

# INTEGRITY AND DISCIPLINE IN ACADEMIA: DEALING WITH STUDENTS' MISCONDUCT ON TWO ISRAELI CAMPUSES

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## Abstract

*Higher education underwent a huge massification process since the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What used to be a reserve for the elite opened its gates to the middle, lower middle and the working classes. Consequently, students' profile changed dramatically. Integrity, honesty, discipline and violence became a major problem on campus. It is taken for granted that the prevalence of misconduct is the outcome of students' characteristics, institutional culture and environment, and faculty attitudes and behaviour. Mainly, it reflects society at large. The problem is bound to deepen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The article tries to outline the problem and its emergence, both in the world as well as in Israel. It then analyzes in detail an Israeli case study. It is based on minutes of two Israeli Disciplinary Committees on two different campuses: One university, the other- a public college. It tries to answer several questions: What is the volume of misconduct cases brought before the committees? Is it stable? Does it change over time? What is the breakdown of misconduct cases brought up before the committees? Does it change over time? Is there a difference between a university and college in this respect? What are the penalties imposed by the committees on the guilty students?*

**Key words:** *students' misconduct, cheating, violence; disciplinary committees decisions and policies.*

## Introduction: Transformation of the System of Higher Education

A new era of higher education began in the second half of the twentieth century, at the conclusion of World War II. Historically, the major goal of education in most societies was to train an **elite**. The system was directed at providing this group with the knowledge and the social foundations necessary in order to run a country. Since the aim of higher education was to develop an elite, it reflected and reproduced the existing social structure (Havighurst, 1989; Morrison, 1998). Thus, only a small minority of the population had the privilege of receiving a higher education.

This state of affairs changed entirely in the second half of the twentieth century, a transformation pioneered by the U.S. In 1940 only about 15% of all 18-21 year olds were studying at colleges and universities, a proportion which rose to 45% by 1970 (Haran, 1990). The expansion of higher education was characteristic of many western countries in the '70s (Broomfield, 2005; Fernig, 1979). By 2004 the rate of enrollment in tertiary educational institutions among 19-27 year olds in OECD member countries was 44% on average, and in European Union countries 45% on average (OECD, 2006, Table C2.1). In eight OECD member countries the rate of enrollment was particularly high, exceeding 50 percent: In Finland it reached 71%, in Sweden 67%, in Iceland 66%, in Hungary 65%, in Poland 62%. In Norway and Australia the rate reached 59% and in the Netherlands 51% (OECD, *ibid.*)

This led to discussion of “higher education for the masses” or “the massification of higher education” (Trow, 1972). It also led to the new current reality in which Bachelor Degrees are as prevalent in developed countries as high school diplomas previously were (Allen & Allen, 2003). This incredible expansion of higher education was the result of a number of factors. These included the extensive democratization which engulfed developed countries following World War II; expansion of the public sector, requiring a greater number of white collar and educated workers; pervasive industrialization, demanding ever increasing numbers of skilled and educated workers; the gradually increasing belief that further economic development depended on a supply of educated human resources, particularly scientists and engineers; and finally, the growing appeal of acquiring an education for its own sake (Gibbons, 1998).

This process ended the era in which higher education was intended exclusively for the elites. It led eventually to an enormous increase in the proportion of middle-class, middle-lower class, and even working class students, previously almost unheard of in higher education (*ibid.*)

The afore-mentioned global process occurred in Israel as well. When the State of Israel was established in 1948 the two existing institutions of higher education, the Hebrew University and the Technion, had a total of 1,600 students. By the end of Israel’s first decade they reached a total of 9,000. During the ‘60s the number of students rose rapidly, at a rate of approx. 14% a year. By 1970 the system of higher education comprised over 35,000 students. In 1980 there were 56,000 students and in 1990 – 76,000 (Soen, 2004, 155). From 1990 to 2001 the population of students increased by 125%. Arab population within the system of higher education increased by 220% (!) over the same period (Planning & Budgeting Committee [henceforth, PBC], 2003, 146). Information on the academic year of 2005 indicates that the number of university students reached 124,000 (CBS and PBC, 2005, table 10), while the number of students at the various academic colleges reached 78,000 (CBS and PBC, 2005, table 12). Thus, the total number of students of higher education was 239,000, and this does not include students studying at branches of foreign universities operating in Israel. From the time Israel was established in 1948 until the end of 2007, its population multiplied by about 8.5, while the number of students of higher education **multiplied by 140(!)** over the same period.

In short, the higher education system in the western world, including Israel, has undergone a process of proletarianization, which drastically changed the character of higher education. A system, which was founded mainly on elites became a system for the masses. **This is significantly reflected in student integrity, discipline, and behavior, in Israel and elsewhere.**

### **Problems concerning cheating, discipline, and violence on campuses in Israel and elsewhere**

Academic campuses have been plagued by increased rates of dishonesty, disciplinary problems, and verbal and physical violence, as well as criminal behavior per se, as academic studies become more widespread and popular. Changes in student composition have created a new reality. Thus, while rates of student-reported cheating on tests reached 23% in 1941 according to a U.S. study, by 1980 the rate reported had reached 88% (Davis et al., 1992).

Dealing with various types of cheating and dishonesty on campus has been a topic of study for over eighty years (Blankenship & Whitley, 2000; Davis et al., 1992). However only in the last 40-50 years has the problem been seriously researched (Davis et al., 1992, 16). By the end of the ‘90s over one hundred studies had been published on the subject (Whitley, 1998). Since then the number of studies has grown at a dizzying rate. Using the Google Scholar search engine nowadays to look for articles published in scientific journals on cheating, academic integrity, and disciplinary problems on campus, will produce many thousands. It is widely accepted that problems concerning integrity within higher education have become greatly exacerbated over the past generation (McCabe & Trevino, 1996).

The American Educational Testing Service, established in 1947 to coordinate tests given by the American Council on Education, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and the College Entrance Examination Board, held a combined series of studies in late 1998, aimed at researching the scope and nature of cheating on campus (ETS, 1999). One of the important conclu-

sions indicated by the study was the realization that cheating on tests is extremely common. This is derived from the recognition that cheating is common in all fields of life.

However, different studies reflect the problem as varied in scope. In a study held among students of marketing, 49% of the subjects admitted cheating in some way on academic assignments (Tom & Borin, 1988). In an anonymous study held at a large American university, over two thirds of the students admitted cheating in some way at least once during their studies (Hollinger & Lanza-Kaduce, 1996). In a huge survey encompassing approx. 15,000 students from thirty one large U.S. universities, over 60% of the students regretfully admitted to at least one act of cheating (Meade, 1992). Other studies found cheating rates of 70% and more among students (Eckridge & Ames, 1993; Genereux & McLeod, 1995; McCabe & Bowers, 1994). An article published in the New York Times in early 2001 (Altschuler, 2001) states that in a survey of 21,000 upper and middle school students, 70% of the former and 54% of the latter admitted to cheating on tests. This is a steep increase from the 33.8% found by Bronfenbrenner and his colleagues who researched the situation in 1969 (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1996). As stated, study and survey findings are not homogeneous. Even the trends identified are not uniform. Some of the differences stem from varying definitions. Others are related to different study settings. In any case, it is widely acknowledged that the problem of cheating on campus is growing gradually worse. Thus, even researchers who contend that cheating has not dramatically increased over the last generation agree that there has been a significant rise in the *types* of cheating (types of cheating not previously found on campus have emerged over the last generation) and in the *frequency* of cheating. In other words, students feel a need to cheat at a higher frequency (Wotring, 2007).

Prevalent trends concerning cheating are also true of bullying and violence. Researchers are not unanimous in their opinions about the scope of the problem and actual numbers. However, as early as 1989 an American scholar emphasized that although American campuses are no strangers to violent crime, "we have never previously witnessed campus crimes anywhere near the nature and extent of those currently evident" (Smith, 1989, 5). In 1993 two other scholars remarked that lately the "ivory tower" image of academic campuses has been replaced by a completely different image – the campus in the image and figure of the violent society that surrounds it (Whitaker & Pollard, 1993).

According to a U.S. survey of students held in 2004, approx. 17% of the students reported experiencing some sort of violence or harassment during the past year (Langford, 2004). The common forms of violence are sexual and interpersonal violence. A telephone survey held in 1997 found that 1.7% of all female students had been victims of rape and another 1.1% had been victims of attempted rape over the previous seven months. The researchers concluded that 5% of all female students are at risk of becoming victims of violence every year, and that *about one quarter* of all female students are at risk of becoming victims of violence by the end of their studies (Fisher et al., 2000). This survey also indicates that about 13% of all female students reported that they were stalked during the previous seven months (*ibid.*). Other studies report that between 20% and 50% of all students experienced courtship violence during academic studies in the '80s (Arias et al., 1987; Makepeace, 1981). In addition, a study from the late '90s indicates that 13.2% of all students sampled reported being involved in violent fights over the previous twelve months (Barrios et al., 2000). 5.8% of subjects in the latter survey reported having carried weapons during the previous thirty days (*ibid.*) and 4.3% reported in another survey that they had carried firearms on campus (Miller et al., 2002). In a survey held by a U.S. university in 1999, 79% of the subjects reported having experienced some sort of violence (Alfred University, 1999). In general, scholars acknowledge that most campus violence occurs among students although regretfully only a small proportion of this violence is reported. In other words, the statistics do not accurately reflect the actual state of affairs and campus violence is extremely widespread (Sherrill & Siegel, 1989, 1).

The situation in the western world is characteristic of Israel as well, although the research shows that student behavior varies across societies. Culture has a significant mediating role (Soen, 2002). Thus, for example, data provided by the Israeli Ministry of Education indicates that although cheating on Israeli matriculation exams has been shown to fluctuate, the number of cases is in the thousands. This despite the fact that these exams are among the most "supervised". 8,356 of the matriculation exams administered in summer 2002 were invalidated (Van Gelder, 2003, 5). 9,156 cases of cheating on the matriculation exams held in summer 2005 were exposed, compared to 6,229 cases in the

previous summer (Trabelsi-Hadad, 2006). A study held in 1999 by Prof. Kari Smith from a well known College of Education in northern Israel found that about half of all junior high school and high school students believe that cheating on tests is a standard and “normal” routine (Smith, 2002).

The same bleak state of affairs is evident in studies held among Israeli college and university students. This was the setting for a number of affairs exposed in 2005 in the press and the Knesset (Israeli parliament), which eventually also reached the courts. The most famous case was that of the then Chairman of one of the major political parties and MK on its behalf. He was accused (and eventually convicted) of a breach of trust, of attempting to receive a benefit in fraudulent manner, and of attempting to conspire to receive a forbidden gift. All this because he had received a Bachelors’ Degree in Psychology from the Israeli branch of Burlington University without personally completing the academic assignments required of regular students, and submitted papers, which he had not written. (NRG Maariv, 2005; Ynet, 2002). The scope of the problem could be gauged by a probe held that year among graduates of the Israeli branch of the University of Latvia. The Ministry of Education checked and found that 850 graduates of this institution did not manifest basic knowledge in the field they had studied (Walla News, 2005). So much so, that a very popular satirical television program devoted a skit to this topic, titled the “Jerby University”, which caused an uproar in the media (Levy, 2005). It seems that 2005 was not the first year in which suspicions of academic fraud were revealed. In May 1997 the Fraud Division of the Tel-Aviv District Police began an extensive investigation regarding papers purchased and submitted to the Tel Aviv University for the purpose of receiving academic degrees, covering the full range of assignments – from seminar papers for undergraduate degrees to doctoral dissertations... The police compiled a list of hundreds of students, including police officers and public figures, who had submitted such papers to the university. The students paid sums ranging from NIS 1,200 to NIS 15,000 to have others do their work for them. The police investigation found at the time that the price of seminar papers ranged from NIS 1,200 to NIS 5,000, graduate papers cost NIS 7,000 – NIS 8,000 and doctoral dissertations were sold for NIS 15,000 (Asher, 2002). Today seminar papers are readily offered on various websites, such as *ib2b*, *academit*, *ubank*, *smarter*, and others.

Items on cheating at college and university campuses are occasionally published in the media. For example, in 2000 it was reported that the management of a certain College of Engineering in a northern town had replaced all exam supervisors after they had been exposed as not preventing students from cheating on tests (Tip, 2000). Moreover, the President of the College, was interviewed as saying that “the Israeli educational system does not cope with the problem of cheating on exams. Universities are reluctantly finding themselves at the forefront of this battle” (*ibid.*). Moreover, he said that “Israeli students have a full stock of inventions and tricks. They are aggressive and even when caught cheating will not hesitate to lie. They also try to arouse the pity of the supervisors, when they see that there is no way out” (*ibid.*). In July 2007 the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Quality Sciences at the Hebrew University issued a circular to all teachers, warning that cheating on exams had reached a level harmful to the reputation of the institution (Finerman, 2007).

Recently, this issue has been examined scientifically as well. For example, a study held by a research fellow at the Hebrew University indicated that there was a very high proportion of cheaters among Israeli students, as indicated by their self-reports. The findings proved that cheating at institutions of higher education is prevalent among all sectors, unrelated to sex, religious affiliation, or geographic location (Walla News, 2006). The researcher concluded from the data “that most students see no wrong in acts of student fraud, which are perceived as normative” (*ibid.*). Finally, the study (which was based on a sample of 1,500 students in a variety of schools) found that the national average of cheating on exams was 71%. Students of agriculture were found to be the most excessive “cheaters”, and 92% of them admitted to cheating at least once on an exam or paper. These were followed by students of business administration, among whom the proportion of cheaters was 85%. Among students of social work the proportion was 60%, while among students of international relations – it was 56% (*ibid.*).

In contrast to the study dealing with all students, the same research fellow also held a study focusing specifically on Israeli law students (Fresh, 2006). This study showed that 60.1% of all law students admitted to cheating on exams, although there was a not insignificant difference between students according to the schools at which they studied. The prevalence of cheating on papers was even greater than cheating on exams: 62% admitted to submitting unoriginal papers (*ibid.*).

Violence is also prevalent within Israeli educational institutions. The last few years have seen

quite a number of reports on the increasing violence. According to reports by the Israeli Police, there has been a rise in juvenile delinquency in general and in educational institutions in particular over the years 1996-2004 (Nathan, 2006). In 1996 the police filed 893 cases for physical violence in educational institutions. In 2004 1,789 cases were filed – an increase of over 100% compared to the previous decade. The number of cases filed for violence-related offenses in educational institutions has also risen significantly over this period (*ibid.*, 1). Moreover, the violence within educational institutions is not limited to students and affects teachers as well. A survey held by the Teachers' Association in 1999 indicates that approx. half of the teachers in the Jewish sector and one quarter of the teachers in the Arab sector experienced some sort of violence at their place of work (Ben-Sasson Furstenberg, 2003, 2). 16.9% of all teachers in the Jewish sector and 5.8% of teachers in the Arab sector reported having been victims of physical violence. 38.1% of teachers in the Jewish sector and 15.1% of teachers in the Arab sector reported being cursed by students. 12% of teachers in both sectors stated that students had caused malicious damage to their vehicles (*ibid.*).

Due to the gravity of the problem, a number of studies on school violence were held in Israel beginning from the '80s (Horowitz & Amir, 1981; Horowitz & Frankel, 1990; Degani & Degani, 1990; Harel, Kenny, and Rahav, 1997; The Teachers' Association, 1999; Benbenisti, Ze'era & Astor, 1999; Rolider et al., 2000; Harel et al., 2002; Soen, D., 2002; Benbenisti, 2003; Gumpel & Zohar, 2002; Horowitz & Tubali, 2002; Benbenisti et al., 2005). The outcome of these studies is mainly a triple conclusion: First of all, violence in the educational system is a unique independent phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is interrelated with other violent phenomena. However it has unique causes, characteristics, and results (Benbenisti et al., 2005). Secondly, violence in educational institutions depends to a great degree on the local climate (*ibid.*). Third, an examination of Israeli findings in comparison to the situation in America indicates that the Israeli state of affairs is worse. This is depressing food for thought (Soen, 2002).

In light of the many studies dealing with violence within the Israeli educational system, it is astounding that to date no research has been performed on violence within institutions of higher education. Israeli pre-school, elementary, and secondary educational systems are divided by sectors. Jewish students study in Jewish institutions, while most Arabs study in Arab schools. Higher education is the first institutional setting in which students from both sectors meet and study together. In some institutions this encounter between students belonging to the two national groups, with their different faiths and cultural backgrounds, is a positive experience (Davidovitch, Soen & Kolan, 2006; Rating of Universities and Colleges, 2007). In contrast, in some institutions this encounter between the two groups has resulted in recurring confrontations and violent clashes. This is particularly true of the University of Haifa and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Wikipedia, 2007; Pi Ha'Aton, n.d.). Even this nationalist-based violence within institutions of higher education has not been studied, although it has been reported both in the daily press and by the Or Commission, established to investigate the incidents of October 2000, in which thirteen Arab citizens were killed by police forces (Or Commission, Chapter A, section 113).

Neither has there been any research on the other fairly frequent forms of violence currently prevalent on some Israeli campuses, such as the violent hooligan outburst at a dance held in 2005 as part of Student Day events at the Ort Braude College in northern Israel, which required police intervention (Internet<sup>1</sup>, 2005; Internet<sup>2</sup>, 2005); or the incident in 2000 in which security guards at the Ben-Gurion University Campus Club were attacked (Roman Demsky, 2006); or the beating of ushers charged with issuing sanction reports for illegal smoking at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (Public Commission, 2000) or severe beatings that ended with hospitalizations at the Tel-Aviv University (Levy, 2006).

## Methodology of Research

The purpose of the research was to examine the extent of disciplinary problems at a large Israeli public college. The research was based on analysis of data concerning misconduct at the academic institution examined. The researchers made use of a computer printout summarizing decisions made by the disciplinary committee during the 2004, 2006 and 2007 academic years. This printout was made available to the researchers. The summary presents the names of students brought before the committee, the date of the offense, the date of the meeting at which the offense was discussed,

the nature of the complaint, and the decisions of the committee. The research compared findings reported in the college printout with findings indicated by printouts summarizing the decisions of the disciplinary committee of an Israeli university during the 2004, 2005 and 2006 academic years. These findings as well were accessed by the researchers on the internet.

The research questions addressed by the researchers were as follows:

- What is the range of the offenses brought before the committee? Does it remain constant or change over time?
- What is the distribution of offenses by type? Does the distribution remain constant or change over time?
- Is there a difference between the range of offenses and their distribution at the college and at the university?
- What are the sanctions imposed on students found guilty of offenses at the college and at the university? Is there a difference between the severity of the sanctions in the two institutions?

At this stage of the research, the researchers focused *on the range and nature of the offenses*. They did not attempt to identify possible relationships between the offenses and student traits.

The research results are analyzed hereunder.

### Range of misconduct offenses at the college compared to the university

Analysis of the findings indicates that during the 2004 study year the college disciplinary committee dealt with 108 cases. During the 2006 study year it dealt with 103 cases, while in sessions held in the 2007 study year, as of July it dealt with 73 cases and later with another 40 cases, i.e. a total of 113 cases.

The conclusion derived from analysis of the cases is that they are comprised mostly of cheating on exams or homework. This type of offense is always the most prevalent. It comprises between 45% and 60% of all offenses dealt with by the committee. However many offenses consisting of verbal or physical violence were also brought before the committee, comprising about 30% of all offenses handled. Criminal offenses (also referred to the police) comprised between 4% and 8% of the total number of offenses.

**Table 1. Distribution of college offenses by type, 2004.**

Offense	No. of Cases	%
Cheating on exam or homework	64	60.4
Verbal or physical violence	33	31.1
Criminal fraud	5	4.7
Illegal smoking	4	3.8
Total	106	100.0

**Table 2. Distribution of college offenses by type, 2006-2007.**

Offense	2006 (103 cases)	2007 (73 cases as of July)
Cheating on exams	33	26
Cheating on homework (exercises and seminar papers)	14	17
Criminal offenses (forging documents etc.)	5	6
Verbal or physical violence	32	23
Violating dorm rules	19	1

A comparison of this state of affairs to that at the university shows, that the extent of misconduct at the latter is significantly lower than at the college. Examination of the summaries of the university disciplinary committee shows that during the 2004 school year it dealt with 67 cases and in 2005 with 95 cases, while in 2006 it dealt with 107 cases. In order to fully understand the difference between rates of misconduct at the two schools it is necessary to take into account their extremely disparate numbers of students. The student population at the university numbered 24,300 in 2004, 25,025 in 2005, and 24,785 in 2006. The college had much less students. There were 5,217 students in 2004, 6,900 in 2006, and 7,500 in 2007. Thus, the extent of misconduct within the college is much greater than at the university.

However there are other differences as well. A no less dramatic difference was found in the type of offenses. At the university, cheating offenses on exams and homework were the most prevalent. They formed 79%-87% of all offenses brought before the disciplinary committee. Violent offenses formed a small minority – 5.6%-12% of all offenses. In other words, both the scope of offenses and their nature indicate *that misconduct is a much more serious problem at the college than at the university*.

**Table 3. Distribution of university offenses during 2004, 2005, 2006.**

Offense	2004 (68 cases)	2005 (95 cases)	2006 (107 cases)
Cheating on exams	49	77	86
Cheating on homework	4	7	7
Fraud and forgery	6	3	2
Violence*	9	7	6
Others	-	1	6

\* Including one case of sexual abuse in 2005

### Decisions of the committee on cases treated

The college disciplinary committee was established on the premise that attendance of the school is based on a relationship of trust between the institution and the students and that students are required to behave as befits the institution, its faculty, workers, and students (Ariel University Center, section 1). The institution even expressed itself extremely laconically on this issue. Codes of conduct in foreign institutions of higher education are often more detailed (University code of conduct, 2007; University code of conduct, 2005; University-wide compliance program, n.d.; ASU code of conduct, 2005). Thus for example, the code of conduct of the A & M University in Texas embraces honesty, responsibility, and integrity, in order to maintain the institution's reputation in the community (University-wide compliance program, n.d.). The code of conduct of the University of Illinois emphasizes students' duty to comply with the rules of behavior and the obligations required by the university as an academic community (ASU code of conduct, 2005). The purpose of the college code of conduct is to treat cases deviating from these rules. The role of the disciplinary committee as determined by the code of conduct is to discuss and reach decisions on complaints regarding disciplinary offenses (Ariel University Center, *ibid.*, section 8). The committee is authorized to impose six to ten different sanctions, beginning with reprimands, through fines and cancellation of credits for courses taken by the guilty student, and ending with suspension of studies and withholding diplomas (*ibid.*, section 4, 1-16).

Publicizing decisions of various academic disciplinary committees (for example, disciplinary committee 2006<sup>a</sup>; disciplinary committee 2006<sup>b</sup>) indicates attempts at deterrence, which is one of the foundations of committee activities. This is implied by the Open University pamphlet advising that the institution intends to publicize recent decisions of the disciplinary committee. Such a report would include both a summary of disciplinary offenses and sanctions imposed (Open University, 2007).

The deterrent value of the committee's actions may be deduced from calls of distress voiced by students on various websites, for example:

“I submitted a paper that I had copied from the previous semester’s work and I was caught. I got into a real mess because my teacher really trusted me, and now she has referred it to the disciplinary committee. What happens in such a situation? What’s the worst that can happen to me? And how can I get out of it? Please help me. I don’t know what to do...” (Ben-Gurion University Student Forum, 2005).

And another case:

“Hello, I wanted to ask an important question. If there is a problem and the supervisors suspect you of copying, are they supposed to say so during the exam and declare it void? Or can it happen after the exam is graded? If they suspect something can it develop into a disciplinary matter? And what are the implications? What can you do in such a case? Who can I appeal to? Pleeeeeease help quickly.” (Disciplinary Committee, 2007).

In any case, a review of sanctions imposed by the college disciplinary committee over the period examined indicates two things: First of all, the committee’s approach may be defined as lenient. Secondly, the committee’s decisions were not publicized and therefore *the deterrent value of the sanctions was lost*.

Examination of the committee’s decisions in 2004 essentially shows that it was presented (table 1) with 64 cases of cheating on exams or homework. Three of the complaints were withdrawn. In three other cases the accused were given the benefit of doubt and acquitted. I.e., students were found guilty in 58 cases. In nine cases the committee decided to let the students off with admonitions or warnings with no additional sanction. In three other cases the students were severely reprimanded and admonished with no additional sanction. In other words, 20.7% of all students found guilty were not sanctioned. In contrast, one student was expelled, another student was suspended for one year, and four were suspended for one semester.

In this context it is noticeable that the college code of conduct requires the committee to impose minimal sanctions in certain cases (Ariel University Center, 2007, section 5). For example, the code explicitly states that students found guilty of bringing unauthorized material to an exam or having such material in their possession will be suspended for a minimum of one semester. This is also true of students found guilty of cheating on homework or seminar papers. If the committee had acted according to the instructions of the code, it would have been compelled to suspend not four but *dozens* of students! Moreover, according to the code, students found guilty of bringing unauthorized material to an exam or of any fraud perpetrated on an academic assignment will receive a grade of 0 for the course. Since the committee found 58 students guilty it should have given students failed grades on 58 courses. In fact the committee gave failed grades for only two courses...

**Table 4. Distribution of committee decisions on cases of cheating on exams or papers, 2004 (64 cases).**

Committee Decision	No. of Cases*
Reprimands/admonitions	28 (of them 9 with no sanction)
Severe reprimands/severe admonitions	10 (of them 3 with no sanction)
Voiding exams	30
Voiding homework assignments	2
Course credit cancelled	2
Disqualification for prize, scholarship, or tuition reduction	1
One-year probation	6
Expulsion	1
One-year suspension	1
One-semester suspension	4
Cancellation of complaint	3
Given the benefit of doubt and acquitted	3

\* The total number of sanctions is higher than 58 (the number of cases in which students were found guilty), since in many cases the accused received concurrent sanctions.



As stated, over 30% of all cases dealt with by the committee during these years involved verbal or physical violence. The relative and absolute proportion of cases involving violence brought before the college committee is much larger than their proportion at the university. This fact is reflected in the committee decisions as well. In 2004, for example, two of the students brought before the committee were acquitted. Thus, in 31 cases students were found guilty. In 9 of these cases students were let off with a reprimand or admonition. Actual sanctions were imposed only in 7 cases (22.6% of the cases). In 5 cases guilty students were required to perform community service, and in two cases they were required to pay a fine.

**Table 5. Committee decisions in cases of verbal and physical violence during 2004 (33 cases).**

The Decision	No. of Cases
Reprimands/admonitions	9
One-semester probation	5
One-year probation	3
Letter of apology to the offended party	6
Writing a paper on the subject of the violence	1
Community service	5
Fine	2
No credit for exam at which incident occurred	1
Supervision by the student dean	1
Obligation to attend consultations at support center	1
Acquittal	2
No decision recorded	2

The leniency of the sanctions imposed on the accused at the **college** may be concluded by examining the sanctioning policy of the **university**. In 2004 67 cases were brought before the university disciplinary committee. Only in 3 cases were students let off with a reprimand or admonition. In contrast, 19 students were suspended. Two of these were expelled, 15 suspended for one year, one for a year and a half, one for two years, and one for three years. In 18 cases the committee decided to withhold the eligibility of those accused to receive their degree. In 14 cases eligibility was withheld for an entire year. In 23 cases the guilty students were required to participate in an additional course, beyond the regular credit points required from all students. Thus, a total of approx. 48% (!) of all students found guilty were required to perform community service, approx. 43% received no credit for the course involved in the offense, approx. 34% of the guilty students were required to participate in an additional course (and to pay for this course), approx. 28% of the guilty students were suspended from studies for a certain period, and in 27% of the cases their eligibility for an academic degree was withheld. Obviously, a not insignificant number of the guilty students received a more than one sanction concurrently! *In general the state of affairs regarding sanctions seems completely different than at the college.* The approach is clearly stricter. As stated above, the committee also takes the trouble to issue written warnings on the university website:

*“In preparation for the approaching exams, the disciplinary committee reiterates its warnings against bringing unauthorized material to exams and of course against cheating or any other fraudulent act.*

*For your information:*

- 1. Possession of a cellular phone** in the student's pocket or anywhere close by, possession of notes with relevant material, etc. – all these are disciplinary offenses. All these materials must be placed in a bag near the supervisor before the exam begins.
- 2. Possession of unauthorized material**, even if not put to use, is considered cheating. Recently 3 students were found guilty of this offense, and the sanction imposed on each of them included:

### No credit was received for the course

- The student was required to take another course in addition to those required for the degree
- 120 hours of community service at the social action unit
- Eligibility for the degree was withheld for one year.

These sanctions require payment of additional tuition for the voided course and the additional course, i.e. a cost of approx. NIS 2,000 per student.

*The disciplinary committee intends to impose even more severe sanctions on anyone found guilty of these offenses, with the most serious being expulsion from the university! **You have been warned!***" (Disciplinary Committee, 2004).

**Table 6. University Disciplinary committee for 2004 (67 cases).**

The Decision	No. of Cases
Reprimand/admonition	3
Course voided	29
Additional semester or annual course required	23
Withholding eligibility for degree	18
Fine	2
Community service	32
Suspension for various periods	19

All the above indicates a very large difference between the sanctioning policy of the two types of institutions – the college on the one hand and university on the other. However, longitudinal examination of trends shows that changes are occurring at the college, lately tending towards more severe sanctions. True, in 2006 26.2% of all guilty students were exempted from punishment. They received a reprimand/admonishment or a severe reprimand/severe admonishment. During 2007 as well 19.9% of those found guilty as of July were exempted from punishment. However the relative proportion of those suspended from studies for various periods rose significantly. In 2006 approx. 11% of all guilty students were suspended, while in 2007 approx. 17% were suspended. The number of courses voided was drastically reduced in 2006 compared to the previous year. However it increased dramatically in 2007, when this sanction was imposed on approx. 35% of all students found guilty. Nonetheless, the college sanction system is still much more lenient than that of the university, and even in the last two years the committee has failed to impose minimum sanctions required by the code of conduct.

**Table 7. Distribution of college disciplinary committee decisions for 2006-2007.**

The Decision	2006 (103 cases)	2007 (73 cases as of July)
Acquittal	19	7
Reprimand/admonishment	6	3
Severe reprimand/severe admonishment	37 (17 with no sanction)	36 (10 with no sanction)
Exam voided	8	12
Homework/seminar paper voided	5	-
0 grade on paper/exam/course	1	12
Repeat course/seminar at a fee	1	23 (34.8% of guilty cases)
Fines	13 (NIS 200-1,342)	4 (NIS 300-1,000)
Probation of college studies	5	5
Dorm probation	1	-
Suspension from dorms	-	8
Revocation of vehicle entrance permit	1	-
Revocation of study award	1	-

The Decision	2006 (103 cases)	2007 (73 cases as of July)
Suspension from college-based job	1	-
Not allowed to register to the college	1	-
Suspension for various periods	9 (10.2% of all guilty cases)	11 (16.7% of all guilty cases)

**Table 8. Decisions of the university disciplinary committee in 2004, 2005, and 2006.**

The Decision	2004 (67 cases)	2005 (95 cases)	2006 (107 cases)
Reprimand/admonition	3	3	1
Course voided	29	33	32
Obligated to take another course	23	23	22
Fine	2	10 (NIS 500-6,000)	11 (NIS 200-3,000)
Suspension for various periods	19	29	35
Eligibility for degree withheld	18	17	4
Community service	32	15	13
Not allowed to register for graduate studies	-	-	1

## Discussion and Conclusions

The study analyzed above attempted to examine the practices of a student disciplinary committee at the largest public college in Israel and to compare them to those of one of the largest universities in Israel. The researchers dealt with a number of questions, including the extent of the incidents brought before the committee and whether this proportion remains constant.

Analysis of the findings indicated that the extent of disciplinary problems brought before the college committee is much more prevalent than those brought before the corresponding university committee. Considering the different number of students at each of the institutions, the extent of incidents brought before the college disciplinary committee may be said to be four (!) times greater than those brought before the corresponding university committee. However, the research showed that although the *number* of cases brought before the college committee over the years examined was more or less constant, there was a decrease in the *proportion* of cases, due to the constant and fairly steep increase in the total number of students. While the number of students at the university remained more or less constant (with insignificant changes in both directions), there was a steady and consistent increase at the college.

A second question pertained to the types of offenses brought before the committee. In this area the analysis found a dramatic difference between the college and the university. While cheating on exams and homework forms 80-89% of all cases brought before the university committee, at the college it forms a mere 45-60% of all cases. Over 30% of all cases brought before the college committee deal with verbal or physical violence, and 5-8% deal with criminal offenses. In other words, the nature of cases brought before the college committee was found to be more severe and formidable than the cases brought before the university committee. In this area the distribution was found to be fairly constant over time in both institutions.

The final question examined by the researchers was whether there are differences in the penal policy of both committees. On this point another dramatic difference was found between the two institutions. Surprisingly, it was the college disciplinary committee, which encounters a larger prevalence of incidents that are also more severe than at the university, which demonstrated more clemency towards the students. Two types of sanctions imposed by the university on students found guilty – withholding degrees and the obligation to register, participate, pay and be tested on courses beyond those originally required – were not imposed by the college. The sanction of suspension from studies and expulsion is much more prevalent at the university than at the college. In contrast,

letting students who have been found guilty off with an admonition or a severe admonition (with no sanction), which is very prevalent at the college, is not customary at the university. Moreover, until last year the two institutions also differed in the warnings and the deterrent effect that they attempted to create. While the university published warnings to students in various forums and instructed them on the gravity of cheating on exams and papers; while the university also publicized sanctions that would be imposed on students as a deterrent device, the college did not do so. Only during the last year did the college committee decide to publicize its sanctions on the college website and only recently was a decision made to supplement this by announcing sanctions on various campus bulletin boards as well.

This is the place to ask two questions which stem from the research but have remained unanswered. First of all, why are the extent and severity of incidents brought before the college committee greater than those brought before the university committee? Second, why is the college committee so much more forgiving towards students than the university committee?

The first question is the most significant. Such great disparity between rates of student misconduct calls for further investigation, particularly since it is so persistent over time. One attempt at explanation is the hypothesis that the two institutions have different policies concerning referral of cases to the disciplinary committee for reasons connected to "school climate". It is very possible that faculty members at the university examined prefer to refrain from initiating formal proceedings against students and they are sanctioned internally by the departments. This hypothesis is certainly worthy of further investigation. On the other hand, it is certainly possible that there is a significant diversity between the student population of the two institutions and this is the reason for the great differences regarding misconduct. Recent CBS data on all Israeli institutions of higher education indicates that socioeconomic cross-sections of students at public colleges and universities are more similar than ten years ago (CBS, 2006, table 6; CBS, 2008, table 8). However, in light of our research findings, there is definitely room to examine student cross-sections at the two institutions studied. An added question concerns why incidents referred to the college committee are more severe than those referred to the university committee. Are there indeed no problems of violence and crime at the university, or does the university choose to refer these issues to external authorities (the police)? This question is also worthy of further investigation.

The questions presented here are worthy of further research. However the state of affairs revealed by the research findings is interesting for its own sake, particularly since as stated, few studies have been held on practices of disciplinary committees within institutions of higher education in different countries.

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