

THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC CAMPUS IN MODIFYING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONFLICTED POPULATIONS – THE CASE OF ISRAEL

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Abstract

Israeli academic institutions serve as an initial place of encounter between Arab and Jewish students. These populations belong to different national groupings and are in conflict outside the academic world. They have different faiths, economic-social-familial-personal histories, and academic backgrounds, resulting in different abilities to cope with their studies. The present study deals with the question of whether and to what degree an academic campus can serve as a place of encounter capable of modifying relationships between populations whose daily reality is affected by the nationalist conflict in which they are embroiled. The study seeks to examine whether and to what degree the background of Arab and Jewish students is connected to interpersonal interactions between the two populations within academic institutions.

The sample-based research, comprised of 459 students from two public colleges, found that the academic campus is a significant factor in modifying relationships between minority and majority populations, when there is an institutional climate of equality and respect. Positive social-academic climate has a positive effect on students and fosters positive feelings on campus. However, the study also indicated that the minority still harbors various concerns, and a not insignificant number feel the effects of discrimination.

An important conclusion is that despite all the differences, the national conflict, and the complexity of majority-minority relationships, on both campuses relationships between the two groups are characterized by a positive climate. Successful modification of Jewish-Arab relationships is expressed by Arab students' identification with the Israeli milieu, similar to their Jewish peers.

The study emphasizes the significance of forming a comfortable institutional climate in order to constructively absorb minority groups.

Key words: *higher education, discourse of diversity, creative conflict, academic social climate, diversity, the Contact Theory.*

Introduction

Multiculturalism and multinationalism on campus, and the benefits of diversity

The research is aimed at understanding the role of academic campuses in modifying relationships between conflicted populations, and particularly mutual relations between **Arab** and **Jewish** students on Israeli academic campuses. It derives from the premise that Israeli academic institutions operate within a plural society, which is composed of many different groups with varying personal-national-ethnic-cultural-religious-familial-social-economic-academic backgrounds.

The main motivation for the research is the fact that Israeli institutions of higher education serve

as an initial point of encounter between Arab and Jewish students (Swirski, 1990, 138-147). The study attempts to cope with the question of whether the joint encounter and the climate of Israeli academic institutions form a modifying atmosphere which serves as a foundation for constructive discourse between the conflicted populations, based on close examination of two academic institutions.

Higher education is engaged in a process, which is attracting to the campuses populations excluded to a great degree until recent generations. Contemporary academic institutions seem to be capable of legitimizing and justifying the current social order (Trow, 1974; Scott, 1995; Allen & Allen, 2003). They are situated at the center of the popular commitment that everyone has the opportunity to realize their skills and translate their ambitions into achievements (Trow, 2003). At the same time – they have a significant role in reinforcing students' social insight and teaching them the full diversity of social intricacies (Rothman et al., 2003). Social diversity is essential for students to better understand the complexity of the country and world in which they live. They must immerse themselves in the culture of the campus, enabling them to study with students who are different than themselves, hold debates, and develop friendships. This will expand their knowledge and their intellect – and these are the basic goals of education. Thus, increasing the range of minority groups on campus might enable students to come in contact with experiences, views, and opinions capable of expanding their perception of “others” (Chang, 2005). These intergroup encounters reach a positive balance of democracy when students embrace new perspectives, strengthen their cultural and ethnic insights and their feelings of citizenship (Gurin et al., 2002). The opportunity provided for such practices on campus is very important, since young students, aged 20-30, are at a critical stage of their process of maturation.

The academic-social climate helps form a modifying discourse on academic campuses

Discourse of diversity

Institutions of higher education have a very significant influence on students **when the social atmosphere on campus is different than that familiar from the student's home and community**. When this atmosphere is complex it can form a variety of intellectual experiences (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), necessary for developing the student's personality. Thus, academic institutions with varied student populations foster development of the student's identity (Davidovitch, 2004; Soen & Davidovitch, 2007). This is the advantage of a heterogeneous academic institution compared to a homogeneous institution, which reproduces the student's home atmosphere and prevents exposure to “new trends”. This is evident from findings of studies held among students on campuses with varied populations, when the students often had very few previous intercultural relationships and contacts. This changed only when they arrive at a university or college serving many students from minority groups. They were exposed to many relationships and contacts with “others” (Whitla et al., 2003). Opportunities for interaction with students from “other” groups were found to be particularly beneficial in the case of students belonging to the majority. It seems that the larger the diversity of student populations, the greater the probability that students belonging to majority groups will associate with members of minority groups and discuss ethnic issues (Gudeman, 2001), even in the long term, after completing their studies, as indicated by research. In other words, even after students from the majority group receive their degrees and commence their professional lives, these initial interactions are manifested in feelings of social responsibility and participation in various activities on behalf of the community (Villalpando, 1996) as well as stronger civil awareness (Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997). This attitude was initially expressed by Aristotle, who believed that it is possible to reach civil uniformity through diversity and differences. In his opinion, the basis of democracy and its reinforcement is civil discourse, which is based on intricate differences and heterogeneity and facilitates resolution of conflicts between groups (Pitkin & Shumer, 1982). Thus, diversity and heterogeneity are important for the social development of students, but they are only the first step. It is necessary to focus on the many details essential for success and for minimizing problems, which might arise as a result of the encounter between different groups (Milem, 2001). Thus, for example, on the academic campus it is necessary to consider campus climate, lecture contents, and the abil-

ity of faculty to adapt their teaching methods to students' needs. However, since diversity enables students to detect differences within groups, the number of students belonging to minority groups must be **significant**. If these students are **insignificant** their uniqueness, special attention, and maybe also their salience, might have **negative** results (Lord & Saenz, 1985; Mellon, 1996; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002; Yoder, 1994) and this might **reinforce negative stereotypes** concerning the minority, which are prevalent among the majority (Kanter, 1977). While stressing the integration of large numbers of minority students, it is also important to maintain a **psychological climate** encouraging positive views and concepts among the different groups and to foster a **behavioral climate** encouraging intergroup association (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Discourse of "creative conflict"

Researchers dealing with interethnic relationships have indicated that the larger the proportion of the minority groups within the general population – the greater the risk of conflict between members of the minority and majority groups (Blalock, 1967, Hurtado et al., 1998). However these conflicts are not necessarily negative. In the '80s one researcher voiced the idea that the university's ultimate benefit is its ability to create a "creative conflict" (Palmer, 1987). Conflicts occurring in a proper campus climate may create a real transformation of interethnic relationships.

Research indicates that the composition of student relationships on ethnically and culturally heterogeneous campuses is more complex (Astin et al., 1991; Duster, 1991; UCMI, 1989): on the one hand subjects describe intensive interethnic interaction on campus, and on the other hand they report that their campus is characterized by conflicts based on ethnic background, prejudice, and ethnic-based groupings.

Discourse of contact

The Contact Theory is a social psychology theory which attempted to find ways of reducing prejudice, tensions, and intergroup conflicts by forming interactions between members of different groups. The main point of the theory (Allport, 1954, 1958) is that intergroup contacts can improve intergroup relationships. However contact per se is not enough. "It has sometimes been held that merely by assembling people without regard for race, color, religion, or national origin, we can thereby destroy stereotypes and develop friendly attitudes" (Allport, 1954, 261). Allport stated four preconditions that are necessary in order to foster successful intergroup contact (Allport, 1954, 1958): **equal status** between the groups in the situation; **common goals** of group members; **cooperation** between the groups; and **authority sanction** for the contact. All the strategies formed over the last sixty years aimed at overcoming intergroup tension and encouraging elimination of negative stereotypes are based on this theory, which is currently intensifying (Davidio et al., 2003). The conditions originally stated by Allport, have been supplemented by two others, as a result of the many studies held over the years. The first is the emphasis on **personal acquaintance** between members of the two groups (Amir, 1976; Brewer & Miller, 1984) and the second is facilitation of **friendships** (Pettigrew, 1998). An example is provided by research held in Northern Ireland, based on the lengthy Protestant-Catholic hostilities. These studies indicate that even in a country dominated by deep traditional hostility between members of two different religious groups living side by side but maintaining separate ecosystems and separate autonomous educational systems, negative stereotypes can be breached and prejudice and group hostility may be significantly reduced by forming opportunities for intimate intergroup personal contact at universities (Cairns & Hewstone, 2002; Niens et al., 2003). However, many examples show that even personal acquaintance and intergroup friendship are no guarantee of harmonious relationships and no protection against virulent hostility. This is also true of the many incidents of ethnic carnage and pogroms in different parts of former Yugoslavia. Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians lived as self-defined ethnic groups speaking the same language within one country. The three groups lived peacefully side-by-side despite their religious differences: Croats are Catholic, Serbs are Orthodox, and Bosnians are Muslim. The rate of mixed marriages between the groups was high as well, reaching 30% in Bosnia (Bowen, 1996) and 40% in Sarajevo (Hewstone & Cairns, 2001). Nonetheless, in the '90s a bloody intergroup conflict emerged in Yugoslavia. The ensuing

civil war – which led to disintegration of the federation – resulted in extremely vicious ethnic purges. A survey held in this part of Bosnia indicated that 50% of the participants reported having been the victims of atrocities committed by their neighbors and acquaintances, members of the Serbian majority (Hewstone & Cairns, 2001). Similar acts were documented and recorded in 1994 in Rwanda, East Africa, where approx. 800,000 members of the Tutsi tribe were slaughtered by members of the Hutu tribe over a period of about 100 days. This although members of the two tribes had previously been living in close proximity and maintained close personal contact (Prunier, 1995).

Since the Contact Theory was formulated, many varied studies were held on the issue of intergroup contact. The findings of a meta-analysis performed over five years to evaluate existing research were published in 2000 (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). The analysis covered 515 individual studies, including 714 independent samples, as well as 1,365 non-independent tests. The analysis included 250,493 subjects from thirty eight different countries. The analysis attempted to evaluate:

- a. *What effect does intergroup contact have on prejudice, and what are the moderating variables.*
- b. *What is the effect of the four conditions proposed by Gordon Allport on intergroup contact.*
- c. *Do the effects of intergroup contact vary across different groups and intergroup contexts.*

The main findings of the analysis are:

- **Greater intergroup contact is associated with less intergroup prejudice.**
- **Intergroup contact effects typically generalize to the entire outgroup**, i.e. its effect transcends participants in the immediate contact situation.
- **The effects of intergroup contact vary** across different types of outgroup targets and contact settings.
- **Intergroup contact effects differ among members of majority and minority status groups.** Intrepid contact has a greater effect on the majority than on the minority group!

Findings indicate that in the correct circumstances and settings intergroup contact on campuses may form a positive relationship dynamics between students from the majority group and students from the minority group.

The current study examines the existence of the four conditions proposed by Allport as essential for fostering successful intergroup contact (Allport, 1954, 1958) on two academic campuses: **equal status** (two groups of students); **common goals** (academic studies); **cooperation** (joint assignments, joint study experiences) and **authority sanction** (the social-academic climate on campus and school policy). In addition, the two additional conditions **personal acquaintance** (Amir, 1976; Brewer & Miller, 1984) and facilitating friendships (Pettigrew, 1998).

The implications of the research results for Israeli reality may hold great significance at the onset of the 21st century, since research indicates (CHE, 2004, Van Leer Institute, 2005; Volensky, 2005; Soen, Davidovitch & Kolan, 2006), that a gradual rise in the rate of Arab students registering for studies at Israeli academic institutions may be expected. The encounter between Jewish and Arab students might benefit both sides.

Diversity, conflict, and contact – Arab-Jewish relationships on university campuses in practice

A review of incidents that have occurred within academic institutions indicate that conflicts between Jewish and Arab students exist on many campuses worldwide. The World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) offers a course training Israeli students to provide information and handle campus confrontations dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict (<http://www.wujs.org.il/about/programmes/hasbara.shtml>).

The situation on Israeli campuses was examined in light of incidents on foreign campuses. In **Israel**, some campuses formed a focal point on issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The following are some examples: At **Haifa University**, a number of violent encounters between Jewish and Arab students were reported. A significant rise in the number of incidents occurred in late 2000 immediately after the October riots, in which 13 Israeli Arabs were killed in confrontations between Israeli Arabs and security forces. At the time, Israeli Arabs were protesting the government's policy. Arab student representatives at Haifa University demonstrated that year in a number of places in northern Israel, and the police was often compelled to intervene in confrontations between students supporting right-wing political parties and Arab students. During this period, the university management made great efforts to calm down both sides, at the same time maintaining their right to demonstrate democratically (Zarhin, Ha'aretz, October 24, 2000). Coexistence at Haifa University was undermined when Arab students violently attacked the chairman of the student association (Levy, A. and Athamna, M., November 9, 2004). A number of violent incidents between Jewish and Arab students were reported in connection to elections to the university student association. Haifa University lecturers suggested placing cameras on campus to record student disturbances. In addition, they suggested sanctioning violent demonstrators, including suspension of students involved in university riots, and even their expulsion (<http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/>).

Students at the Mt. Scopus campus of the **Hebrew University** will never forget July 31, 2002, a summer day, which turned traumatic. A terror attack on the campus targeted students and university employees. Nine people were killed and dozens injured. The attack left much confusion in its wake: How would Jewish-Arab relationships commence? The Mt. Scopus campus of the Hebrew University became a microcosm reflecting the radicalization of some Israeli Arabs. Arab lists on campus (Hadash, Balad, and 'Village Sons') boycott elections to the student association, as in their opinion the method of personal elections is discriminatory. As an alternative, they have established the 'Arab Students Committee', unrecognized by the university management.

However, a review of the websites of Israeli academic institutions reveals calls for students to take part in rapprochement activities (both voluntarily – individually or as part of student association activities – or initiated by the management), and even academic courses crediting students for communication between Jews and Arabs. In many academic institutions, activities focus on three areas: research (Samocha, 2001), student activities (Farber, 2004), and social responsibility. Many institutions organize unique delegations of Jewish, Muslim, and Christian students, who travel to the death camps as part of courses on the Holocaust. A review of the websites of Israeli academic institutions reveals many such programs on offer (www.ariel.ac.il, www.huji.ac.il, www.haifa.ac.il, www.bgu.ac.il, www.biu.ac.il). It seems that program initiators expect that such dialogues will occur on all academic campuses. These activities are also expressed in the policies of the CHE and the Ministry of Education, which encourage academic institutions to promote Arab students based on the policy of accessibility of higher education (CHE, 2000; PBS, 2003; Dovrat Commission, 2004; Volensky, 2005).

Diversity, conflict, and contact – Jewish-Arab relationships on two academic campuses, a case study

As stated, the present study seeks to examine intergroup contact on two academic campuses, according to the conditions proposed by Allport (1954, 1958). The research population consists of two groups of students – **equal status**, engaged in academic studies – **common goals**, with joint assignments and joint study experiences – **cooperation**, at academic institutions with a social-academic climate – **authority sanction**. Contact between the students creates **personal acquaintances** (Amir, 1976, Brewer & Miller, 1984) and **friendships** (Pettigrew, 1998).

The proportion of non-Jewish students at Israeli institutions of higher education is very low compared to their relative proportion in the population, but much higher at universities than at colleges (Davidovitch, Soen & Kolan, 2006). Thus, for example, in 2000 their relative proportion at universities was 50% higher than in colleges. At the universities they formed 9.0% of all students, while at colleges – only 6.1% (CBS, 2002/19, 17). However, even among colleges the diversity is

very significant. On the one hand there are colleges such as the Zefat Academic College, at which about half of all students are Arab – and the Western Galilee Academic College, at which over 40% of the students are Arab. On the other hand there are many colleges at which the proportion of Arab students is around 1% or even less. At the Ariel University Center of Samaria the proportion of Arab students reached 2.4% in 2004. In ten of the twenty two colleges included in analyses performed by the CBS, the proportion was even lower. The empiric research focused on two public colleges: the Academic College of Judea & Samaria (henceforth, ACJS) and the Western Galilee College (henceforth, WGC). The proportion of Arab students at the ACJS is significantly lower than the weighted average of all colleges. However despite its geographical location and the label it has received in public opinion (which deems the institution to be right-wing), the proportion of Arab students on its campus is higher than at many other colleges (although still low). Observation of the proportion of Arab students at the ACJS since 2000 indicates that there is a rising trend. The college makes efforts to market itself among the Arab sector in order to recruit additional students from this sector. At the **WGC** the situation is different. A longitudinal study indicates that as early as 1995 the proportion of Arab students had already reached over 16%. Since then it has been rising, reaching 44.7% in 2005 (CBS, 2005b, 18).

At the WGC the current proportion of Arab students is almost half of all students. Only at the Zefat Academic College is there a higher proportion of Arab students. Moreover, the proportion of Arab students is gradually rising and has not yet reached its full potential. Perusal of CBS data indicates that the growth potential of Arab students will continue to rise, due to the demographic profile of the northern district, in which Arabs are the majority. The Acre sub-district, where the college is located, is a conspicuous example. According to the data, 20-24 year old Arabs constituted 66.0% of this age group in the sub-district. They constituted 65.3% of all 15-19 year olds, 72.0% of all 5-14 year olds and 74.5% of all 0-4 year olds (CBS, 2002, 2-28). In other words, over the next few years the proportion of Arab youth studying at the college will gradually rise. Due to the rising proportion of Arab teens with matriculation certificates, the demand for higher education will continue to rise. The significance of this trend for the WGC is obvious.

The state of affairs at these two colleges indicates that they are very different in regard to their size, the variety of study fields offered to students (the ACJS has various faculties; the WGC concentrates on social studies), and the students' national affiliation. For this reason, the quality of relationships between Arab and Jewish students should be studied. Our purpose is to examine the existence of a dialogue of diversity, creative conflict, and contact, on two academic campuses with stereotypical images: The **ACJS**, one of the two colleges studied here, was established in 1982 at the heart of the Samaria region, a bone of contention between Israel and the Palestinians. Moreover, its founders were settlers representing the right-wing Jews who believe in Jewish domination of the entire Land of Israel. This college could have been expected to harbor a campus atmosphere unfavorable towards Arab students. In contrast, the **WGC**, the second college studied here, is located in Acre, a mixed Jewish-Arab city, in the heart of the northern region, where the Arab population is a majority. Thus, it too is not characteristic of Israeli academic institutions.

Methodology of Research

Research Purpose

The purpose of the research is to examine mutual relations between Jewish and Arab students studying for various degrees on two campuses: **The WGC** and the **ACJS**, which serve as a point of encounter between two cultural and national groups: the minority group and the majority group. The encounter between these two groups at the college was examined in regard to the question of whether and to what degree can an academic campus serve as a point of encounter capable of helping modify relationships between conflicted populations. The study sought to examine whether and to what extent was a connection found between the (personal-familial-social-economic) background of Arab students and Jewish students – and interpersonal interaction between the two populations at the academic institutions.

The study was comprised of 459 students, 182 studying at the ACJS and 277 studying at WG. At the ACJS the study included 85 Arab students, constituting 97.7% of all Arab students, and a random sample of 97 Jewish students. At WG the study included a random sample of 140 Arab students and 137 Jewish students.

Research Instrument

The study utilized a questionnaire constructed based on information portrayed by Davidovitch (2004) in her study dealing with Israeli regional colleges and their effect on the system of higher education, incorporating the components of Allport's Contact Theory (1954, 261).

Some of the items are personal and express the **equal status** of the two groups and their **common goals** and some relate to details concerning the student's studies and express the **cooperation** between members of the two groups, **authority sanctions, personal acquaintance, and fostering friendships** (Pettigrew, 1998).

These items include:

1. **Items related to the student's personal-economic background:** gender, country of birth, marital status, occupational status.
2. **Items related to the familial-economic background of the student's parents:** family size, parents' education, estimation of the student's familial-economic situation.
3. **Items related to the student's academic background:** Selection of the current study course as a first choice, previous academic history, tuition funding sources, psychometric score, eligibility for matriculation certificate, matriculation grade average, sources of knowledge about the college.
4. **National identity.**
5. **Students' perception of academic-social climate.**

Research Design

The study was performed during the second semester and summer semester of the 2004 study year. The questionnaire was completed by students in their classrooms in a group setting. In both colleges an Arab agreed to distribute the questionnaires among members of his sector, as he identified with the study and its goals. At WG it was the educational consultant who collaborated with the researchers and at the ACJS this was a student active in the student association. They distributed the questionnaires among the students in their classrooms and collected them, so that the subjects had no direct contact with the researchers. Before the questionnaire was administered, the students received an explanation about the questionnaire and its goals, in addition to the explanation displayed on the first page. Students were requested to answer all items in the questionnaire. Time for completing the questionnaire was not limited and it took about 20 minutes. Students were assured that the data would be used for research purposes only. However they were asked to state the last three digits of their identification number and the last three digits of their telephone number in order to cross the data with information in college computer databases.

The department heads cooperated with the researchers. Compulsory lessons at which the questionnaires were distributed to the students were chosen in advance. At each course, coordination of questionnaire administration was performed on an academic or administrative level. There were no special problems with understanding of the items. The questionnaires were comprised of closed questions dealing with students' demographic and socioeconomic background, opinions, views and feelings on national identity and affiliation, and the quality of their social and academic integration at school.

Research Questions

As stated, this study dealt with the question of whether and to what degree does the academic campus serve as a point of encounter capable of modifying relationships between conflicted populations. As stated, the research sought to examine whether and to what degree it is possible to find a connection between the personal-familial-social-economic background of Arab and Jewish students – and the interpersonal interaction of the two populations at academic institutions. The research questions are:

What are the mutual relations between Arab and Jewish students at the two academic campuses? How do they perceive the academic-social climate at their campus?

Is the academic-social climate of Jewish and Arab students identical or different on both campuses and to what degree?

Is there a link between the personal-familial-national-cultural-religious-academic-social-economic background of Jewish and Arab students – and interpersonal interactions between the two populations at the academic institutions?

Statistical Processing

In order to examine the relationship between background data and nationally-variant characteristics at each of the colleges, joint distributions of the background and national variables and chi-square tests were held. In addition, two-way analyses of variance were held in order to examine differences between nationalities and colleges on the various questions. Where correlations were found between different variables, the Bonferroni method was used to examine their source. This method uses error variance from the analysis of variance and takes into account the number of comparisons. Results reported as significant are on a significance level of $p < .05$.

Results of Research

In order to closely follow mutual relations between Arab and Jewish students at both academic campuses and their perception of the academic-social climate, **four areas** were examined: **equality and respect**, **special difficulties** encountered by Arab students, **quality of social relationships** on campus, and **concerns** due to the particularity of the minority group. Nineteen different statements were presented to the students in the questionnaire in order to examine the situation in four areas. On eight of the questions significant statistical differences were found between the colleges. On fourteen questions significant statistical differences were found between Jewish and Arab students. On six of the questions significant differences were found for both college and nationality.

The study findings indicate that diversity, creative conflict, and contact – form a positive atmosphere:

A. Equality and respect – Analysis of the findings indicates that as **subjectively** perceived by the students at both institutions Arab students feel the most deprived by the student association. This is expressed by the fact that only few Arab students are members of the student association; at WG only about 21% attest to being members of the association. At the ACJS the rate is about 44%. The state of affairs regarding equality as perceived by Jewish students differs from that perceived by Arab students: the problem of discrimination is more severe at WG. For example, a little more than 69% of Arab students at the ACJS state that their religious feelings are respected, that the lecturers do their best to help them. At WG the corresponding rate is 55%. At the ACJS over 62% of all Arab students declare that the lecturers do not discriminate against them. At WG only about 48.5% hold similar opinions. This is all the more conspicuous regarding scholarships. At the ACJS about 64% of Arab students declare that there is full equality on the issue of scholarships while at WG less than 36% of the Arab students think so. All these differences are statistically significant, questioning why precisely the college at which almost half the students are Arab fosters much stronger feelings of deprivation than the college with only a small minority of Arab students. Maybe the difference stems precisely from the profound sensitivity, which exists at the ACJS due to its stereotypical image.

Arab students do not report **feeling deprived by lecturers**. Some Arab students receive modifications on exams and academic assignments due to language difficulties. At the ACJS no differences were found between Arab and Jewish students regarding such perceptions.

At WG the proportion of Jewish students who feel that **the religious feelings of Arab students are respected** is higher than the proportion of Arab students. The proportion of Arab students at the ACJS who feel that the religious feelings of Arab students are respected is higher than the proportion of Arab students at WG. In addition, the proportion of Jewish students at WG who feel that the religious feelings of Arab students are respected – is higher than the proportion of Jewish students at the ACJS.

Only few Arab students take part in classroom debates and discussions. At the ACJS the proportion of Arab students who feel that only few Arab students take part in classroom debates and discussions is higher than the proportion of Jewish students. At WG as well, the proportion of Arab students who feel that only few Arab students take part in classroom debates and discussions – is higher than the proportion of Jewish students. It is difficult for Arab students to complete required assignments. At the ACJS the proportion of Arab students who feel that it is difficult for Arab students to complete required assignments is higher than the proportion of Jewish students. At WG no differences were found between Arab and Jewish students. The proportion of Arab students at the ACJS who feel that it is difficult for Arab students to complete required assignments is higher than the proportion of Arab students at WG.

B. Difficulties encountered by Arab students – The researchers examined the difficulties encountered by Arab students. A significant number of studies have been held on the correlations between culturally-related variables and academic success (Biggs, 1976; Lerner, 2000; Silver & Silver, 1997). All scholars dealing with Arab students in Israel who encounter the university milieu perceive the complexity of this situation. When Arab students enter the world of higher education they are exposed not only to different study methods and a foreign language, in which they are often not proficient (Bashi & Tusia-Cohen, 1994); they also encounter a society with values that differ from their own, intensifying their feelings of cultural marginality and foreignness (Layish, 1991). On campus they acquire knowledge, but they also encounter the individualistic western culture, which is the culture of the majority. In contrast to the authoritative approach customary within traditional Arab society and its schools (Al-Haj, 1996; Dwairy, 1988; Walid, 1998) they encounter a different approach, encouraging individual independent reasoning with the possibility of objecting to knowledge and authority and legitimization of questioning, investigating, asking. This is a real culture shock. About three quarters of Arab students sampled declared that only few Arab students take part in classroom debates and discussions and over three quarters of the participants declared that Arab students are compelled to work much harder at their studies than their Jewish peers. 62% of Arab students at the ACJS add that Arab students also find it difficult to complete required assignments. At WG the corresponding proportion is only 42%. A large majority of Arab students (about 75% at the ACJS; about 81% at WG) declare that some Arab students are afraid to express their opinions. The question is whether this is a consequence of personal and collective feelings of intimidation felt by Israeli Arabs (Sina de-Sevilia, 2005) or a consequence of the culture shock they experience or part of the dissonance that exists between the perceived difficulties expressed by Arab students and the opinion of their Jewish peers regarding difficulties experienced by Arabs.

C. The composition of social relationships between Arab and Jewish students is extremely significant for deciphering the discourse of diversity between the two national and cultural groups on campus. The study attempted to follow interactions between both groups of students by means of the questionnaire. The premise of the research team was that encounters and interactions between Jewish and Arab students would be affected by the general national confrontation (Maoz, 2002). Interactions between students would be characterized by various related conflicts (Bar-On, 1999), since the collective identities of both Jews and Arabs have been shaped by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for many years (Maoz et al., 2002).

Four statements sought to examine the composition of social relationships between the two groups of students at the college. One statement dealt with functional relationships and another with

interpretation of the initial relationships: “Arab students are not interested in getting to know Jewish students”; “Some Jewish and Arab students work on their studies together” (functional, task-oriented relationships); “Students at the department associate with each other” (initial relationships) and “some students at the department do not get on well with each other”.

The first conclusion of the study is that there is a wide consensus among the two groups of students in both colleges that Arab students do not display tendencies of seclusion and separation. They are definitely interested in getting to know Jewish students. This tendency to cross ethnic-national boundaries is more significantly conspicuous at WG than at the ACJS. It is possible to say that a large majority of Arab students would like to become acquainted with their Jewish peers. This wish is apparently satisfied, as a large majority of the two groups of students – both Arabs and Jews – agree with the second statement, that students at the department associate with each other, despite the significant statistical difference between the two colleges. In the opinion of Arab students, ethnic-national borders are breached more at the ACJS (88.0%) than at WG (73.7%). This contradicts the interest expressed by students in forming acquaintances with Jewish students. However the findings show that in practice the two groups of students display a large degree of openness at both institutions.

Nonetheless, the findings indicate that the composition of relationships is complex. At both colleges – but at WG more than the ACJS – there is ostensibly a core group of students who do not get along with each other. Over half the Arab students at the ACJS (54.8%) attest to this. At WG their number is close to three quarters (70.8%) of all Arab students. This is a large and statistically significant difference. In addition, there is a large difference between Arab and Jewish perceptions. Only 28.5% of Jewish students at the ACJS acknowledge this problem. At WG 63.4% of the Jewish students acknowledge it. The large difference between the subjective feelings of Arab and Jewish students probably stems from the greater sensitivity of the former as a minority.

Study findings indicate that in daily life the two groups reach a great deal of cooperation, however on this issue as well there is a statistically significant difference between the two colleges. Around 72.5% of Arab students at the ACJS and more than 90% of Arab students at WG state that students from the two groups work together on their studies. On this issue WG displays a statistically significant lead. A large majority of students employ functional contact. In addition, the proportion of Arab students attesting to cooperation between the two groups is significantly higher than the proportion of Jewish students, at both colleges.

The question is whether Jews exhibit less cooperation with Arabs on study assignments or whether this is a subjective perception. Since actual cooperation was not examined – this is difficult to gauge. A study held in the late ‘80s at a certain College of Education in Israel about admission of Jewish and Arab students to the school indicates greater openness among Arab students who were more interested in contact than their majority peers. When the students were asked at what frequency they tend to submit papers with students of other national groups, a large difference was found between the two groups. Only about 8% of Jewish students answered that they do this frequently, in contrast with 22% of Arab students (Peleg, 1991).

“Arab students are not interested in becoming acquainted with Jewish students”. The proportion of Jewish students at WG who feel that Arab students are not interested in becoming acquainted with Jewish students ($M=27.64$) is higher than the proportion of Arab students ($M=10.37$). At the ACJS no statistically significant differences were found between Arab students ($M=38.33$) and Jewish students ($M=25.97$). The proportion of Arab students at the ACJS who feel that Arab students are not interested in becoming acquainted with Jewish students ($M=38.33$) is higher than the proportion of Arab students at WG ($M=10.37$).

D. Concerns of Arab students due to their affiliation with a minority group – The final area examined by the research team with the aim of understanding the academic-social climate at the two institutions studied was: concerns of Arab students due to their affiliation with a minority group. The two statements presented to the subjects were: “Students must watch what they say during lessons” and “Some Arab students are afraid to express their opinions”.

Another question sought to indirectly examine the sensitivity of students to the dominance of the Arab-Israeli conflict in campus life. The statement presented to students in this context was: “The Arab-Israeli conflict receives much attention”.

The two first statements indicate clear differentiation on a statistically high level of significance based on national affiliation. About 64.5% of all Arab students at the ACJS and 72% of Arab students at WG stated that students must watch what they say during lessons. This in contrast to 37.7% of their Jewish peers at the ACJS and 39.7% of their Jewish peers at WG.

Regarding the statement on the fear of expressing opinions – here too about 74.6% of Arab students at the ACJS stated that some are afraid to express their opinions. At WG this was stated by 81.2% of the Arab students. The test-statement on the Israeli-Arab conflict also indicated highly significant differentiation based on national affiliation. 58.9% of Arab students at the ACJS and 50.8% of Arab students at WG stated that in their opinion there is a great deal of attention to the Jewish-Arab conflict at their colleges. Only about 20.8% of the Jewish students at the ACJS and 28.8% of the Jewish students at WG were of this opinion. This indicates once more that reality is in the eyes of the beholder.

The positive climate was evident when examining differences in feelings of Israeli identity between Arab students and Jewish students at the two public colleges (Davidovitch, Soen & Kolan, 2006; Soen, Davidovitch & Kolan, 2007). About 90% of all Jewish students declared that their feelings are adequately or very adequately reflected by the designation of “Israeli”, in contrast to two thirds of Arab students; in addition, the Israeli component within the identity of Arab students is significantly weaker than that of Jewish students. However a comparison with other research indicates that Israeli feelings of Arab students at the two colleges are stronger than those found at other institutions. In light of the complex geopolitical state of affairs in which Israel has been involved since its establishment, and in light of the relationship between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority, the researchers expected to find acute differences between the identities of the two groups of students, however these differences were found to be smaller than anticipated. According to the study, no significant differences were found between Jewish and Arab students in the definition of their identity. The significant Israeli feelings of Arab students at both institutions might have a number of explanations: first of all, it seems that those who registered to study at ACJS *differ* to a certain degree from regular Arab students. Due to the special status of this college, not all Arab students would be willing to study there. Secondly, it is possible that the numerical proportion of Arab students at WG increases their confidence and thus also their Israeli feelings. Finally, other recent surveys have also indicated not insignificant Israeli feelings among the Arab public, despite their feelings of frustration and gradually increasing struggle for full equality with the Jewish majority (Soen, Davidovitch & Kolan, 2007).

Discussion and Conclusions

This study dealt with mutual relations between **Arab and Jewish students at academic campuses**: the ACJS, where tensions among Jews and Arabs could be expected, and at the WG, located in an area with a great potential for Arab students. We assumed that the two colleges, with their unique characteristics, express the reality existing within academic institutions operating in a plural, multicultural society, and are not isolated from contemporary attitudes. A survey of incidents within academic institutions shows that many campuses in Israel and elsewhere serve as a point of confrontation between Jewish and Arab students.

Israeli institutions of higher education are the initial point of encounter between Arab and Jewish students and the question is whether the joint encounter and the climate of these institutions result in a discourse of diversity, creative conflict, and contact – i.e., a discourse based on acquaintance, understanding, and awareness of the mutual relations between language and culture.

The study attempted to examine mutual relations between students of the two groups and their perception of school climate. What are the mutual relations between Arab and Jewish students at the two academic campuses? How do they perceive the academic-social climate and to what degree is the academic-social climate of Jewish and Arab students on the two campuses identical or different?

On the positive side, **almost two thirds of Arab students feel equal on campuses**. However, they also feel deprived. This is expressed by the third who do not feel equal on campuses, but is even more conspicuous in other areas: About 55% of Arab students feel that they are not treated as equals by student associations; 45% are of the opinion that lecturers discriminate against them (the others

feel, in contrast, that lecturers do their best to help them); and about 45% feel that their religious feelings are not respected on campus. In this context, it is notable that Arab students are part of a sector, which suffers from severe discrimination in Israeli daily life. It is certainly possible that this feeling of deprivation is transferred to the campuses as well, although the latter attempt to make all students feel comfortable. In other words, while many students feel comfortable, a not insignificant number feel deprived! In this context, the study shows that there are statistically significant differences between the two campuses: Paradoxically, at the ACJS the situation seems to Arab students to be better than at WG.

Since the study is based on a questionnaire, it is necessary to qualify the findings and say that they express the **subjective feelings** of Arab students and not necessarily the reality. However their feelings of deprivation are consistent and comprise a wide range of areas, and the necessary conclusion is that these issues should be examined systematically and conceptualized in a structured manner.

Considering these feelings of deprivation, the composition of interpersonal relations between the two groups is very positive. This is particularly true in light of the severe national confrontations, which result from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In contrast to the situation elsewhere, **about 75% of Arab students on both campuses examined declared that they are interested in developing acquaintances with Jewish students.** 81% of Arab students reported cooperating with Jewish students on study subjects (task-orientated relationships) and **81% reported mutual friendships** (primary relationships). At the same time – and this is no paradox – it seems that there is a core group of students on the campuses who do not share this openness. 63% of Arab students report groups of students who do not get along with each other! A difference was identified between the campuses: Functional cooperation on study assignments is higher at WG, however primary relationships between members of the two groups are much more prevalent at the ACJS. The core group of those who reject mutual relations is also significantly larger at WG. These findings answer one of the research questions: **Is there a link between the personal-familial-national-cultural-religious-academic-social-economic backgrounds of Jewish and Arab students and interpersonal interactions between the two populations within academic institutions.** Although differences were found between the **personal traits** of Arab and Jewish students at both colleges, fairly comprehensive relationships developed between them. Most Arabs at the two colleges are Israeli-born, however although a majority of Jewish students are Israeli-born as well, some have come from other countries in Eastern and Western Europe. Most Arabs are observant or very observant, compared to the Jewish students. Almost all speak Arabic, while some of the Jewish students speak Russian and others (those coming from Ethiopia) speak Amharic or Tigrini.

At WG both Jewish and Arab students stated the supportive academic-social atmosphere, the value of the academic degree provided, and the opportunities for advanced studies.

In regard to the **Israeli identity** of Arab students, at both colleges they identify themselves as Israelis and as individuals. We found differences in the **academic-social climate** perceived by Arab and Jewish students and between them at the two colleges. At the ACJS Arab students report feelings of equality and friendship, although at WG they reported more joint work with Jewish students on study subjects. It seems that interaction between Arab and Jewish students at WG is stronger.

At both colleges Arab students reported difficulties in performing academic assignments, the need to work hard at their studies, the fact that there is no attention to the Israeli-Arab conflict during studies, and respect for their religious feelings.

The research findings indicate that there is a feeling of cultural affinity between Jews and Arabs, but normative cultural pluralism is not yet evident at the academic campuses examined. It seems that there are no dramatic differences between the identity of Jews and Arabs but close scrutiny shows that the issue of identity among Arab students is complex. They study together with Jews but tend to become secluded/segregated. In addition, Arab religious identity is more predominant than in the case of Jews, and it is greater than their national identity.

The research findings arouse questions such as: Is there need for new teaching methods, diversity in multicultural classrooms in general and for Arabs in particular? What is the educational outlook and the views of management and faculty regarding the issue of multiculturalism as reflected on academic campuses? What are the social, cultural, and political dilemmas that accompany the process of planning and implementing the admission of Arab students to Israeli academic institutions and

how may they be overcome? Which problems are encountered by Arab students studying at Israeli academic institutions and what may be done?

In light of the significant finding regarding feelings of cultural affinity between Jews and Arabs, it is recommended to study mutual relations between Arabs and Jews in institutions of higher education. These studies will clarify the direct connection between academic foundations and the variety of students, with attention to their different cultural backgrounds. The attitude of the academic system to Arab students, who have different personal traits, and to their motives for studying, demands methods of answering needs stemming from these motives. The findings in this study reflect the state of links between the variables examined. One recommendation is to hold a long-term study of a group of students studying at different academic institutions in order to examine these connections over time. Further studies can compare concurrently between groups of students in different institutions and reflect connections between undergraduate students and their schools. In addition, it would be possible to examine whether there are similar patterns of connection between variables and whether additional variables have a role in influencing the connections.

The academic campus is a true opportunity for academic life and a chance for true Arab-Jewish cooperation in the future. Therefore, the findings indicate different trends regarding a number of subjects on a practical level:

- a. Forming an **academic-social climate** imbued with tolerance and religious sensitivity.
- b. **Fostering Israeli identity** among Arab students. Facilitating **rapprochement** between Jewish and Arab students. Reinforcing feelings of equality and friendship between Arab and Jewish students, while fostering joint work on studies and encouraging and initiating opportunities for interaction between Arab and Jewish students.
- c. **Reinforcing a supportive academic-social atmosphere: assistance and support** in studies due to language difficulties. Assistance and support in performing difficult study assignments and respecting their religious feelings.
- d. **Affirmative action regarding terms of admission** to academic institutions and increasing preparatory study programs.
- e. Consultation and assistance with **academic-vocational guidance. Assistance in finding places of work** for students in general and Arab students in particular. **Financial aid.**

All in all, this study has important implications on the potential of academic campuses in heterogeneous societies. There are not many societies in the West afflicted as Israel by a combined national-religious deep conflict and a sense of frustration. Despite this background, it seems that given the right climate academic campuses could serve as facilitators of better understanding between conflicted groups. This is the major lesson to be learned from the above study.

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