socialization strategies is that they both rely on the bureaucratic authority of the teacher and the school. The differences between them are characterized by the degree of interest that the teachers reveal in the student's problem (more in socialization) and the extent to which they separate themselves from the problem (more in blocking). Observation of the techniques they used indicates that in the socialization strategy the emphasis is on persuasion of the parents, for example: *It's important that you wake him up in time to get to school.* In the blocking strategy, on the other hand, the emphasis is on blaming the parents for the problem, for example: *If the test results are not good that's your problem.*

6.5.2 Parents' response strategies

Parents chose response strategies to the teachers' behavior in particular and to the character of the school in general. Based on the observations and interviews, I found that the parents' strategies could be classified into two categories according to the schools in question:

- a. Expansion of the points of contact – school A
- b. Reduction of the points of contact – schools B and C

This classification does not appear in the theoretical material, but it emerged from my observations of the interactions between teachers and parents.

a. Expansion of the points of contact

The expansion of the points of contact relates to the parents' attitude to many areas in their interaction with the teachers, from matters that concern their children to issues concerning the curricula and the parents' commitment. This strategy was used in school A as an outcome of the teachers' strategies, who adopted the methods of cooptation or coalition with the parents and sharing the child's problems and the decision making with them. The parents did not feel threatened by these strategies; on the contrary, they saw the teachers as a tool that could help them in advancing the

child and therefore they chose behavior patterns that would match their goals (to find out about the children's situation, discuss difficulties in their education, request help in school and family matters, place responsibility on the school and so forth). The prevalent behavior patterns observed among the parents in school A included different forms of defense: upward displacement of blame, evading responsibility and flattery.

The different forms of **defense strategies** parents used could be by defending their children, devaluating the teacher or comparing different situations.

Parents' **defense of their children** referred to personal traits and study habits.

But you do know that my son is shy and when he receives encouragement he has potential.

It pains me, she studies a lot at school and in the library.

In the first quotation above the mother also implied subtly that her son did not get enough attention.

To strengthen their defense of their children's efforts parents also offered to contribute doing something.

He does his best, but still I would like to meet the teachers of the subjects.

Another form of defense used by parents was the **devaluation of the teacher**. This could also be seen as a parent's way of defining the situation.

My daughter wouldn't let me phone you, she told me that you don't know about the problems with other subjects, because you teach only one subject.

Comparison as a defense strategy could refer to a comparison of one child with another or of the situation in junior high school with that of the elementary school.

This is not elementary school, but they never sent for me, everything was excellent there.

I'm in shock. This is the first time it's happened to me. My other daughter

took the matriculation in the sciences, you probably know her.

A strategy, similar to defense, but expressed more outspokenly, was **upward displacement of blame**. These accusations included the direct and indirect questioning of the teachers' pedagogical strategies.

Everybody says that you don't give enough homework, so then they have time for television and phone calls.

Private lessons in the 9th grade, does that make sense?

In other circumstances the accusation was in the form of a generalization of negligence on the part of the school and the teachers.

What about English? How will they be ready for the matric exams? There's so much material. Apart from that, there are teachers who are often absent, they don't come to school when they don't feel like it, and then the children suffer. How will they do the matric?

Evading responsibility was sometimes used by parents in connection with different kinds of problems, even in cases where the problem stemmed from difficulties of communication in the family. Sometimes it was done by means of direct or indirect instructions to the teacher.

Do me a favor, try to understand her and you'll see that she'll improve. I'm very upset. I'm shocked because she studies and works hard. This is so sad compared with last year.

She's an intelligent girl but she gets stressed quickly, she needs to be given a chance.

Parents also requested teachers to act as mediators between them and another party.

Perhaps you could speak to the counselor?

And there were even instances where parents were evading responsibility regarding family matters.

Pass this message on to my son, communication between us is not good, nor with his father.

It's important for things to change and for my daughter to succeed, because my husband is sick.

Sometimes a parent also resorted to **flattery** to persuade the teacher to do more for her child.

My daughter admires you very much; she has made progress thanks to you.

We see here that the parents attempted to engage the teacher in a dialogue in which they, the parents, took the initiative, did not unquestioningly accept the teacher's pronouncements and even suggested ways for the teacher to behave in dealing with their child.

These observed patterns were confirmed in interviews with the parents. One of the mothers said:

I'm a nagger. Sometimes I ask the teacher to give the child time and talk to him, because he is not always aware of his situation [defense]. If the teacher pays no attention to me, obviously I will be a bit more insistent. I don't fight over grades, but as a member of the parents' committee, at every meeting we say, 'Be lenient with the students' [evading responsibility]. The child has to make efforts; if he deserves more you have to ask for it [upward displacement of blame]. The grade reflects knowledge, there's no smoothing things over like in elementary school [comparison]. By the open school method the parents can intervene up to 25%. As it is today they don't let us intervene [devaluation]. It's important for me to use my connections with the teachers to make things easier for my son and myself in the school system, and I don't mind flattering them [flattery], but no gifts, I'm against that.

b. Reduction of the points of contact

Reduction of the points of contact refers to the minimization of the parents' intervention in relevant areas that arise in their interactions with the teachers. This kind of behavior was observed in parent-teacher interactions in schools B and C, in response to the teachers' strategies of socialization and blocking. Apparently the parents felt threatened by these strategies and their response sometimes expressed hostility, in the form of indirect protest by diversion. Sometimes they used a strategy of asking for help, while in other cases their responses expressed surrender or despair. This latter response strategy was characterized by the parents' blaming themselves and expressing a sense of personal failure in order not to arouse the teachers' anger, a pattern that was later confirmed in interviews with the parents.

The strategy of **indirect protest by diversion** appears to reflect considerable hostility and veiled criticism of the teacher, which the parent could not or would not express openly. The diversion was normally a reference to another teacher or educator who did things differently and allegedly showed more insight in the situation.

In geometry the whole exercise was good and he lost points on part of the question. I have a teacher friend who usually considers the students.

When I studied at the Kibbutz Teacher Training College I had an elderly teacher and I wasn't able to take in anything she taught. Along came a young teacher and my grades improved. He couldn't believe it, he took me aside to test me again and said good for you.

It was fine with the previous teacher, and this year there's a new teacher and everything has changed for the worse.

In **asking for help**, the parents exposed their own and their child's weakness, placing them both at the mercy of the teacher. The nature of the help was sometimes related to the organization of private tuition.

She wants help in English, do you know of a private teacher? I'm prepared to do anything for her schooling.

She's afraid that if she takes private lessons she'll feel inferior. I'm ready to sacrifice anything for her.

Other requests related to family problems and parents' pedagogical goals of identifying the school's problems and discussing difficulties (see 6.1.2.1.a). There are also linkages with parents' response strategy of evading responsibility (see 6.5.2.a).

I want her to speak to you as well; when there are problems she's afraid or ashamed to tell me.

A more extreme form of this kind of response was found among parents who resorted to expressions of **despair** or **surrender**. Some parents who despaired tended to blame themselves directly.

I blame myself, it's my fault.

Others blamed themselves implicitly and combined it with a defense strategy.

We have spent a lot of money to help her improve, but when the test comes she doesn't know anything because she's afraid. We are desperate.

In the cases where surrender was the main strategy parents tended to emphasize it by indicating that they had exhausted all possible avenues of intervention.

I give up, I've tried everything.

We were given so many options, nothing helped, we've given up.

In the interviews with the parents some of the patterns discussed in this section were confirmed. They were also intertwined with parents' definition of the situation

in order to reach some kind of pseudo-concord (see also 6.4.2). For example, one of the mothers said:

I don't usually complain to the teachers. I ask them for help when I need it, because I think that they are professionals. They have the ability, they are educators and I promise to speak to him at home [asking for help].

I don't shout or argue. I say that I'm prepared to give anything for my child, take private teachers, although I should say the opposite. It's the teacher's job to teach and not to tell me to take private tutors, but I don't say that and I adapt myself to the teacher and the school [surrender].

6.5.3 Conclusion

As we saw, the parents in school A used the strategy of expansion of the points of contact through techniques such as defense, upward displacement of blame and flattery. These behaviors were a response to the teachers' strategies of coalitional cooperation and inclusion of the parents in decision making concerning their children (cooptation). The parents employed these behavior patterns to bring the teachers to help their children to advance and thus assist in achieving the parents' pedagogic and therapeutic goals.

In schools B and C the parents used the strategy of reducing the points of contact by blaming themselves for the child's failure, asking for help, expressing despair and surrender. These behaviors, too, came in response to the teachers' strategies of socialization and blocking.

The consistency between the interviews, the patterns observed and the researcher's impressions raised the question as to whether this was a case of genuine agreement. This question was put to the teachers and parents in the three schools, and the common factor in their answers was their view of the purpose as a guideline in choosing a strategy. Teachers remarked that they used certain strategies to achieve their professional and survival goals, but that each teacher did it in her own way, adapted to the demands of the school ethos. And as we saw, in school A the teachers were more open and invited various responses to themselves and to the school, as

opposed to schools B and C, where the teachers were less open to the parents' responses.

Parents stated that they used certain strategies to achieve their goals, according to the relevant knowledge they had about the teachers' demands in particular and the nature of the school system in general.

Parents from school A stated that they encountered *flexible authority* and they responded to the teacher's behavior with behaviors characterized by defensiveness, evading responsibility, upward displacement of blame and even flattery. They said that the risk of these responses jeopardizing their children's future in the school was minimal and therefore they were not afraid to intervene in various aspects of the teacher's work. In contrast, parents from schools B and C saw the teacher as a ruler who had to be appeased and therefore they chose to agree to every suggestion and promise to do everything that was required of them in order to "avoid trouble".

It was my clear impression that these parents' policy of appeasement was a conscious and calculated method and not a spontaneous response. As one of the mothers said:

I don't say that the teacher is out of line, even when I know he is. I just say that I believe the teacher and that he can achieve a great deal with my son.

However, beyond the distinction between teachers' and parents' strategies, one can discern strategies common to both sides, such as displacement of blame and shifting responsibility, when the teachers refer to the rules of the school in defense of their behavior and the parents navigate carefully between hinted blaming of the teachers and admission of their own weakness and appealing for help in dealing with their children. The parents' behavior appears to be more flexible than that of the teachers, whose behavior stems partly from their need to defend their professional knowledge and authority (see also 6.2.1).

6.6. Patterns of working agreements resulting from the negotiations between teachers and parents

The basis for negotiations between teachers and parents was, at least ostensibly, a common goal: to help children to succeed through education and instruction.

Although this goal has general and symbolic value and is given different interpretations, it represents a general mandate to administer the school, because of the shared identification with it that no-one dared to question openly. As such, the teachers made considerable use of it to defend their steps and attitudes towards the parents, as we saw in the strategies described above. As participants in the negotiations they sometimes represented the general good, sometimes their personal interests and sometimes the ideological status of their profession. We also saw that, in the discussion, coalitions could be formed, sometimes with full agreement. However, the more specific discussions concerning the attitude towards students and the way they were treated, particularly in the subjects that could determine the students' fate, exposed the inability of both sides to translate the shared general goal into specific operative aims. Differences of opinion between the teachers and parents surfaced and had to be resolved by various bargaining methods: flattery, defensiveness, indirect protest, and so forth.

Grade 9 is considered a stage of preparation for entering high school and studies are conducted according to the grouping method, mainly in mathematics, English and science. On the face of it, this method is based on pedagogic considerations: to divide the class into a number of groups, each studying according to its level, purportedly to make the teachers' work easier and enable the students to use their ability in the most suitable framework. This approach is based on the assumption that the population is composed of groups of diverse quality, each of which is capable of reaching a certain level, whether in administration or in production. Against this the parents struggle, using every line of action and resource available to them, to place their child in the best position in the contest for a certificate that will help them to find their place in society.

Presented below are the prevalent patterns of working agreements as revealed in the interviews with teachers and parents.

6.6.1 Prevalent patterns of working agreements emerging from the negotiations between teachers and parents as described in their interviews with the researcher

The outcomes of the negotiations between teachers and parents were characterized by working agreements that were influenced by the power of each side (see 4.5.6).

These agreements are presented here in a uniform structure consisting of the following components (for each school only one teacher–parent interaction is documented, because the parents’ reactions in the same school were similar in each case):

1. Contents of the agreement
2. Clarity of the agreement
3. Responsibility
4. Follow-up

Each school is presented separately below. The working agreements they arrived at may be categorized as concord, pseudo-concord or discord (see also section 4.1 and Figure 4-4).

6.6.1.1 School A (teachers 1 and 2)

In School A, which is characterized as having a “balanced” approach and using a strategy of coalitional cooperation and cooptation with the parents, each of the two teachers constructed the working agreement with the parents according to her own personality. **Teacher 1** used a strategy of coalitional cooperation to achieve the shared aim of the teacher and the parent, namely, to advance the student’s achievements. The mother, on her side, used a strategy of expanding the points of contact, trying together with the teacher to find a way to help the student. It was the parent’s responsibility to find a private tutor for the child while the teacher was responsible for informing the parent of problems that arose with the child in the classroom.

Usually there is full agreement over private lessons and how to deal with problems of discipline. The parents show this by nodding their heads and I ask them to undertake to complete the task together with the child. When the parents are responsible for follow-up they have to contact me by telephone at home or at school once a month. Usually they agree. It is clear to the parents that we share the same educational goal. When we don’t agree and there are differences of opinion, for example, when parents say that it’s

useless to talk to a certain teacher, I refer them to the principal. I don't use this authority unless I have tried every other possibility.

In this case there was concord. The mother's description of the working agreement matched that of the teacher. The mother agreed to take responsibility for finding a private teacher and following up on the child's progress.

Contents of the agreement: *Taking a private teacher for the student.*

Clarity of the agreement: *The boy will have lessons once a week, with more lessons before examinations.*

Responsibility: *I, the mother, will be responsible for finding a private teacher and paying for the lessons.*

Follow-up: *I have to be in contact with the teacher and inform her if there is any progress. My interest is for my son to succeed and the teacher has to inform me of problems.*

In the agreement with **teacher 2**, the teacher used a strategy of cooptation, giving the parent the role of not intervening, and letting her daughter take responsibility. In response, the mother used a strategy of expanding the points of contact, allowing herself to show anger. The teacher reassured her and passed the responsibility to the daughter, while she herself took responsibility for feedback. In this way the teacher prevented the mother from intervening in the teacher's decisions and she induced her to take the role of a mother who allowed her child to take responsibility.

Usually the parents let me do what I want and I am responsible for the follow-up, while the parent is left out. Generally speaking I prefer it this way, because I don't like the parents intervening in my professional work. Another thing, if we reach a working agreement with parents it means they have given up, so their intervention would not be effective.

In this case, too, there was concord. The mother's description matched that of the teacher. The teacher took responsibility for follow-up of the student's progress and for ensuring that she received help. The mother remarked that she agreed to this arrangement in order to avoid conflict with her daughter.

- Contents of the agreement: *My daughter failed in one of the subjects and I was very angry. The teacher calmed me down, saying she is a big girl and from now on it's her responsibility.*
- Clarity of the agreement: *My daughter will decide whether to study with a friend or take a private tutor.*
- Responsibility: *The teacher is responsible for the girl receiving help in one of the two ways suggested.*
- Follow-up: *The teacher will supervise the child's progress and maintain contact with the subject teachers. I agreed to this because I know my daughter, it would involve me in unnecessary conflicts with her.*

We see that even in the same school with the same approach there are differences between teachers in the working agreement they aspire to achieve. Teacher 1 used a strategy of coalitional cooperation and teacher 2 used cooptation. What they had in common was that both acted according to the approach of school A, the "balanced approach" that permitted open dialogue between teachers and parents. The differences stemmed from the individual teachers' personality, experience and biographies.

6.6.1.2 School B (teacher 3)

School B is characterized by the "closed door" approach, with the teachers using blocking strategies. The parent reduced the points of contact with the teacher, knowing that the responsibility was purely on herself. The responsibility for arranging private tuition and for follow-up rested solely on the parents, as we will see below.

The teacher said:

Usually we draw up the agreement together. I try to make it clear. I don't put it down in writing, and the parents are responsible for fulfilling the agreement and for follow-up. At our next meeting I mention the agreement. If there are differences of opinion, I accept the parents' approach as long as

it conforms with the school regulations and is reasonably argued. If there are deviations from the school regulations I refer them to the principal.

There was pseudo-concord. The mother's description presented a less rosy picture of the working agreement. As we will see below, her cynical remarks cast doubt on the teacher's description (*Usually we draw up the agreement together, or I accept the parents' approach*).

- Contents of the agreement: *The school administration offered help with tutoring. This help did not materialize because of budget problems and therefore I had to employ a private teacher.*
- Clarity of the agreement: *It was clear to us that we had to take a private teacher, and I don't think that any teacher took an interest in it, apart from the talk with the counselor. But I don't think that any teacher has ever called a student and asked him what his problems really are and how much work he does at home, so it should be clear to me – I know that the school has budgetary limitations and I know how I can help my child.*
- Responsibility: *It's all mine.*
- Follow-up: *Mine too. I didn't feel that the teacher was concerned about my son beyond his grades.*

The teacher described the agreement as if it had been made jointly with the parent in conformance with the school regulations. Although the teacher stated that she was willing to accept the parent's approach, in fact she was the one who decided, and perhaps that was the reason for the tone of anger in the mother's words, along with the fact that she felt a lack of interest in the child on the teacher's part. The resultant agreement reflects pseudo-concord, perhaps because the mother saw no point in arguing with the teacher.

6.6.1.3 School C (teacher 4)

School C is characterized by the “closed door” approach, with the teachers using strategies of socialization and blocking towards the parents, and the parent reducing the points of contact with the teacher, not expressing her feelings.

The teacher said:

I build working agreements based on the approach that 'the parent does not intervene'. When I am responsible for follow-up and I check it by meeting with the student, the agreements usually relate to short-term projects. For example, the project may be to give the child responsibility. The mother undertakes not to intervene for a week in what happens between the child and the school in the studies and social aspects.

We see here pseudo-concord between the teacher's description of the working agreement and that of the mother. The mother agreed not to intervene for a week, thus giving her consent to the teacher's blocking strategy.

- Contents of the agreement: *We agreed that the teacher would take care of the educational side and talk with my daughter about her studies.*
- Clarity of the agreement: *I don't intervene unless I'm asked to by the teacher.*
- Responsibility: *We are both responsible, because I also have a certain role: not to intervene.*
- Follow-up: *The teacher.*

The teacher neutralized the parent with the agreement not to intervene. She herself took all the responsibility for fulfilling the agreement and for follow-up, and this perhaps explained the absence of anger on the mother's part.

6.6.1.4 Conclusion

With regard to the relationship between the working agreements and the school's organizational structure (laws, status), all the agreements that are reached through negotiations cast light on an element that is vital for the explanation of the school's organizational structure. All the working agreements described above have a uniform character: the teacher usually raises the problem and its solution and the parent or the teacher is responsible for implementing the solution. These are not agreements of a dynamic nature but agreements that buttress the old order of the school and the established laws and policies. Thus, the school structure serves as a kind of background to the negotiations at the front.

A closer look at the working agreements reveals two patterns:

Pattern X, as seen in school A, which uses a "balanced approach", with teachers 1 and 2. The teachers and parents have a common aim and they agree on the working patterns, such as taking responsibility and feedback on the child. The teachers see the parents as partners in the working agreement and the responsibility and the follow-up is on them.

Pattern Y, as seen in schools B and C, reveals a "closed door" approach. In school B the teacher decides that the mother will take responsibility for finding a tutor for her son and for follow-up on his achievements. In school C the teacher does not permit any intervention from the family.

Pseudo-concord appears to be the most suitable description of the process of achieving agreement between teachers and parents in schools B and C, and again we see that the formal organizational power of the teacher in the school system generally exceeds the power of the parents as individuals. This advantage enables the teacher to initiate working agreements while the parents use the strategy of accepting the teacher's superior power.

6.7 Conclusion of findings summarized in tables

The tables below summarize the interaction between the teachers and parents as revealed in their negotiations on parents' days. The tables show that both the teachers

and the parents have goals, resources, perceptions and definitions of situation, and that both sides make use of strategies to reach working agreements, as we saw in the “combined model” that I constructed on the basis of the models of Hargreaves and Strauss (see figure 4.4).

Table 6-1 shows the goals of teachers and parents as reflected in their mutual negotiations on parents’ day. These goals stem from cognitive and behavioral aspects. Teachers and parents aim to arrive at a shared definition of situation in order to ensure optimal achievement of their goals (Hargreaves, 1972, 1975).

Table 6-1: Goals of teachers and parents as reflected in their mutual negotiations

Goals	Teachers	Parents
Pedagogic	1. Focus on students’ problems: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Learning difficulties b. Homework c. Disciplinary problems 2. Clarification of student’s situation: Asks the parents for pedagogic help	Identification of student’s problem and discussing difficulties – different conversational styles associated with social class differences
Therapeutic	Sending the parents and their children for counseling	Requesting help in school and family matters
Survival	1. Limiting their pedagogic responsibility 2. Shifting blame to students’ parents and social setup	1. Shifting responsibility and blame 2. Seeking information

Table 6-2 shows teachers’ and parents’ resources as reflected in their negotiations. Teachers and parents present themselves as possessing real or fictitious resources in order to steer the action of the other (Goffman, 1971).

Table 6-2: Teachers' and parents' resources as reflected in their negotiations

Resources	Teachers	Parents
Status	1. Professional status and training 2. Pedagogical or subject authority	Status as parents vis-à-vis the school
Position	Bureaucratic authority – conferred by their role in the school with regard to: a. Organizational structure b. Backing of higher authority c. Contribution to the system	Socio-economic status
Knowledge	Knowledge concerning the parents, their children and family matters	1. Knowledge about the teaching methods 2. Knowledge of the school's requirements of the students 3. Understanding teachers' expectations of parents

Table 6-3 relates to the teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other that stem from the concepts, roles and intentions that exist in their awareness context (Glazer & Strauss, 1967). There is a remarkable congruence between the perception the one actor had of the other and the other's view of how the first actor perceived her.

Table 6-3: Teachers' and parents' perceptions of each other

Teachers	Parents
<u>Perception of parents</u> Parents are not realistic in their expectations concerning their children	<u>Perception of teachers</u> Teachers hide behind the authority granted to them by their professional role
<u>Perception of parents' perception of them</u> The teachers do not fulfill the parents' expectations	<u>Perception of teachers' perception of them</u> Parents possess unrealistic expectations about their children

Table 6-4 shows the definitions of situation. The definitions of situation derive from the teachers' and parents' goals, resources and perceptions of each other. The mutuality of the definitions of situation stems partly from social norms, shared practices and cultural patterns. The definitions of situation are also formed in the context of the place where the social situation occurs – the front and backstage (Goffman, 1971).

Table 6-4: Teachers' and parents' definitions of situation

Teachers	Parents
The teachers determine the definition of situation	The parents usually accept the teachers' definition of situation and adapt themselves to the teachers' expectations.
The compatibility between definitions of situation is "pseudo-concord"	
Metaphorical theatrical interpretation	
Front: classroom where teachers receive parents	
Backstage: staff room Here the planning of the impressions to be made takes place	Backstage: the corridor It is the waiting area, and here the "pseudo-concord" is planned

Tables 6-5, 6-6 and 6-7 below show clearly the teachers' and parents' strategies, or what Hargreaves (1972) called behaviors which lead to the working agreements between the participants in the negotiation processes. As Strauss (1978) noted, these interactions are not accidental but are determined by the background and character of the organization.

Table 6-5: Teachers' strategies towards parents in the three schools as derived from the nature of the school

Strategy	School A (balanced approach)	School B (closed door approach)	School C (closed door approach)
Coalitional cooperation	<u>Teacher 1:</u> 1. Expressing solidarity 2. Revealing empathy 3. Offering to intervene		
Cooptation	<u>Teacher 2:</u> Involving parents in a. the child's problems b. making decisions about him/her		
Socialization			<u>Teacher 4:</u> 1. Downward displacement of blame 2. Placing responsibility on the parents 3. Reference to the rules of the school
Blocking		<u>Teachers 3 and 4:</u> 1. Evading responsibility 2. Mitigating the situation 3. Reference to situations over which teacher has no influence 4. Playing helpless	

Table 6-6: Parents' strategies towards teachers as derived from the teachers' behavior, the character of the school and the family setup

Strategy	School A (balanced approach)	School B (closed door approach)	School C (closed door approach)
Expansion of points of contact	1. Defending child 2. Devaluing the teacher 3. Comparison 4. Upward displacement of blame 5. Evading responsibility 6. Flattery		
Reduction of points of contact		1. Indirect protest by diversion 2. Asking for help 3. Despair 4. Surrender	

Table 6-7: Patterns of working agreements resulting from the negotiations between teachers and parents

Pattern	School A	School B	School C
Concord	Teachers 1 and 2 and the parents have a shared goal and they agree on the working methods in relation to taking responsibility and follow-up on the pupil		
Pseudo-concord		Teacher 3 makes the parents fully responsible for carrying out the working agreement and following it up	Teacher 4 neutralizes the parents' responsibility and prefers to retain full responsibility herself (due to personality factors)

In conclusion, this work examined processes of negotiations in a micro-social situation (parents' days), in which interactions take place between teachers and parents over the definition of the students' educational situation. For this I used an interpretive-constructivist approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 211; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). In analyzing the negotiation processes I was guided by the approaches of Hargreaves (1975) and Strauss (1978), and made extensive use of their concepts: interactions, strategies, awareness context and working agreements. Also, I used Hargreaves' (1972) concept of "definition of situation", from which derive techniques of presentation of the self, according to Goffman (1971), referring to the individual's speech, movement, gestures and facial expressions, which have impact on the impression she or he makes on the other.

While conducting my observations and interviews the concepts of Hargreaves and Strauss served me as milestones in interpreting the negotiation process and its outcome. The findings show that in the negotiation process the teachers and parents presented goals. The goals presented by the teachers were mainly pedagogic rather than therapeutic, and it is reasonable to assume that this stemmed from their view of their role primarily as experts in transmitting knowledge and only later as therapists. Behind these goals, one could discern survival goals, reflected in their demand that the parents accept their approach in everything connected with the students' functioning in the school.

The parents presented goals in learning issues but showed restraint in expressing their demands, for fear of jeopardizing their children's career at the school.

The findings revealed that the meeting on parents' day was meaningful for both sides. It was meaningful for the teachers, because it enabled them to harness the parents to fulfilling the school's requirements and to make them partners in this responsibility. And it was meaningful for the parents, because of the importance they attached to their children's achievements in studies, which would serve them later in advancing their social and financial status.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

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CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As we saw in the application of the combined conceptual model devised for this study, teachers and parents, in negotiating with each other, use various resources to achieve their goals, employing strategies that stem from the nature of the school and from their personal biographies and personalities, in order to arrive at the outcome of the negotiations, the “working agreements”. The two sides are not always in full agreement as to these outcomes; nevertheless the negotiations take place because the shared “reward” anticipated by the negotiators at the end of the road is greater than the specific interests of the teachers and parents. The teachers want others to think that they are good teachers and they attempt to achieve this by turning out “good” students, and the parents want to achieve good grades for their children (Thompson, 1993).

My observations of the interactions between teachers and parents indicated that socio-economic resources had an impact on teacher-parent relations, although neither side admitted openly to this in the interviews. We saw in subsection 6.2.1.1 that a teacher emphasized the parent’s profession (a psychologist or a scientist), but she did this while attempting to assert her professional authority. And when the parents were asked whether their socio-economic status had an impact on the teachers’ attitude to the students they said definitely not (see subsection 6.2.2.3).

There is a prevalent assumption in the sociological literature (see chapter 2) that people have powerful influence that derives from their socio-economic status and social prestige, but in the present study neither the teachers nor the parents admitted to this. The teachers know that one of the major goals of Israeli Ministry of Education is to reduce social gaps. The schools have to aim for integration of the different social classes and they convey this message to their students. Although my research deals with a specific situation of interaction between teachers and parents at the micro

level, this situation is not isolated from the macro-social level, namely the context in which the interaction takes place, which is Israel's hierarchical social structure.

The role of the education system is not only to transmit the national culture from generation to generation but also to integrate new immigrants and weak populations into the school system. It is expected to promote their social and cultural integration and provide them with the opportunity to take their place on the social ladder (see Introduction). However, although Israeli society has a strong commitment to equality and the public ethos upholds the ideology of equal opportunity for all, this is not achieved in reality, due in part to the fact that the education system fosters competitiveness. As we saw on parents' days, the discussion between parents and teachers tends to focus on measuring the students' achievements. Nevertheless, due to the declared ideology, from the moment their child enters pre-school, where the education system employs integrative frameworks, the parents deny the existence of a link between their socio-economic status and the school's attitude towards them. This recalls the discussion in sections 2.1.4 and 2.1.5, relating to personal, psychological and sociological aspects in teacher-parent relations, and specifically to the question of social desirability.

7.1 The character of the school and its influence on the actors

The combined Hargreaves-Strauss model I constructed sets the teachers' and parents' interactions and negotiations not only on the basis of the awareness contexts that are expressed by the socio-economic, cultural and ethnic resources that constitute sources of power; on definitions of situation related to goals, private perceptions and biographies and on sequences of interactions that create working agreements as an outcome of negotiations, but also on the basis of types of awareness contexts and types of strategies and negotiation interactions, as we saw in the schools investigated.

In school A, which follows a "balanced approach" (Litwak & Meyer, 1974) in that it opens the "doors of intervention" in the educational-social sphere and closes them in the learning sphere, the teachers use strategies of coalitional cooperation and cooptation (Goldring, 1988). Both these strategies are characterized by cooperation between the teachers (the service providers) and the parents (the clients) to achieve an agreed common goal (Mintzberg, 1983). However, each teacher implemented the

concept of cooperation differentially according to her personality and biography (see sub-section 6.6.1.1).

These strategies permit the parents to expand the points of contact with the teachers and make use in their negotiations of behavior patterns such as defense, upward displacement of blame, evading responsibility, devaluing the teacher, comparison (for purposes of distraction), appeals for mercy and flattery, all this in order to achieve their goals related to their child's progress.

Schools B and C use a "closed door" approach (Litwak & Meyer, 1974), based on the assumption that the parents' intervention should be minimal because they lack professional training (Lightfoot, 1978; Smilansky et al., 1986), and because they tend to limit the freedom of action of organizations such as schools. This assumption found expression in the teachers' strategies of socialization and blocking (Goldring, 1989). The common element of these two strategies is persuasion of the parents and bringing them to identify with the school's goals, values and working methods, while blocking their intervention in anything connected with the school. In this case too, each teacher implemented the idea of cooperation differently according to her personality and her biography.

These strategies bring the parents to behave in their negotiations with the teachers in such a way as to reduce their points of contact with the school to a minimum, to avoid jeopardizing their children's future in the school. They do this by using behavior patterns such as blaming the home for the failure, indirect protest, asking for help and surrender to the point of expressing despair.

The choice of strategies used by the teachers and parents in their negotiations was conditioned by the character of the school, but the final product of the negotiations, the working agreements, were determined, as revealed in the observations and the interviews with the teachers, by the personal professional power of the sides and their approaches in various situations (Strauss, 1978) or, as Woods (1981) phrases it, the personal biographies of the actors.

At the mezzo level, the findings show that teacher-parent relations are not only affected by the teachers' status and personality but also by the character of the school organization. Different kinds of school ethos create different school cultures and influence the patterns of interactions between teachers and parents. Therefore, in order to improve relations between teachers and parents it is necessary to construct a different ethos in the school, emphasizing support and understanding rather than

focusing on achievement. In this, the role of the principal is central, as the person mainly responsible for shaping the school culture.

7.2 Parents' day as a ritual and a discussion forum

The patterns emerging from my observations and interviews led me to the conclusion that while the main goal of parents' days is in the concrete outcomes for the teachers, parents or students, they also serve to recall and reconfirm the general principles of the school which brings together teachers and parents for shared organized activities. The ritual comes to strengthen a situation that has a fixed and familiar order and thus binds those involved in it to mutual commitment (Bernstein, Elvin & Peters, 1970; Hazan, 1992).

I will relate mainly to three ritual functions that took place in the parents' days that I observed:

- a. Restatement of common goals
- b. Restatement of the ideology of parental involvement
- c. Confirmation of the statuses and roles of the teachers and parents

7.2.1 Restatement of common goals

Alongside meetings that ended in detailed and binding working agreements, there were many meetings – all held in a fairly pleasant atmosphere – in which partial and meager information on the student's situation was transmitted from one side to the other. These meetings gave both sides an opportunity to express the fact that they shared a common goal, even if they did not state it explicitly. It was as if they said, "We teachers and parents share the endeavor and the concern involved in helping each child to advance in his/her education". Even when the working agreement is faulty, incomplete or imaginary, it is reached on the background of the shared goal which binds the teachers and parents together.

7.2.2 Restatement of the ideology of parental involvement

The idea of involving the parents in the school is one of the hallmarks of the various ideologies of the modern pedagogy (Lortie, 1975; Smilansky et al., 1986).

Teachers are exposed to this ideology and it seems that even those among them who object to it tend to declare agreement with at least some of its principles. The parents' day, which served in the past largely as a vehicle for delivering information to the parents, can provide an opportunity for expression and ritual fulfillment of this ideology and, as we have seen, the teachers tend to consult the parents about their children, to involve them in decisions, whether sincerely or as a technique for manipulating them.

Both these ritual functions found expression in the interviews I held with teachers and parents. One teacher referred to the partnership between parents and teachers:

This meeting is important. As soon as the parents sit facing me, their commitment grows... both sides become partners in the child's education.

This idea of partnership is also confirmed by the parents.

At the meeting I find out how my daughter is doing in her studies and socially, and I even to get to know the teacher better.

The meeting enriches the information we receive from the child. It gives us the exact picture of the teacher's character, personality and teaching methods.

The parents feel that these meetings, beyond providing them with important information about their children, also help them to know the teacher better.

7.2.3 Confirmation of statuses and roles of teachers and parents

Every position in an organization or social system has two aspects: a static aspect — the status of the one who holds the position, as expressed in the rights and responsibilities granted by the position, and a dynamic aspect — the roles of the holder of the position (Goldring, 1988).

The statuses and roles of the teacher and parent in the school system have to be symbolically expressed and confirmed from time to time. While the principal, the teacher, the other staff members and the students maintain ongoing open interaction with their role complements, the parents are far away from the everyday

manifestations of the school reality. Parents' day provides an opportunity to redefine and reconfirm rituals of status and roles.

In the interviews I conducted with the teachers and parents, most of them referred not only to the contents of the discussion on parents' days, but also to the participants' statuses and roles. Expressions that challenge the prevalent definitions of status and role crept into some of the interviews:

She [the mother or the teacher], who does she think she is?

Does she [the mother or the teacher] think she's an expert?

These quotations appear to reflect a hidden power struggle between the teachers and parents, in which each side feels threatened, the teachers fearing diminution of their status and role and the parents on their side questioning the teachers' dominant role. However, they do not give expression to these feelings in their meetings and both sides are interested in maintaining the ritual of parents' day meetings because of their importance in helping to achieve their goals.

Alongside the ritual activities, the parents' days served as a forum for discussion and treatment of some of the unresolved dilemmas in the realm of education and the school. (Of course, it may be that discussing and dealing with dilemmas that cannot be easily solved is also a kind of ritual, as if they were saying: "Perhaps we will never find a solution, but let us recognize the existence of the dilemma".) One such dilemma was the question of who should bear responsibility for the student's learning and education. As I found in this study, teachers and parents declared that they took the responsibility, but they were also busy shifting the responsibility to each other for various aspects of the student's education.

7.3 Possibilities and limitations of the combined Hargreaves-Strauss model

In the combined Hargreaves-Strauss model which I constructed for this work we can see several limitations. For example, Hargreaves investigated schools, Strauss investigated hospitals. Hargreaves saw his model as one with a clear sequential process, while Strauss's model refers to dynamic processes constantly influenced and changed by the actors. For the purpose of my research I took their common element, namely the idea that we can learn through them how people conduct negotiations to

achieve their goals. Hargreaves' model (1972) relates to a number of factors that characterize interactions between the actors: goals, perceptions, definitions of situation, strategies, personality and working agreements as derived from negotiation processes between the partners to the interaction. These factors were examined in studies on classroom interactions between teachers and students. According to Hargreaves, when the student takes any line of action it is immediately followed by a sequence of interactions. This sequence includes all the concrete behaviors, that is to say, the actual behaviors that occur in the field.

Strauss' model (1978) offers an approach to micro-social study centering on the concept of negotiation. This approach is guided by the assumption that the participants define and create a social structure, but at the same time the social structure defines and shapes their life circumstances. In order to understand the essence of the negotiations in the broader social context, Strauss presents a number of basic assumptions relating to the concept of negotiations. For example, just as there are types of "awareness contexts" there are also types of "negotiation contexts", which explain the interactions between the participants; and the outcomes of the negotiations are all limited to their time and subject to changes in the future. Strauss' approach is based on his view of the social order and the individuals in society as being shaped through constant processes of negotiations. These factors were examined in studies on doctor-patient relations in hospitals.

Despite its limitations, the combined model helped me in analyzing the situation on parents' day because it cast light on those points that I sought to investigate in teacher-parent relations, namely the strategies, awareness context, definitions of situation, negotiations and working agreements.

The limitation of the combined model is that it is too structured and makes it difficult to see the dynamics of the parent-teacher relations. In order to overcome this limitation I was helped by the interpretive approach, whose point of departure is the assumption that people in a social situation do not simply "behave", but "act", in other words, that our actions are guided by the meaning or definition that we ascribe to the situation in which we participate (Silverman, 1993) and we are not totally subject to constraints and to the organizational or structural situation.

Thus, in seeking to understand teacher-parent relations during parents' days, I attempted to examine the meaning that the teachers and parents ascribe to their behaviors and to the situations in which they participated.

The combined model may be further refined by investigating in greater depth the factors that generate the dynamic changes in the interactions, such as the actors' personal biographies, which were not investigated in depth in my study in the context of their private and social lives. There is a need to clarify the teachers' and parents' personal perspectives, formed by their beliefs, emotions, thoughts and actions (Beck & Murphy, 1994).

7.4 Contribution of the research to the understanding of the Israeli education system

The findings of this study indicate that the teachers tend to perceive the school's roles in a similar way. The common denominator that emerged is the school's focus on the purely instructional aspect, relating to the students in regard to their learning achievements, studiousness and diligence in the class context, their mental ability, interest and active participation in the classroom. And based on these criteria, the teacher describes the student to the parents as succeeding or failing, as we saw in the observations and interviews. This behavior strengthens and perpetuates the hierarchy existing in the education system between teachers and parents, and thus the school's role of narrowing the gaps between students from different socio-economic backgrounds is not achieved. The present study opens the way for further study and investigation of the question as to how the school can be made to contribute to greater equality, among other things through changing the teachers' educational perception.

At the same time, despite the problematic nature of teacher-parent relations and the pseudo-concord between them, both sides are interested in maintaining communication and cooperation. The teachers need the parents' support in their children's education, both as regards their studies (making sure they do their homework) and with discipline (supporting sanctions imposed by the school on the disobedient student). The parents want the connection with the teacher because they want to further their children's interests in the school, and therefore they will recruit the resources at their disposal in order to influence the decisions of the system with regard to their children. As our study shows, even if they did not admit it, the more socio-economic resources the parents have the more powerful their influence with regard to their child's future.

The question that arises on the macro level is whether it is possible to create non-hierarchical relationships between teachers and parents instead of the concealed power struggle between them or passive compliance reflected in pseudo-concord. Teacher-parent relations are a function not only of the personal interests of each side but also of the attitude of society at large. In Israel teachers are not the objects of particularly high esteem, among other things because of their relatively low salaries, and this often affects relations between parents and teachers, with both sides employing strategies in order to survive. Hence, in the absence of change in the priorities of society as a whole, it will be hard to generate changes in teacher-parent relations. However, that is a subject beyond the scope of the present study.

7.5 Recommendations for further research

One of the limitations of interpretive research is the inability to generalize. The research findings that emerged in this study and my recommendations derive only from the limited population that I investigated. In order to make generalizations out of these conclusions it is necessary to conduct similar studies in other schools in various parts of Israel, dealing with parent-teacher interactions in different frameworks. In addition, I recommend conducting studies combining different research methods. For example, it would be interesting to conduct a study combining an interpretive with a quantitative approach. Specifically, I would recommend the following:

7.5.1 Increasing the number and types of schools investigated

My study investigated three junior high schools in the center of the country. To represent a wider population I suggest investigating other schools in other parts of the country, thus reflecting populations of parents with differential resources. In addition, it would be worthwhile to increase the number of teachers investigated in each school in order to gain a firmer understanding of the school's approach. Also, I recommend examining further types of schools in the education system, such as kindergartens and primary schools, in addition to the junior high schools studied in my work. In addition to the meetings between teachers and parents on parents' days, these studies should examine other frameworks of teacher-parent interactions, such as general teacher-parent meetings, parents' visits to the school or home visits by the teacher.

7.5.2 Combining research methods

Another characteristic of interpretive research is the dependence on the researcher's interpretation of people's activities. Therefore, in addition to the techniques of observation and interviews, it might be worthwhile to gather information based on questionnaires focusing on the expectations of both sides and the extent to which they felt that these expectations were met. For example, "How much time did the teacher devote to you?" / "Did the parent cut you short during the meeting in order to finish quickly?" and "Was the teacher prepared to listen to you?" / "Did the parent listen to your explanations?" To both sides: "Did you feel that the discussion really covered the important points?" And to parents: "Would you recommend this teacher?" In preparing the questions, we should not forget that the limitation of the quantitative approach is that a great deal of information may be lost and important data may be ignored if they are considered subjective, anecdotal or based purely on impressions. Thus, with a combined interpretive-quantitative approach, the reality that emerges from the findings should be perceived as a whole, and all the data accumulated, including atypical results, should be documented and discussed in detail.

7.6 Recommendations to the education system

The meeting on parents' day sometimes becomes a frustrating encounter for both teacher and parent. Teachers have to "cover" a large number of students in one evening, which makes it hard for them to relate personally to each parent, hence the meeting tends to become mechanical and formal. Every deviation from the short time devoted to the meeting affects the parents who are awaiting their turn. The time pressure creates tension and causes both sides to concentrate mainly on the points that need improvement, on failures and problems. In this way, the child is portrayed in a false light, making the parents feel uncomfortable, angry and even ashamed. Parents are liable to avoid coming to meetings when the teachers have nothing new to tell them, when they feel attacked or accused, or when they feel that the teacher does not know their child or does not like him/her.

The teachers gain nothing from a meeting in which they are active but learn nothing from the other side. Thus the channel of communication that is so vital becomes a source of frustration, tension, and even conflict - as we saw in the findings. The success of the meeting is measured by the extent to which two-way communication develops during its course. The teacher, as a professional, has the responsibility for the agenda of the meeting and for achievement of its purposes. To improve the communication, there are many changes that can quite easily be made (in addition to the specific recommendations in Appendix 1). For example, it is highly recommended to spread the parents' days over two evenings instead of one, each evening devoted to half of the class, informing the parents of the dates in advance and keeping to the timetable. The ultimate aim is to change the meeting on parents' day to a counseling situation in which the teacher, the parent and the student take part as three equal partners in a relaxed, unhurried meeting to discuss the student's situation from their different points of view. The homeroom teacher should be fully informed of the student's situation at school. To facilitate the success of the meeting, it is important to ensure pleasant physical conditions, privacy, and sufficient time for both sides to express their thoughts and responses. The information provided by the teacher has to be reliable, particularly when it is unpleasant. Teachers should avoid generalizations or ambiguous definitions, and offer concrete examples to illustrate their message. The use of simple, non-condescending language without professional jargon is an aid to communication. The ability to remain attentive even when the parent is aggressive or untruthful is one of the teacher's professional requirements. If the teacher focuses on the development process as a whole, with its achievements and difficulties, strong points and weak ones, balancing the different aspects of growth - cognitive, affective, physical and social - parents will emerge with a sense of optimism, feeling that the teacher understands them and does not judge them or their children. Both sides need to emerge from the meeting with clear knowledge of the role distribution between them in terms of helping the child.

Both sides may be apprehensive about the meeting for fear of being blamed or attacked by the other side. Teachers should avoid attempting to "educate" parents or preaching to them. Teachers often think that parents have unrealistically high expectations of their child, which puts pressure both on the child and on the teacher. Sometimes teachers think that parents who neglect their children expect the school to take their place. Parents, on their side, fear that the teachers do not know their

children well and do not appreciate their talents enough. When the meeting is successful all the doubts disappear. The teacher learns to know the child better and adapt the teaching to his/her needs; parents learn about other aspects of their child's functioning, and the child profits from the partnership.

In addition, in light of the interpretations of interactions that emerged in the course of the negotiations, it is recommended to develop teachers' and parents' communication skills through workshops that will develop effective and constructive communication rather than blocking. This communication should convey positive mutual expectations together with respect for and acceptance of each other. This kind of workshop could lead to genuine cooperation between teachers and parents and to the attainment of shared goals on the basis of common interests.

In order to ensure that the school's educational approach will not be purely the domain of the teachers it is necessary for the teachers, students and parents to develop a shared ethos in which all the partners share the same educational vision. Furthermore, to effect a fundamental improvement in teacher-parent interactions it is recommended to hold courses and workshops at teacher training colleges. In Israel there are no courses that provide teachers with tools to communicate with the parents, who themselves are clients of the school. The future teachers are not taught how to conduct parents' days and recruit the parents' cooperation, nor are they trained for the national mission of helping to close social gaps. The syllabus in teacher training colleges focuses on curriculum studies, teaching methods and ways of coping with disciplinary problems. As regards any other problems that they encounter in the course of their work, the teachers have no choice but to use the trial and error method, having received no preparation to deal with these issues.

The teachers themselves also need to clarify their objectives as an ideological perspective and present it to their students, the parents and the community at large. In doing so, they need to be aware of the broad cultural contexts in which they function, out of a sense of responsibility for society as a whole, which sees them as its agents (Starratt, 1994). The ethical perspective may give the teachers inner strength to challenge the external norms that reproduce and perpetuate social stratification. Teachers should challenge routine patterns and traditional procedures in education, and fight social injustice together with the parents. Perhaps the answer to the teachers' growing sense of loss of authority and justification for their actions lies in deepening the ethical perspective, while reinforcing their confidence in their professionalism,

values and goals. In order to deepen this perspective, it is important also to clarify the perspective of the teachers' partners to interactions in the education system, such as the parents, the students in the classroom, other teachers in the staffroom, the administrative staff, the supervisors and representatives of the community.

Teacher-parent relations can be improved by the participation of both sides, together and/or separately, in various courses and workshops designed to enhance mutual understanding and the ability to listen to each other (see Appendix 1).

Improved relations will help to lower the tension and reduce the alienation that sometimes exists between teachers and parents.

For teachers these courses should begin in teacher training colleges, and later in in-service training and various complementary courses in a more comprehensive framework. It is recommended that the parents and their representatives in the PTA be invited to participate in these courses and their planning, in order for them to experience real partnership in the school. The teachers sometimes feel as if they own the school both because of their role in it and because they think that their training and experience in educational work make them in some way superior to the parents. Their sense of professional pride is often an obstacle to collaboration with the parents in the educational work. It is not enough to deliver messages from the school to the parents' representatives, it is necessary to create two-way communication with them and give them the opportunity to influence decision making processes.

It is my hope and belief that the development of a practical program to change the reality of parents' days will provide a practical contribution to the improvement of education in Israel.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Proposed workshops for improvement of communication between teachers and parents

Following are some practical suggestions for the improvement of communication between teachers and parents on parents' days:

- The workshops for teachers are based on a total of 56 or 28 hours, which are the number of hours that grant teachers credit points leading to eligibility for salary increments according to Education Ministry procedures.
- The first workshop below is described in detail because I see it as the basis for changing teacher-parent relations.

A. Workshop for teachers: Development of effective communication between teachers and parents on parents' days

The specific aims of this workshop are:

1. To enhance the participants' awareness of the elements that lead to tension between teachers, as representatives of the school, and parents, as representatives of the family sphere.
2. To clarify the participants' expectations of themselves as both teachers and parents, and also their expectations, as parents, of their children's teachers, and as teachers, of their students' parents. The purpose of this is to strengthen the teachers' ability to empathize with the parents and sensitize them to parents with diverse approaches.

The overall goal of this workshop is to give a different character to parents' day, changing the meeting between teachers and parents from an exchange of information based on criticism and blame to a situation of working together for a common goal on the basis of collaboration, acceptance, understanding and mutual respect, despite differences in attitudes and approaches towards a particular issue.

Topics to be covered in the workshop:

1. Basic communication skills leading to effective communication between teachers and parents.

a) The art of speaking

An inappropriate manner of speech can alienate parents and students from teachers instead of bringing them closer together. Often, instead of conveying **acceptance**, teachers project the opposite message, expressing **accusation** or **criticism**: *You are not consistent enough in following your child's progress, or threats*: *If your son does not make progress in studies he might have to repeat the class*. These messages hinder communication and prevent spontaneous response from the parent who is absorbed in his/her own problems, thus obstructing solution of the problem.

b) Effective listening

In order to be able to listen to the parent or student, the teacher needs to believe in their ability to solve their own problems, even if this involves a long process. The teacher should allow them to release their emotions, understanding that emotional states such as anger are transitory. Beyond this, the teacher should really want to help the parent and be ready to devote time for this. It will prove to be a profitable investment. Parents (or students) who feel that the attitude to them is not judgmental and that their opinions and emotions are respected will feel closer to the teacher, be prepared to listen and together seek a solution to the problem.

2. Problem solving techniques

In many cases the solutions offered to educational problems are "first aid treatment" and therefore not successful. What is needed is a **problem solving technique** with a system-based approach, relating both to the goal and to the process, which has to be implemented by careful planning.

3. Principles of facilitating a discussion

Effective discussion starts with familiarization, planning and choice of topics. The topics discussed in the workshop should be relevant to the school, for example, the question of school uniform, homework, lateness and absences, the attitude to school

property and the property of others, the attitude towards authority, respect for parents and teachers, recruitment of students to community activities.

Participants: groups of teachers

Format: 14 weekly sessions during the year, each session of 4 hours duration, totaling 56 hours.

- It is recommended that this workshop be conducted in the framework of the school staff, with the group of teachers acting as a support system for the individual teacher.
- Teachers should receive group or individual guidance according to their needs at the various stages of the course.
- The instructor of the course should preferably come from within the school staff.

B. Workshop for parents: Thinking and learning processes

Aim of the workshop:

To provide parents with operative tools for coping with teachers' thinking and learning processes.

Topics to be covered in the workshop:

1. The parents' place in the learning processes in the school
2. Creating a home atmosphere that is supportive of learning
3. Channels of communication between parents and teachers

Participants: groups of parents

Format: 5 sessions during the school year, each of 3 hours duration.

It is recommended that the workshop be given in the school by the school counselor and an outside instructor.

C. Workshop for teachers and parents: Collaboration between systems

Aims of the workshop:

1. To improve the interpersonal communication between the teacher and the parent on parents' day.
2. To help the participants to develop awareness of the complexity of the contact between teachers and parents on parents' day and to define for themselves the need for continued learning and training at various levels.
3. To develop effective interpersonal communication skills.

Topics to be covered in the workshop:

1. Orientation and preparation of a contract
2. Teachers' and parents' conscious and unconscious expectations
3. Interaction and negotiations between teachers and parents
4. Basic assumptions of communication between teachers and parents
5. Obstacles to communication
6. Identification of emotions
7. Active listening
8. Conflict resolution
9. Collaboration between teachers and parents in the school

Participants: teachers and parents

Format: 7 weekly sessions of 4 hours duration (entitling teachers to 28 credit points), to be conducted by a facilitator from outside the school.

D. Workshop for teachers and parents

Aim of the workshop:

To develop understanding and provide tools for coping with conflicts that might arise between teachers and parents on parents' days.

Topics to be covered:

1. Recognition of alternative ways of thinking, locating inner strengths, development of the ability and ways of coping with pressures, exhaustion, conflicts and burnout, identification of personal styles. The material is based on cognitive theory, role theory, behavior in crisis situations and conflict theory.
2. "We all want the good of the child" – collaboration and encouragement.
3. Accord between parents' and teachers' intentions - seeking areas of convergence between teachers and parents.
4. Identification of problems common to parents and teachers and locating solutions that suit both sides, learning how to use collaboration and encouragement as effective tools to enable parents and teachers to further the child's progress both at home and at school.

Participants: teachers and parents

Format: 14 sessions, each of 4 hours duration, totaling 56 hours, to be conducted by a facilitator from outside.

E. Workshop for PTA committees

Aim of the workshop:

To develop and organize the work of the PTA committees.

Topics to be covered:

1. The PTA's functioning as an organizational entity
2. The PTA's functioning with the school
3. Examination of the PTA's methods of working with the school, with the local authority and/or ownership of educational networks. Review of the findings and analysis of data, followed by recommendations relating to the organization of the PTA's work, including refresher courses, help in formulating goals and providing tools and knowledge for organizing class committees and parents' committees together with the class teachers.

Participants: PTA committee members, class teachers and the school administration.

Format: 7 weekly meetings of 4 hours duration, altogether 28 hours, run by a facilitator from outside the school.

Additional topics for workshops: for teachers and parents together and separately

- "Who's afraid of parents/ teachers?"
- The family sphere and its influence on the children's development and achievements.
- Immigrant parents – families in cultural transition, different forms of parenting, modes of communication and support during the period of absorption and adjustment.
- "My family and other families" – changing family situations and their effect on the children (divorced parents, one-parent families).

Appendix 2: Bulletin - school A

יעדי בית הספר:

- התלמיד יעמוד במרכז העשייה החינוכית.
- מגוון אפשרויות ללמידה בכל הרצף.
- בחירה אישית של תחומי הלמידה.
- רמות למידה שונות במגוון רחב של מקצועות.
- מעקב והנחייה אישית לכל תלמיד.
- תגבור באמצעות מרכזי למידה ושיעורי עזר.

פעולות חברה:

- בית הספר מקדיש חשיבות רבה לחינוך מעבר למסגרת הפורמלית.
1. התלמידים לוקחים חלק בסמינרים וטיוולים חינוכיים, הופעות בתיאטרון, ערבי פולקלור, ביקור בתערוכות.
 2. יש מגוון קורסים מחוץ למערכת.
 3. בנוסף למסגרת החברתית פועלות כמה מסגרות – מועדון עיתונאות בית ספרי, מועצת תלמידים כיתתית ושכבתית.

תקנון בית הספר:

1. המחנך ידווח להורים על ההישגים הכלליים של התלמיד.
2. תלמיד שנעדר משיעור או מיום לימודים יביא אישור מההורים או מרופא המסביר את סיבת ההיעדרות.
3. אסיפות הורים – בשנת הלימודים יקבעו ע"י המנהל/ת מתחילת שנת הלימודים.
4. הורים מחמנים למספר פגישות עם הגורמים הספציפיים המתאימים.
5. פגישות הורה – מורה ברמת הכיתה יקבעו עם ההורים בהתאם למורי הכיתה.
6. נציג אחד מכל כיתה יצטרף למועצת ההורים – מועצת ההורים בוחרת את יושב הראש.
7. נציג מכל כיתה ייקח חלק בדיונים במועצה הפדגוגית, חוץ מההחלטות שמשפיעות על תלמידים והישגיהם.

Appendix 3: Bulletin - school B

מטרת ביה"ס:

להקנות לתלמידים השכלה וחינוך כדי שיסתגלו בהצלחה
 בצב"א ובחיים האזרחיים.

חברה ותרבות

בית הספר כולל פעילויות אידיאולוגיות, חברתיות מתוכננות
 ומובנות.

1. כל תלמיד לוקח חלק בפרויקט עם תוכן אידיאולוגי
 חברתי משק במשק שנת הלימודים.
2. בסוף שנה כל תלמיד כותב בעיתון בית הספר.
3. קיימות פעילויות תרבות כמו: ביקור בתיאטראות,
 קונצרטים, סרטים ועוד.

נוהלי בית הספר:

1. התלמידים מוחררים (חוץ ממחלה) רק שמגיעה בקשה
 מהבית.
2. יש ברורים עם הורים אחרי שתלמיד נרשם, התנהג בצורה
 שלילית ו/או איפה בעיות התנהגות ו/או איחורים.
3. קיימים קשרים ראויים עם הורי תלמידים.

Appendix 4: Bulletin - school C

בשביל מה לומדים?

המכוונות היא לתת לתלמיד את מלוא האפשרויות להגיע למצוינות אישית ויחזמה עצמית.

תוכנית חברתית:

לבית הספר יש מגוון פעילויות חינוכיות – חברתיות כמו:

1. קורסים מחוץ למערכת.
2. טיולים.
3. סיורים מקצועיים.
4. ביקור בתיאטראות ובבתי קולנוע.
5. מועצת תלמידים שותפה בקביעת אפיון בית הספר.

אמנה חברתית

התלמיד יכול ללמוד הודות למאמצי הוריו, הנהלת ביה"ס, מוריו והצוות שמוכן לעזור לו להצליח – אנחנו מקווים שתעריך זאת.

Appendix 5: Original Hebrew text of direct quotations in thesis

6.1 יעדי מורים והורים

6.1.1 יעדי מורים

6.1.1.1 יעדים פדגוגיים

א) התמקדות בבעיות התלמיד

קשיים בלימודים, שיעורי בית ובעיות משמעת

אם: אני רואה שהמצב בלימודים לא כל כך טוב..

מורה: היסטוריה - חפש, צריך רק לשבת, זה לא קשור להבנה, יש בעיות,

הציונים נמוכים, לא עושה שום דבר. יש לבקש התראה חמורה בתצורה אם לא

ישפר את הציונים.

מורה: היא יכולה, היא לא יושבת מספיק. הציונים נמוכים מכיוון שהיא פשוט

לא מכינה שיצורכי בית.

אם: זה לא כמו בבית ספר יסודי, כאן צריך להכין שיצורכים וזה לא הולך

בקלות.

אם: רציתי להרים טלפון והוא לא נתן לי.

מורה: יש לך את הזכות, את אמא שלו, חשב לי שאת תהיי בקשר, זה

הצתיק שלו, יש מורים שרוצים לראות אתכם במיוחד, שנינו - חשב שיבוא וזה

תלוי בק.

אם: אני מוטרדת מהאנאלית.

מורה: המצב קשה, יש טיפה התקדמות אבל לא מספיק, המצב עצוב,

הציונים נמוכים.

(צמ' 107)

אם: הוא חושב על דברים אחרים ולא על לימודים.

מורה: בנק התחיל להפריע וחשב שיקשיב ולא יצטוק בדברים אחרים.

אם: יש התקדמות בלימודים?

מורה: יש לי בעיה עם בנק, למרות שהל שנינו, הוא צבר חמש הפרצות משמעת.

יש התקדמות בלימודים אק יש בעיה במשמעת.

ב) הבהרת מצב התלמיד

בראיונות שהתקיימו עם ארבע המורות, הן הראו בהבהרת מצב התלמיד יעד פדגוגי מרכזי

ועל פי דבריהן - ביום ההורים יש להעביר את האינפורמציה לגבי הילד, למסור

הערכה להורים על ציוני התלמידים במטרה לחשוף בעיות.

חשב להסביר להורים על מצבו של הילד, כדי שלא יהאנו בטעות שלא ידענו.

(צמ' 108)

ביום ההורים חשב שהורה ידע הכל כדי לקחת אחריות על ילדו.
אם: הפציה היא במתמטיקה, כל השנים.

מורה: את הפציה במתמטיקה, יש לי מורה ואני מוכנה להפנות אותך אליו. ניתן לשפר, זה לא מאוחר, אני יכולה להציע שני דברים- תישל מורה למתמטיקה, כדי שתראו שאכפת לכם ואתם לא מנלנלים, תשאלו באיזה תחום קשה לכם, ודבר שני- כדאי שתקחו שיעורים פרטיים, יש לי מורה מצויה, אני ממליצה עליו כל השנים, ותמידו שאני המלצתי.

(צמ' 109)

ובראינות איתי איששו המורים את הדרישה הדפוסית לשיעורי עזר, עם ההבחנה שהן יוצרות בין המעמד הנמוך למעמד הבינוני ומעלה.
חשבה לי הצעה הפיסית של ההורה במתן שיעורי עזר בקיב. את יש תלמיד קשה לו במקצוע מסוים, אני מבקשת שיקחו לו עזרה פרטית, או שההורים יעזרו, כדי למנוע הצעה לסוף הסיוסטר עם שילדים. אני מרגה ככה, מכיוון שמתק ניסיוני ראיתי, שתלמידים שמסויצים אחד לשני זה לא עקבי ולא יציב, ולבסוף לא הולך, ומניסיון של שנים אני יודעת שבמתמטיקה, לפעם, אתה לא לוקח שיעורים פרטיים, אתה לא מניח להישלם. אני לא מדברת באוויר, אני אומרת להורה שהילד צריך להקיצ, אבל ישנם הורים שמצבם הסוציו-אקונומי קשה והם אפילו לא פונים אליו בקשת עזרה ואנחנו בבית הספר מציעים להם מספרות עזר באמצעות ומתמטיקה וזאת על מנת למנוע את נשירתם.

(צמ' 110-109)

6.1.1.2 יעדים טיפוליים

אם: יש בעיות משפחתיות, אולי זו הסיבה לירידה בלימודים?
מורה: בקשר לפציה המשפחתית, תבואי אינה בוקר אחד לבית הספר ותדברי עם היוצרת.

אם: הייתי אצל פסיכולוג ועשן לילד אבחון.

מורה: תישל היוצרת, היא עוסקת בהכוון, למרות שאנו מתואמות. ובראיון איששו המורות את התנהגותן שעלתה בתצפיות וצינו שבעיות טיפוליות הן מפנות ליועצת בית הספר:
יום הורים זה לא מקום לשיחות נפש. יש הורים שמחכים בחוץ, אני מרגישה לחץ וזה לא רצוני שאני אדבר על בעיות בבית. לפעמים באין ברירה זה מתגלגל.

אם זה עולה מדברים על זה, כשהנושא לא מסובק, אבל שהוא טיפולי ומורכב
אני מפנה ליועצת.

(צמ' 111)

בדרך כלל ביום הורים החזק הטיפולי לא עולה כי יש תור ארוך ולכל הורה
מוקדשות בקושי 10 דקות, אם יש צורך אני מפנה ליועצת.
אני לא מתערבת בקונטקסט המשפחתי אלא מפנה ליועצת או לעורך טיפולי
אחר, כמו תחנות ליועץ משפחתי.
אני לא נכנסת לצדויות משפחתיות במועד.

(צמ' 112)

6.1.1.3 יעדים שרידתיים

אומרים המורים להורים:

כדאי לערוך עם המורה המקצועי ולבדוק אולי המורה הפרטי לא בסדר, אולי
צריך לתת שיעורי עזר עצמיים בשבוע, אולי אתם צריכים לדרבן אותה יותר?
אצלי בנק בסדר, אך יש בעיה עם המורים האחרים וכדאי לדבר איתם.
קשה לשיעורו בית תשאלי את ילדך, יש לו קשיים ולכן הפנינו אותו
לפסיכולוגית, מהו מפרוץ לו.
יש לו בעיות התנהגות בבית הספר, איך הוא בבית? אתם נותנים לו סיבוי
לעבו הצדדיות מביט הספר?
בנק צריך להשקיע יותר בלימודים, חבל שלא הצעתם במועד לאסופת
הורים, אני מבינה שהייתם בחו"ל.

(צמ' 113)

יתכן כי הימנעותן, שנצפתה, של מורים מלשבח את הילדים בפני ההורים נבעה מן החשש
להתחייבות: שמא יבואו אליהם הורים אחר כך הטענות - הרי אמרת שהוא משתפר או
השפית אותו או בעצמך אמרת שהוא ילד טוב, אז מה קרה?
בראיון עם המורים עולה כי התנהגותן מונחית ע"י פעולות שרידתיים:
אני לא מתנצלת אבל יש תלמידים שאתה מרשים שמיצית איתם את מה שאתה
יכול, הזמנת אותם, דיברת איתם, הבטיחו, ויום דבר לא קרה ואז אתה אומר,
ניסיתי מה שאפשר, כרעצ אני מסיר אחריות, ואני נוהגת עם להחתיים את
ההורים על זה שידעו שילדך לא צמד בהתחייבות וכך אני מסירה אחריות בקשר
להצלחתם בלימודים, אפילו אם ילדך יש יכולת והוא נכשל, זאת אשמתי.
לפעמים יש מצבים שהילד לקוק לעצרה ואני מנסה לערב את ההורים, שייקחו
לו שיעורי עזר. לפעמים, המורה אעם כק שהתלמיד נכשל אבל הוא אף פעם
לא יודה בכך.

(צמ' 114)

6.1.2 יעדי הורים

6.1.2.1 יעדים פדגוגיים ותארוכיים

א) זיהוי בעיית התלמיד והצגת קשיים בחינוכו

התבטאויות קצרות ועמומות משמעות:

צריק להכניס אותה לאספול.

אנלית זה בעיה.

לא ברור לי מה הולק איתה.

בצמחי היתה טובה.

היא יושבת הרבה.

היא דווקא לומדת.

(צמ' 115)

התבטאויות מפורטות ובהירות:

נימנו שזה עם המורה לפיסיקה. אנחנו אהבים לעשות את זה עם לפני יום הורים'. הציון האחרון של הבן שלי היה 85, אני לא מבין איך המורה עושה את הממוצע? הוא אמר לי שאת בני יספר, הציון יתוקן. את יודעת שהשאלות שלו איטיות, וכשהמורה מצודדת אותו זה טוב כי אז אפשר להפיק מהפוטנציאל שלו הרבה.

(צמ' 116)

ב) בקשה לעזרה

תמיד זה מורה טוב במתמטיקה ופיסיקה.

אני מקפד שתי תצבור הקבצה.

חשוב שאת תדברי עם המורה לאנלית.

המורה מתנספת עליה ונמאס לה, לכן עם הציון יורד, תיווצר לה מה לעשות. יש לה בעיות, צריק לעזור לה, יש פנינו בעיות תקשורת, אני מקפד עם את, המורה דווחי לבתי על האימודים.

(צמ' 117)

ניסיתי לדבר, לברר מה קרה לו, אבל הוא לא אמר לי, זה לא צניוני, אבל זה הבן שלי, אולי תדברי איתו את.

תדברי את עם האבא ותראיצי אותו, כי הוא מביא לפני שהוא שומע.

מה צריק לעשות כדי לעלות לו את הציון?

את יודעת שהוא ביישן.

(צמ' 118)

6.1.2.2. יעדים שרידתיים

בתצפיות, הן לגבי הורים מהמעמד הבינוני ומעלה והן לגבי הורים מהמעמד הנמוך עלו התגובות הבאות:

בצמחי היתה מצונית באמצעה. כאן על כל שטות היא נכספת.
מה עם המורה לספרות? את יודעת שיש לה דעה שלילית על כתי.
המורה לא מסביר מספיק טוב.

יש הצדקות רבה של מורים מבית הספר ולכן תלמידים שיצורים חופשיים.
כדאי שכתוב מכתב בצורה מאורגנת, כל ההורים, ונסנה אותו למנהלת.

(צמ' 118-119)

בראיונות שהתקיימו עם ההורים, נמצא אישוש לפעולותיהם של ההורים כפי שנרמזו בתצפיות:

א) התקה של אחריות ואשמה:

הורים מהמעמד הבינוני-גבוה - אני מצפה שאם יש בעיה, שהמורים יודיעו לי מראש ולא יחכו עד ליום הורים. אני חושבת שלילד צריך לתת חינוך בבית והמורה צריך להמשיך את זה, אבל זה לא תמיד מצליח, המורים בוחרים בדרכי הקלה-לקרוא להורה ולדווח לו.

אני לא הולכת לשם התצננו, אלא לראות מה מצב כתי בלימודים ואם יש בעיות לימודיות, חברתיות, אני מנסה יחד עם המורה והבת לפתור אותן במשותף, כי האחריות משותפת. אם יש בעיה עם מורים כמו השנה, למשל, זה לא בעיה שלי אלא של בית הספר. אנחנו ההורים התלוננו וטיפלו בזה. בעיה שלי זה אם הייתה לא ממושמעת, מתחצפת או לא צונה על דרישות בית הספר. הורים מהמעמד הנמוך - אם הרבה נכספו המבחן באיאלרטיה, מי לא בסדר? אני חושבת שהאחריות על המורים, אבל אני לא אומרת להם, כי אז כאילו אמרתי להם - אתם לא בסדר.

(צמ' 120)

לכתי יש הרבה אחריות, היא פועלת במוצת תלמידים, תנועת נוצר ונותנת הרבה מצמחה ולא מספיקה לצמוד במחויבויות הלימודיות.

(צמ' 121)

ב) בקשת דווח לצורך מציאת פתרון:

הורים מהמעמד הבינוני-גבוה: חשוב לי ללכת ליום הורים כדי לקבל דווח על המצב הלימודי והחברתי של כתי, זה הכל. אני לא חושבת שהמורה תוכל לצבור לי, כי מה שהיא יודעת אני יודעת, כי אנחנו עוסקים באתו תחום, לכן זה ימנע בעדו לספר דברים לא נצויים על כתי. אם זאת בעיה ספציפית אני אפנה

ליוצרת, לפסיכולוגיות, אני יודעת מי מתאים לי.
 אני לא מציעה את הצעותיו של בני, אני הולכת לשמוע.
 אני לא מציעה קשיים ולא מקשת עצרה, כי הולך מתנדד לבק.
 חשוב לי לקבל מידע מוסמך לפני מצבו הלימודי של הבן. אני לא נוהגת לבקש
 עצרה מבית הספר, כי אני לא חושבת שהמורה יכולה לתת מעבר לשעות
 הרגילות. יש דברים שאני צריכה לקחת על עצמי, כמו עצרה. אני עושה מה שאני
 חושבת שהולך לקוק לו. בית הספר היום חסר תקציבים ומה שצריך להשיג בכסף
 אני יכולה להשיג. לא שיש לי כסף מיותר, אלא סדר העדיפויות שלי בנוי עפ"י
 הצרכים הדחופים שלנו.

(צמ' 121)

אני לא מזכירה את הצעות ילדי, אני הולכת לשמוע.
 אני לא מציעה קשיים, או מקשת עצרה כי בני נלמד זה.

(צמ' 122)

6.2 משאבי מורים והורים

6.2.1 משאבי מורים

6.2.1.1 סמכותם הפרופסיונאלית של המורים

אומרת אם:

נכון שאני מורה אבל זה הבן שלי, אני מלווה אותו כל השנים ועם כל הכבוד
 לק אף אחד לא מכיר אותו כמנחי צריק סבלנות אליו, מי שסבלני כלפיו-יכול
 להשיג אצלו כמעט כל דבר.

מגיבה מורה:

יש לי את כל הכבוד אליך כאן ובכלל אבל כאמרת את מסתכלת על הצעות שלי
 באופן סוביקטיבי. זה טבעי. כדי להבין מה קורה איתו צריך כלים פסיכולוגיים
 ופדגוגיים, בשביל זה אנחנו כאן, המורים. דרושה כאן פרספקטיבה, הבנה, קצת
 מרחק והרבה ידע.

ומורה אחרת לאם שהינה פסיכולוגית:

אני יודעת שאת מבונה מבחינה פסיכולוגית מה קרעם הילדה, אולי יותר מננו.
 את מקצועית, אבל כדי להתקדם באמת במקצוע שאני מלמדת, הילדה הזאת
 לקוקה לתכונות ויכולת שאני לא בטוחה שיש לה.

תגובת מורה לאב מדען:

אדוני, המומחיות שלי היא אולי לא במקצוע ממש, אבל תאמין לי שאני יודעת
 איך ללמד וכאן מונחת הבציה של הבת שלכם.

(צמ' 124)

6.2.1.2 סמכותם הביורוקרטית של המורים

אומרות המורות:

תראי חברתי, בבית הספר הזה אני קובעת כמה זמן מקדישים לשיעורים במקצוע שאני מלמדת-ולא האמא.

רון בחור נהדר ואני מצריכה את תכונתו וחוש ההומור שלו. הייתי רוצה בו כחבר לפני אפילו כאן זה בית הספר, וכשהחוכמות שלו קוטעות לי ללא הרף את השיעור אני צריכה להחליט, ולא פצת זה להחליט: השיעור או רון. בנסיונות אלו אין לי ברירה אלא להפציץ את סמכותי כמורה. אני מקווה שאתם מבינים, אין לי הרבה ברירה.

(צמ' 125)

וראיון לחוקרת:

לפצמים כשהמורים באים עם השטיקים שלהם - אני קרובה למשבר. אמא שואלת אותי מדוע אני לא מכבדת את הפתק שנתנה לי לידה שלה. לא יתכן שהמורים יתנו לי לידהם רישיון לא לבוא לבית הספר בכל מיני אמתלות מטופשות ושהמורה לא תשיב. המברת יכולה להתלונן, יש לי מנהלת שאני סומכת עליה ודעם על הפיקוח. אם לא - יש, ברוק השט, עם ארסונים מקצועיים. אדרבא, שתנסה האמא הזאת לרדת עליו.

(צמ' 125)

אם יכולתי הייתי עושה בית ספר להורים שהיה מנהל עם את ההורים ודעם את התלמידים.

אני מסוללת לא לתת עצות להורים אלא לתת להם סיוע אמיתי-במסגרת שיעורי עזר הקיומים בבית הספר ואני שותפה לקביעת שיעורם של התלמידים בהקצות במתמטיקה, אנגלית ומדעים.

(צמ' 126)

6.2.1.3 מידע המורים על ההורים וילדיהם

אומרת אם:

אני לא תופסת מדוע הוא מצליח בכל המקצועות ורק במקצוע שלי הוא נכשל.

מגיבה מורה:

עד כמה שאני מבינה ביסודי לא הלך לו במקצועות שלי.

אומרת האם:

בדרך כלל הוא לא עושה צרות.

מגיבה מורה:

אני מבינה שהוא היה ביסודי. מדוע, בצעם הפסקת עם זה?

אומרת אם:

מאז שהוא הוצרך להקבצה ט' ירד לו מצב הרוח מאוד.

מגיבה מורה:

אבל אולי זה בגלל הקשיים, שאני מכונה, סליחה שאני מתערבת, אבל זה קצת התפקיד שלו, שיש לכם בימין האחרון בבית. אני מתכוונת, תסלחי לי, לנסיעה הממושכת של הצלף לחו"ל.

ובראיון לחוקרת:

הורים שמצדקת הסוציו-אקונומי בינוני ומצדקת מוסרית על ידיהם ואני צריכה להשקיע יותר כדי להפוך אותם לפרטנרים שלי.

(צמ' 127)

6.2.2 משאבי הורים

6.2.2.1 מעמד המוקנה להורים מתוקף היותם הורים.

מתוך הראיונות עולה, שההורים ראו כמשאב רב עוצמה את מעמדו הפורמאלי של ההורה, המוקנה לו מתוקף היותו הורה, כפי שעולה מאחד ההורים:

יחד עם המשפחה יציבה, מאושרת, בעלת ערכים ונורמות התנהלות נאותה, הדעת נותנת שתפקודו יהיה חיובי, הן בבית והן מחוץ למשפחתו.

הורים, שלהם עוצמה כזאת של הורות משתמשים בה שהם נושאים ונותנים לגבי ציפיותיהם מילדס ומבית הספר אליו, כשהם מדגישים משאב נוסף שיש להם והוא ידע אודות הילד, כפי שעולה מדברי אחד ההורים:

אני מכיר את הילד, התנהלותו ויכולתו יותר מהמורה.

אולם ההורים מדגישים בראיון שיש לתת את הדעת גם על כך שיש ילדים הבאים מבתי כאלה ואינם מתפקדים כראוי בבית הספר בשל גורמים הפועלים במערכת הבית ספרית עצמה. ולהפך, יש ילדים הבאים ממשפחות שאינן עונות על הציפיות ואף על פי כן תפקודם בבית הספר תקין, בשל גורמים חיוביים במערכת החינוכית, כפי שמציין אחד ההורים: נכון, את המורה, אבל הוא בן, אני חיה אתו כל השנים, ואם כל הכבוד לך, אף אחד לא מכיר אותו כחונן... את זקוקה לכתיב פסיכולוגיים ופדגוגיים, ולכן אנחנו המורים נמצאים כאן.

(צמ' 128)

6.2.2.2 ידע ההורים על מערכת החינוך, על הדרישות מהתלמיד והציפיות מהם.

(א) ידע על שיטות ההוראה בבית הספר (והראציונל שמאחוריהם)

מורה: יש לנו שיטות לימוד חדשות ומודרניות כדי לקדם את התלמידים.

הורה: אצתי על שיטות הלימוד הנהוגות בבית הספר, אני לא רואה לך אף תפקיד של המורים לפחות בטוב עבור ילדינו.

(ב) ידע על דרישות בית הספר מהתלמידים

מורה: מה את עושה כדי לצמצם לבינה?

הורה: אני יודעת ששנה לפני שבחנות פתחת לכן אני כל הזמן מדרבנת את
בני ללמוד, למרות שנהו תפקידו של בית הספר.

(צמ' 129)

ג) הבנת ציפיות המורים ע"י ההורים

הורה: אני חושבת שהאחריות הלימודית היא על המורים, אבל אני לא אומרת
זהם זאת, כי כאילו אמרתי להם - אתם לא מסדר, אני לוקחת את האחריות
על עצמי, כפי שמצפים ממני המורים.

מורה: תסמכי עלי שאני יודעת מהו תפקידי.

הורה: זאת הרי עבודתך, אני מוכנה לעזור אם יש צורך בכך, אך לא להתערב.

6.2.2.3 מעמדם החברתי - כלכלי של ההורים

כשנשאלו ההורים בצורה ישירה האם השכלה או מעמד חברתי הוא מאפיין מבחין בין
ההורים, הם ענו שבהחלט לא:

הורים ממעמד נמוך -

מכיוון שיש הורים משכילים שהם אדושים ולא תורמים מודיעותיהם לילד אלא
להם, מנלים לילדו כלפי בית הספר ולא איכפת להם שילדם יצא לעבודה אם
הוא לא לומד, יש הורים משכילים והם לא נעזרים במורה פרטי, אבל זה לא
מנה את הישגי התלמיד.

יש הורים ממעמד כלכלי נמוך שדווקא מקימים בחינוך ילדיהם. הם דואגים
ומצודדים את הילד ללמוד. הורים ממעמד כלכלי גבוה יכולים לקחת שיעורי
עזר לילד אבל זה לא תמי צורך אם אין לילד מוטיבציה וציוד מצד הבית.
המעמד הכלכלי וההשכלה לא אורט משפיע לא על הילד ולא על יחס המורים
לילד, מכיוון שיש הורים ממעמד גבוה ומשכילים שמפלים את ילדיהם ומכים,
עסוקים בצניינים שלהם. מה ששנה הוא לא המעמד אלא היחס לילד.

הורים ממעמד בינוני - גבוה (שבצבר השתייכו למעמד נמוך)

אני לדדתי במשפחה מהמעמד הנמוך והורים לא משכילים והיו לי הישגים
טובים בלימודים. היום אני משתייכת למעמד הכלכלי הגבוה ואני ובעלי
משכילים וילד אין מוטיבציה ללמוד. אז מה, המעמד וההשכלה משפיעים?
נכון שבחיים קל יותר שיש כסף אבל אף פעם לא ניצלנו את המעמד שלנו
לשימוש לרעה, יחסנו חיובות לאיכויות האישיות יותר מאשר למעמד.

(צמ' 131-129)

גם המורים תמכו בגישה זו ולא ראו במעמד סוציו-אקונומי משאב מאפיין.

כפי שעולה מראיון שקיימה החוקרת:

אני לא שאפת את ההורים מה מצבם הסוציו-אקונומי.

לא נתקלתי בהורים שמנצלים קשרים כדי להשיג את יצדיהם.

יש הורים שמקשים אפילו הרוסקציה עבורם בלי קשר למצמד.

(צמ' 132)

גם הורים ומורים דוחים את קיומו של המעמד הסוציו-אקונומי.

מורים אומרים:

אני יודעת שאת מינה כפסיכולוגית מה קורה עם ילדך. את מקצועיות

ולאבא שהוא מדען היא אומרת:

אולי אני לא מומחית בנושא כחוק, אבל...

והורים ממעמד סוציו-אקונומי גבוה רומזים על כך בראיונות:

אני לא חושבת שהמורים יכולים לצזור לי. אם יש בעיה אני יכולה לשוחח עם

היוצרת או הפסיכולוג.

לביה"ס חסרים משאבים ואני צריכה לפגוש עבור שירותים.

(צמ' 133-132)

6.3 תפיסת מורים-הורים אלה את אלה

6.3.1 תפיסת המורים באשר להורים

מורה אומרת- הם לא רוצים רק שהילד יצליח אלא שכל המשפחה תקודם.

מורה אחרת אומרת- רוב ההורים חושבים שילדם טאון קטן, וזה שצדיין הוא לא

התלפה זאת אמת ההורים והמורים.

מסבירה מורה:

יכולת לראות שיחה שהיתה לי עם האמא של אנוי מה הבעיה המרכזית שלנו

ביום הורים. את מדברת עם אנשים שמורים לזהות רציונאליים. שמקבלים בחיי

העבודה שלהם החלטות חשובות ואחריות. אבל ביחס לילדים הם מרשים

לצמצם לעתים קרובות לפקוד פנסטאציות. על סמך מה שהיא חושבת, האמא

הזאת, שבת שנכשלה במבחנים באנגלית שלו או ארבע פעמים ברציפות, היא

מוכשרת בקליטת שפות?

לעתים הורים 'מתווכחים' עם המלצות בית הספר המבוססות על מבחנים כדי

לדחוף את הילדים למצמד אטרקטיביות.

(צמ' 135-134)

6.3.1.1 תפיסת המורים את תפיסת ההורים אותם.

אומרת מורה:

לפעמים זה פשוט לא שיחה לאכול של צניין אלא סתם מקח וממכר. האמא

רוצה ולכן היא 'לוחצת', היא לוחצת עד שאסכים או שאנרוק אותה מן החדר.

אמהות צדינות לא לוחצות אבל הן רוצות והקונפליקט הזה בין לרצות
ללחוץ מאוד לבין הנורמה התרבותית של ינה לא יפה ללחוץ מצוק עליהן
ולרוב לא מוכה בשיחה.

(צמ' 136)

ומורה אחרת אומרת:

אחת האמהות הודיעה לי שהיא באה ליום הורים אבל זה מפגש ראשון ואחרון
שלי איתה כי היא מורה במקצועה. השתתי להתצמת איתה ואמרתי לה שאם היא
לא רוצה לבוא אני לא יכולה לזרור אותה. הצענו להסכם של צבודה שלה עם
הבן בבית. היה מאבק כוחות סמוי בינינו אבל הוא נסמר בתיקו ויצאתי בהרצאה
טובה מהצניין.

6.3.2 תפיסת ההורים באשר למורים

אומרות אמהות:

לפעמים אני מרגישה שסולרים את הילד ואני צריכה לחפש את הפתח שבמנהרה.
המפגש של יום ההורים קצר. אין אפשרויות רבות לשנות את הדעות. לעתים
המורה יודעת את השם בלבד ולא מצטרף לנה, אין לי צפיות כי אני יודעת
שהמורים לא יחדשו לי הרבה. אני לא חושבת שהמורה מתעניינת בי, פשוט יש
זה מטרה שאני אשכנע את הילד שרצוי וכדאי לטובתי ולטובת כל הצניין שהילד
ולמד ויתקד כראוי בבית הספר.

(צמ' 137)

אני מוזמנת ליום הורים כדי להבהיר לילד ולצמחי מה נדרש ממנו כתלמיד
מסערת שהותו בבית הספר, ולא כדי להכיר אותי ואת הילד מקרוב, לנה
אין זמן ואני לא מתלוננת. כך המערכת בנויה.
הם בעד הדברות ופתיחות אבל כשאני מתקשרת אליהם הם כואסים.
הם אומרים, אם יש בעיה בואי נשוחח, אם אני אכן עושה כן, הם צועקים, אין
ברירה אלא להבליט...

אומרת אם נוספת:

המערכת הזאת תקוצה בהרצאה שהיא ואפס בלתי. אין לי כל חשק ללכת
לימי הורים האלה, כשרור לי שאין צ'אנס לשכנע אותה בשום דבר. היא יודעת.
היא קובעת.

(צמ' 138)

6.3.2.1 תפיסת ההורים את תפיסת המורים אותם.

אומר אב:

לא נעים לי לראות שחושבים שאתה סתם נודניק וצקן.

אומרת אם (פסיכולוגית):

המורה הזאת חושבת שאני מזכירה את המקצוע שלי רק בשביל לעשות עליה רושם ולעבוד עליה. זה לא כק, ויתכן שהכשרתי המקצועית עונת לי לראות דברים עם בקשר למה שלי אבל מה שאני אומרת למורה הזאת זה מה שאני חושבת לא מה שאני רוצה להשיג, אבל לך תשכנע אותה. כל הזמן המורה אומרת לי: אני יודעת שאת מקצוענית! היא לא צריכה להסיד את זה, אני לא מכניסה את זה ואין שום סיבה שהיא תכניס את זה.

(צמ' 139)

6.4 הגדרות מצב כנגזרות מיעדיהם, משאביהם ותפיסותיהם של

מורים - הורים.

6.4.1 הגדרות המצב כפי שתוארו ע"י המורים בראיונות

מורים:

אני לא מוטרדת ממה יאמרו הורים. במפגשים שלי איתם אני חושבת איך לנסח או לארשן את הדברים. אם המצב קשה, אני חושבת איך לעדן את הדברים ולהדגיש את הצד החיובי. בדרך כלל ההורה נכנס ומתיישב ואני מזהה אותו בשמו ואז זה עושה לי טוב. אם אני לא מזהה אותו בשמו אני משתמשת בסכניקות כמו - אני מוציאה את הדף ואומרת איפה הוא. ההורה אומר - מתחיל ב: ק' ואני נזכרת, אם זה הורה שאני מכירה טוב יותר, אני שואלת - מה נשמע? ואז ההרצה נינוחה ומיידי מתחילה להציג את המצב בלימודים ומתייחסת בצורך לשליליות. זה בצבט מתנהל כמו סרט נצ, כל עשר דקות נכנס הורה אחר. לרוב אני מתחילה עם אינספור מצבים לימודיים ואני מתאימה את סגנון הדיוור והתוכן להורים. יש הורים שאני אומרת להם בצדיות שהם שלהם לא זאון, כי אחרת הם פשוט ירדשו רצ. לפעמים אני משתדלת להרבות בדברים חיוביים ולומר פחות דברים שליליים. חשוב לזהות על קנקנו של ההורה, יש שיחות שהן 'נינוחות' ויש שיחות 'חריפות' יותר.

(צמ' 141-140)

6.4.2 הגדרות המצב כפי שתוארו ע"י ההורים בראיונות

הורים ממעמד נמוך:

בדרך כלל אני פסיבית, אני מציבה את עצמי - אימא של... אני מקשיבה לציונים, אם דבר מה לא ברור לי אני שואלת. אני נינוחה בכל מצב. אני לא אזהרת לבוא בסצנות, המורים הם בעלי מקצוע - היכולת והידע. אני יכולה לבקש מהם עצרה ולשוחח עם הילד בבית.

לפי הרמת הטבה של המורה אני יודעת מה קורה, בדרך כלל, הבן עם מכיר אותי, כשהמורה מקריאה את הציונים אני מרשימה לא נעים, כמעט כמו אמה. הורים ממעמד בינוני-גבוה:

אני נכנסת לכיתה ולא אומרת כלום. אני מבקשת לשמוע. לרוב אני מסכימה עם המורה, כמו עם רופא. בדרך כלל אני אומרת שהמורה צודק וילדי לא, אבל זו לא האמת וזאת על מנת לפני לא תהיה ציפה לא ללמוד.

(צמ' 141-142)

אני מציבה את עצמי לא פשוט הפרטי אלא כאמא של... אני רוצת בתוכי ושאפת מה מצבה של הבת שלי, אם יש לי תלונות כלפי מורים אני מביעה את דעתי.

כשהינן הורים 'ירוקים' התרשנו מהמפגש עם המורה, התיוחסנו אליה כאף דמות מחנכת, השתפה לנו בחינוך הילד, הייתה התרשנות, מה אני אכיד, מה היא תמיד, האם אשש, האם זה יציק או יוציל, האם הנני השתפסנו ויש לנו בטחון מלא. עם לנו יש מה להכיד.

אין לנו ברירה, המורים הם היחידים המחליטים ואנו מתאימים את עצמנו אליהם.

ויותר מזה, אנו מתנהלים כמו שהמורים מצפים מאיתנו להתנהג.

(צמ' 142-143)

6.4.3 – הגדרת המטפוריות של המצב ע"י תצפיות החוקר

הורים בשעת המתנה בפרוזדור:

קור הזה מוסיבים אותנו שעות, אפילו אין כסאות כמו שצריך. כמה זמן המורה מדברת? הזמין אותי ל- 18:00 והסעה כבר 19:00... המורה לנת"ק ממש קטסטרופה, למה לא מפטרים אותה? בדרך כלל אני אומרת שהמורה צודק ולא ילדי, אבל זה לא נכון.

(צמ' 144)

מורים בהפסקה בחדר המורים:

כמה לא נצימים חלק מההורים. הם חושבים שהם יודעים מה טוב לילדי. אם הילד שלהם לא מסוגל להתמודד עם מבחן של 5 יחידות במתמטיקה הם מנסים לשכנע אותי שהוא מסוגל.

אני מקווה להכיר הביתה הזמן לראות את הסרט בטלוויזיה.

(צמ' 145)

6.5 אסטרטגיות מורים והורים כפי שהן משתקפות בתהליכי המשא והמתן

6.5.1 אסטרטגיות מורים

6.5.1.1 אסטרטגיות מורים בבית ספר א'

(א) שיתוף פעולה קואליציוני (מורה 1)

אומרת מורה: את יודעת שאמורה בהיסטוריה יש קושי ביחסים עם אנשים, עם אי היו בצוות איתה. תשוחחי עם המורה ותספרי לה שהבת לאומדת ולא מצליחה, ושתסביר לך איך ללמוד. לפחות היא תדע שאיכפת לך, את תבואי היום עם זה בכלל יצעה רושם.
אם: אכזבם יש בצוות לא רק אי .

(צמ' 147)

מורה: תמיד יש מורה אחד כזה, קשה לחנוק בן אדם בן 40, המנהלת כבר הצבירה את זה הזאה, עם אליו היא פונה לא יפה, יש דברים שקשה אי להתמודד איתם, את בוועד, תתארטנו כמה הורים מהכיתה ותסנו למנהלת בנוגע ליחס, כדאי לשתף מורה עצמה, תסידו לה שזה פגע בהתנהלות אפילו היא לא ישנה בליזה ותראו שאיכפת לכת.
אם: אני אארכן מחר מכתב למנהלת עם חתימות.
עם אי יש בצוות איתה. היא שולטת בנו.
מורה: חשוב אי לשתף בצורה עם ההורים עם את זה נאד מורים, כל עוד זה לטובת התלמיד.
אם: דברי עם המורה למתמטיקה ותבקשי ממנה לדחות את המבחן.
מורה: תנסי את לדבר איתה ואם יש בצוות תפני אלי.

(צמ' 147-148)

מורה: הוא לא מכין שיצורי בית.
מורה: היא יכולה, לא נראה אי שהיא יושבת מספיק בבית, ואני שמחה שאתם חושבים כאלו.
אם: אנחנו כבר נדבר איתה.
מורה: תוצעו אותה בלי עונשים.
אם: בוודאי, זה קל להכפיש את בית הספר אבל בתי צריכה ללמוד.

(ב) קואופטיציה (מורה 2)

מורה: היא תלמידה חיונית אבל נצדרת הרבה במשק היום, אולי בכלל היוסבות במוצתת תלמידים, אולי צריק לקצץ בפעילויות, מה דעתך?

מורה: הוא מפריע בשיעורים, מה דעתך יש לצוות? האם יש קצוות משמעת עם
קביות?

(צמ' 148-149)

בראיונות עם מורים אוששו דפוסי התנהגות אלו בצורות שונות, גלויות יותר או פחות:
כשאני מרשימה שקיים מתח בין ההורים לתלמיד אני מנסה להיות המאפסת
והמצודדת ואני יכולה להשיג מה שאני רוצה.
חשוב לי לשתף את ההורים בקבלת ההחלטות לפני ולדיהם. אם הילד מתקשה
בלימודים ויש לו סיכויים, אני מאפשרת להם להחליט בדבר שיעוריו עזר לילדם,
אם אין לו הרבה סיכויים, אני מציינת את הצופדות כמו שהן כדי להבהיר
לילד שאין לא מקום אצלנו. אני נוהגת לפנות להורים לא בדרך של הטפת
מוסר כדי לקרר אותם אלו.
אני מנסה לנהות על קנקנו של ההורה, להיות ישירה וברורה ולשתף אותו
במצב הלימודי והחברתי של ילדו. אני נוהגת בשיטת המקל והחזק - קודם אני
אומרת דברים טובים ואחר כך מציגה דברים שאני רוצה. אני משתדלת להיות
מניפולטיבית כדי להשיג את מטרתי.

(צמ' 149-150)

6.5.1.2 אסטרטגיות מורים בבתי ספר ב' ו- ג'.

(ג) סוציאליזציה (בית ספר ג', מורה 4)

* התקת אשמה כלפי מטה -

הוא מאחר כי את נותנת לו משימות בקוקר, את צריכה להפסיק עם זה.
חשוב שתצורו אותו לעצתו.

במשפון, זאת בעיה שלכם, צריק לחשוב איך לשפר.

אתם מוכרחים לקחת מורה פרטי לילדיכם.

יש לו קשיים בלימודים. עליכם לדאוג לו לשיעוריו עזר כדי שיהיה בקצב הכיתה.

בכיתה של 40 תלמידים קשה להשיג לכל אחד.

מה קורה עם הבן בבית? זה משפיע עליו בבית הספר.

(צמ' 151)

* הצגת כללי בית הספר -

בית הספר קבע כללים להתנהגות לא ישרה, וצפ-סיהם הוא נוהג. זה החוק.

התלמיד צריק להסתדר עם כל מורה, לפי הראש שלו. אף מורה לא ילך עם

הראש של התלמיד.

כל ונדלונט שיערם צ"ו ילדכם - אתם תישאו בתוצאות ותשלמו את הנזק.

מורה לספורט יש טבלאות ציונים עפ"י הפצולויות, לכן הציונים שלו מדויקים.

לפתק יש בעיה באמצעיה, כדאי שאת תשבי למורה ולא אני כי אני חלק מביט
 הספר. זאת הדרך המקובלת אצלנו.
 התלמידים צריכים להתאים עצמם לשיטות העבודה של המורים. המורים לא
 יתאימו עצמם לדרישות התלמידים.

(צמ' 152)

ד) חסימה (בית ספר ב', מורה 3 ובית ספר ג', מורה 4).

* אי נטילת אחריות -

זה שהמחנכים לא טובים, זה הבעיה שלכם.

הרבה מקבלים אצל המורה הזאת חלש, אני לא יודעת למה? יש קצר בין
 התלמידות למורה.

אני לא מקטנה אבל כשם שיפור בין רגעון א' ל-ב', מקובל שלא עושים מחוצ
 חשבוני.

תישל למורה המקצועי לברר את הבעיה, אני לא הכתובת.

בקשר לקשיים הלימודיים תישל ליועצת, אני לא מוסמכת ולא מסוללת.

(צמ' 152-153)

* מיתון המצב -

במקצוע זה הרבה קיבלו - חלש.

כשהוא רוצה הוא מצליח.

אשר הדברים יסתדרו.

המחור חביב, אני מקווה שישפר את הציונים והכל יהיה בסדר.

הציונים גבוליים, אפשר לשפר, היא תצא מהמצב, יהיה בסדר.

* הצגת מצבים נטולי השפעה -

אין מה לעשות כנגד המורה, לא מוצא חן בעיניכם, שימו פקקים באוזניים.

המורה הוא עם רכז המקצוע, כך שאין למה להתלונן מצדו, בוודאי שיש לו

הסברים משלו למצב.

(צמ' 153-154)

בראיון אמרה המורה - אני נוהגת להשתמש בדו"ח עצמו, להציע להורים את הדבר

העובדתי, החוקי ולתת הסברים. בדרך כלל אני נוהגת להפנות את ההורים

למורה המקצועי, הם מנסים להתמקח על החלטות המועצה הפדגוגית ואני

מבהירה להם שאין לי סמכות להפוך החלטות או שאני מקפדת שיכתבו מכתב

לאנשים המתאימים. אני נוהגת להקדיר את המצב עצמו תלופת ההורים - יש

הורה שנידעצ אט ישמע שבו איחר חמש פעמים, אז אני אומרת את זה בנימה

כחות משמעותיות, אט יש לו ציון 6, זה סוף הצולף בשבילם, אני מסבירה

שכל הכיתה קיבלה 60. כמובן אם זה נכון.

(צמ' 154)

6.5.2 אסטרטגיות הורים

א) הרחבת נקודת החיכוך (בית ספר א')

* התגוננות -

אבל ידוע שק שפני ביישן וכשמצודדים אותו יש לו פוטנציאל. הוא עושה את

המקסימום.

כואב לו, הוא יושבת הרבה ולומדת בבית ובספריה.

(צמ' 156)

* הפחתת ערך המורה -

הבת שלי לא נתנה לי להתקשר אליה ואמרה לי שאת לא יודעת מה בעצמות

בשאר המקצועות, ושאת מלמדת רק מקצוע אחד.

* השוואה -

זה לא בית ספר יסודי אבל אף פעם לא קראו לי שם, הכל היה מצויין.

אני בשוק! זאת הפעם הראשונה שזה קורה לי. בתי הסנייה נישא לבחינות

בריאלי, את בודאי מכירה אותה.

* התקת האשמה כלפי מעלה -

כואב אומרים שאתם לא נותנים מספיק שיצורים, אז יש להם זמן לטלפניה

ולטלפונים.

טעם ב-ט' לוקחים שיצורים פרטיים, היתכן?

מה עם אנאלית, איך יודעו לבטחות? החומר לחופי ודחוס. חופי מזה יש מורות

שנדררות, שלא מביעות לבית הספר, שלא מתחשק להן ואז הילדים סובלים, איך

יודעו לבטחות?

(צמ' 156-157)

* הסרת אחריות -

תצטו לי טובה, תנסי להבין אותה ותראי איך היא תשתפר.

עצוב לי, אני ממש עצובה. אני נדהמת לראות כי הוא לומד ומקיא, עצוב לי

לצוות שנה שצברה.

היא ילדה אינטליגנטית אבל נלחצת מחר, צרי לתת לה צ'אנס.

אולי תדברי עם היוצרת?

תצטו את המסר הזה לבני, התקשרת בינינו לא טובה, טעם עם האבא.

חשוב שהמציב ישתנה ובתי תצליח, כי בעצמי חוליה.

* חנופה -

בתי מצריכה אותך מאד, בלכותך היא התקדמה.

(צמ' 157-158)

דפוסים הללו אוששו בראיונות עם ההורים, כך אומרת אחת האמהות:
 אני נודניקית. אני מצמיח מבקשת מהמורה להקדיש זמן לתלמיד ולשוחח איתו
 כי התלמיד לא תמיד צר למצבו. אם המורה לא מתווחסת אליו, כרוך לו
 שהיטה עליו תהיה חריפה מצט. לפני הציונים, אני לא נלחמת אבל כחברת וצד
 ההורים, בכל וסיבה אנו מציינים - 'נהגו בתלמידים במידת הרחמים'. הילד
 צריך להתמודד. אם מביע לו יותר צורך לבקש. הציון מקפיד ידע, אין מריחות
 על בית הספר היסודי. ביטה על בית ספר פתוח אפשר להתערב. 25% כפי שיש
 היום לא מאפשרים לנו להתערב. חשוב לי לנצל את הקשרים עם המורה כדי
 שיהיה לי ולבני קל במצרכת בית הספר, לא אכפת לי להחניף להם, אבל בלי
 מתנות, אני נשד לה.

(צמ' 158)

(ב) צמצום נקודות החיכוך (בית ספר ב' ו-ג')

* מחאה עקיפה ע"י הסחה -

בהנדסה כל התרשול היה טוב וירד לו ציון עבור חלק של השאלה, יש לי חברה
 מורה שמתחשבת בדרכי כלל. אני לומדת בסמינר הקיבוצים. היתה לי מורה
 מבודרת, לא קלסתי אצלה את החומר, בא מורה צעיר והציון עלה, הוא לא
 האמין, לקח אותי הצידה, בחן אותי ואמר לי - כל הכבוד.
 אצל המורה הקודמת היה בסדר. השנה יש מורה חדשה והכל השתנה לרעה.

(צמ' 159)

* בקשת עזרה -

היא רוזה עזרה באנאלית, את מכירה מורה, בסביב הלימודים אני מוכנה הכל.
 היא חוששת שאם תיקח שיצורי עזר היא תרשול נחותה. אני מוכנה להקריב הכל
 למצנה.

אני רוזה שהיא עם תפנה אליך, יש בעיות היא מחדת או מתביישת ממני.

* ייאוש וכניעה -

אני מכה על חטא, אני אשה.

אני פשוט מרימה ידוים, צויתו הכל.

נתנו לו כל כך הרבה אפשרויות, שום דבר לא צולח, הרמנו ידוים.

הוצאנו הרבה כסף כדי שיוחל שיפור, אבל בכל זאת, כשמביע המבחן הוא לא

יודעת כלום, היא פוחדת. אנחנו כבר מיואשים.

(צמ' 160)

בראיונות שהתקיימו עם הורים אוששו דפוסים אלו, כך אומרת אחת האמהות:
 אני לא נוהגת לבוא אל המורים בטענות, אני נוהגת לבקש מהם עצרה כשצריך
 כי אני חושבת שהם בעלי המקצוע, להם היכולת, הם המחנכים ואני מבטיחה
 לדבר איתו בבית.

אני לא צועקת ולא מתווכחת. אני אומרת שאני מוכנה להשקיע בשביל ילדי
 הכל - מורים פרטיים, למרות שאני צריכה להגיד אחרת, אם יש מורה הוא צריך
 ללמד ולא להגיד לי לקחת שיעורים פרטיים, אבל אני לא אומרת זאת
 ומתאימה עצמי למורה ולבית הספר.

(צמ' 161)

6.6 דפוסי הסכמי פעולה כנגזרים מתהליכי המשא והמתן בין

המורים להורים

6.6.1 הסכמי פעולה כפי שעולים בראיונות עם מורים והורים.

6.6.1.1 בית ספר א', מורה 1 - שיתוף פעולה קואליציוני

בדרך כלל יש הסכמה מלאה בצניין מתן שיעורי עצר וטיפול בעציות משמעות.
 הדבר בא לידי ביטוי על-ידי כך שההורה מהנהן בראשו ואני פונה אליו
 להתחייב למלא את המשימה יחד עם ילדו, כשהמעקב נעשה על ידי ההורים -
 הם אחראים ליצור אתי קשר סלפוני בבית או בבית-הספר, אחת לחודש.
 לרוב ישנה הסכמה ברור להורים כי המטרה החינוכית משותפת לפנינו.
 כשגין הסכמה בינינו וקיימים חיפוקי דעות, לנסף, כשהורה אומר שצט מורה
 מסוים אין צט לפעול, אני מפנה אותם למנהל בית-הספר, אני לא נוהגת
 להשתמש בסמכות זאת, אלא אם מיציתי את כל האפשרויות.
 אם שילדה לומד בבית ספר א' אצל מורה 1, מתארת את "הסכם הפעולה":
 תכני ההסכם - מתן שיעורי עצר לתלמידה צ"י מורה פרטי.
 בהירות ההסכם - התלמידה תיקח פצט בשבוע עצרה ולפני ההחלטה תקבל תגובה.
 שאלת האחריות - אני האמא, אחראית להשיג מורה ולפסל לו עבור העצרה.
 שאלת המעקב - "אני צריכה להיות בקשר עם המורה ולהודיע להם אם זה פוצע
 ואם חלה התקדמות. האינטרס שלי הוא שגני יצליח וצף המורה לידיע אותי
 בקשיו.

(צמ' 164-165)

בית ספר א', מורה 2 - קואופטציה

בדרך כלל ההורה מאפשר לי לעשות מה שאני רוצה והאחריות והמעקב שלי
 ההורה מחוץ לתמונה. בדרך כלל אני מצדיקה לנקוט בדרך זאת, מכיוון שאני
 לא אהבתי שההורים מתערבים בעבודתי החינוכית. דבר נוסף, אם מייצגים כפר

להסכם עם ההורה, ההורה במצב ש' הריב את הידיים, ובמצב זה דרכי
התערבותו לא תהינה יוצאות.

(צמ' 165)

אם שילדה לומד בבית ספר א' אצל מורה 2 מתארת את הסכם הפעולה:
תכני ההסכם- לפני היה שלישי באחד המקצועות וכעסתי מאד. המורה ריכזה
אותי ואמרה שהיא גדולה ומרעצ זה האחריות עליה.
בהירות ההסכם- בתי תחליט אם ללמוד עם חברה או לקחת מורה פרטי.
שאלת האחריות- המורה אחראית שהילדה תיקח צורה באחת מתי המסכרות
שהוצעו לה.

שאלת המעקב- המורה תעקוב אחר ההתקדמות ותהיה בקשר עם המורים
המקצועיים, הסכמתי לכך כי אני מכירה את בתי, זה מכניס אותי לצימיות
מיותרים איתה.

(צמ' 166)

6.6.1.2 בית ספר ב', מורה 3 - חסימה

בדרך כלל ההסכמים נעשים באותו. אני משתדלת שההסכם יהי ברור. אני
לא מתעדת אותו בכתב, וההורה אחראי לביצוע ההסכם והמעקב. במסע
הפא אני נוהגת לאזכר את ההסכם. אם קיימים חילוקי דעות, כל עוד שזה
מנומק וצפוי תקנון בית ספר, אני מקבלת את גישת ההורה, אם יש חריגות
מתקנות ביה"ס אני מפנה למנהל.
אם, שילדה לומד בבית ספר ב', מתארת את "הסכם הפעולה":
תכני ההסכם- הנהלת בית הספר הביצה צורה לימודית. צורה זו לא מומשה עקב
קצוות תקציביות ולפיכך היה עלי לדאוג למורה פרטי.
בהירות ההסכם- ברור היה לנו שצלינו לקחת צורה, ואני בכלל לא חושבת שאיזה
מורה התצניין בכך, מלבד השיחה עם היוצרת. אבל אף פעם אני לא חושבת
שאיזה מורה קרא לתלמיד ושאל מהם קשיו באמת וכמה הוא מקיץ בבית,
ולפיכך הדברים צריכים להיות ברורים לי- אני יודעת שלבית הספר יש מבלות
תקציביות ואני יודעת כמה אוכל לצזור לילדי.
שאלת האחריות- עלי בלבד.
שאלת המעקב- עלי בלבד. לא הרשתי שהמחנכת התעסקה בנושא של בני מעבר
לציונים.

(צמ' 166-167)

6.6.1.3 בית ספר ג', מורה 4 - סוציאליזציה וחסימה

אני בונה הסכמי פצולה שבבסיסם קיימת הדיסה' שההורה לא מתערב. כשאני אחראית למצקב אחר הסכמי פצולה ואני בודקת את ביצועו צ"י מפגיש עם התלמיד, בדרך כלל הסכמי הפצולה הם על משימות לטווח קצר. לפעם המשימה - מתן אחריות לילד. האבא מתחייב לא להתערב במשק שבוצ במה שקורה עם ילדו בבית הספר בתחום הלימודי- חברתי. אם שילדה לומד בבית ספר ג' מתארת את "הסכמי הפעולה": תכני ההסכמי- סוכמי, שהמורה תטפל בצד החינוכי ותשוחח עם בתי בקשר למצב הלימודי.

בהירות ההסכמי- אני לא מתערבת, רק אם אדרש צ"י המורה. שאלת האחריות- צל"י וצל המורה כי אם לי ניתן תפקיד מסוים- לא להתערב שאלת המעקב- על המורה.

(צמ' 168)

7.2 - ימי ההורים כריטואל וכמסגרת לדיון

7.2.1 - הצהרה מחודשת של היעדים

7.2.2 - הצהרה מחודשת של אידיאולוגיית שיתוף ההורים

דברי המורה בראיון:

המפגש הזה חשוב, בראש שההורה מסתכל עלי, המחויבות גדלה. אני יכולה לרתום אותם לצדמי, ולהפכה ליותר מחויבים אלו ולבית הספר, ואז כל נושא שארצה לדון בו צולה. בדרך זאת המטרות שתכננתי לצדמי זה מושגות, שני הצדדים נצויים שותפים בחינוך הילד.

דברי ההורה בראיון:

המפגש אני מאלצה איך בתי לומדת ומתפקדת מהחינה חברתית, ואני מכירה טוב יותר את המורה. המפגש מצוייר אותנו כמושגים של מידע אודות הילד שניתן לנו. זה נותן לנו תמונה מדוייקת על תכונות המורה, אישיותו, ושיטת ההוראה שלו.

(צמ' 180)

אם היו יותר מפגשים, היינו בודאי משיגים את רוב היעדים.

7.2.3 - אשוח הסטטוסים ותפקידיהם של מורים והורים

דברים שעלו בראיונות ע"י מורים וגם ע"י הורים-

היא (האמא או המורה) מי היא חושבת שהיא.

האב היא (האמא או המורה) חושבת שהיא משהו מיוחד.

(צמ' 181)

