

Considerations for College enrollment among Jews and Arabs in Israel: Are there differences between minority and majority groups?

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Abstract

The article deals with enrollment considerations of two distinct groups of Israeli students: one belongs to the majority group (Jewish students), the other to the minority group (Arab students).

This is a case study examining the considerations of the two groups who attend undergraduate studies at two academic campuses in Israel. The research team's assumption was that due to the Arab students' minority status, as well as their socioeconomic status, there would be a difference between their enrollment considerations and those of students who belong to the Jewish majority due to different opportunity structures available to the two groups.

An analysis of the attitude questionnaires that were distributed among the students in both sectors revealed a number of differences in the examined variables, including study disciplines, enrollment considerations and information sources for enrollment. However, the principal surprising finding of the study is that despite the fact that in the Jewish sector graduates enjoy a relative advantage over graduates in the Arab sector in terms of both admission criteria and the chances of finding work upon graduation, there is no material difference between them in terms of enrollment considerations.

Keywords: Higher education, accessibility by nationality, enrollment considerations

1. Theoretical Background

1.1 Accessibility by National Origin: The term "accessibility to higher education" is broad and general. It comprises data on the demand for higher education versus the supply of places and the range of study programs (Wilensky, 2005). The article focuses on one aspect of the above, accessibility by nationality as reflected in students' reports about their considerations for registering at the regional colleges. The research on which this paper is based was carried out in Israel, in fact a bi-national country, whose population in December, 2006 consisted of 76% Jews, 20% Arabs and 4% non-Arab Christians (CBS, 2006/279).

Due to the traditional structure of the Arab sector in Israel and due to the limitations stemming from the fact that it is a minority group in Israeli society (in both the numerical and sociological sense of the term), its attendance rates in higher education institutions was lower for years in comparison with that of the Jewish sector. Thus, for example, the percentage of students at institutions of higher learning in the general population increased from 4.2 per 1,000 residents in 1957 to 20.6 per 1,000 residents in 1996 (Al Haj, 1996). In the Arab population, the percentage of students increased during that period from 0 per 1,000 residents to 6.3 per 1,000 residents (ibid). In 1964/5, Arab students constituted 1.3% of the entire student population; this despite the fact that they constituted 13.4% of the 20-24 age group (the Economics and Budgeting Division, 2004). In 1984/5, Arab students constituted 6.7% of the entire student population. By that time they constituted 21.1% of the 20-24 age groups (Swirski and Swirski, 1998).

There were many reasons for this under-representation of Arabs at institutions of higher learning (Benziman, 2002, 2):

- * Jews and Arabs attend separate schools.
- * The standard of education at Arab high schools is inferior to that of Jewish high schools.
- * The objective difficulties in adjusting that the Arab students cope with at the institutions of higher learning (language problems, cultural differences, economic problems).
- * The lack of supportive networks to help the Arabs in their integration at the institutions of higher learning.
- * The employment problems faced by Arab graduates.

Other researchers (Okun & Friedlander, 2005; Golan-Agnon, 2006; Abu-Saad, 2006; Jabareen, 2006; Shavit, 1990) claim that the Arabs are a deprived minority in the State. A long history of discrimination towards Israel's Arabs in terms of allocation of funds for education and for infrastructures in the educational system has had an effect on their inferiority in the scholastic domain.

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) (1996/7-2000/1) has set itself national tasks, including expanding accessibility to higher education and reaching new social groups, in view of the existing gaps among students of the different sectors and the percentage of those who meet the universities' threshold requirements (CHE, 28/29; Hershkovitz, 2000). In the year 2000 a committee headed by Prof. Majid Al-Haj was appointed. The committee recommended a number of ways to increase awareness among the Arab population regarding the options for studying at institutions of higher learning. Its recommendations included: Setting up information centers, providing social and economic support, maintaining a program that takes the various deficiencies of the Arab population into consideration. In 2003, the CHE granted its unanimous approval to the report, which, as stated, recommended a series of steps aimed at encouraging Arab students to enhance their chances of improving their socioeconomic status (Al-Haj, 2003). Concurrently, the percentage of Arab students at the institutions of higher learning began to rise, although statistically the percentage of non-Jewish students is still low in comparison with their relative percentage in the population (CBS, 2000; 2001; 2002). Between 1990 and 2001 the percentage of Arab students at Israeli institutions of higher learning increased dramatically by 220% . This is in comparison with a growth of a mere 125% in the student population as a whole (the Planning & Budget Committee, 2003, 146).

The study presented below was conducted at the two regional colleges whose purpose, like that of all regional colleges, was defined at the outset as a means to meet the educational needs of those living in outlying areas, both Jews and Arabs (Israeli, 1997; the Planning & Budget Committee, 1997; Wilensky, 2005), thus rectifying a social problem.

1.2 Studies and Theories on the Selection of a Course of Study as a Basis for Employment

What impels a student to study?

The question of motives has constituted the basis for an extremely large number of studies with various starting points. However, there is a consensus that a person's decision to pursue higher education is the direct result of a process. One can say that the decision is made over time. There are those who claim that it is a three-stage process that begins in junior high school (Harker et al, 1999; Hossler et al, 1989). During these three stages, and before the final decision is made, the student develops an inclination to pursue a higher education, subsequently he seeks and searches sources of information about higher education and ultimately he makes his choice of the institution. Some researchers associate each of these stages with a defined age group, from seventh grade to twelfth grade (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000). There are those who distinguished seven different stages on the way to making the decision on whether to pursue a higher education (Le Claire, 1988). Each of the stages ultimately produces insights and preferences, which cumulatively train the student to make the decision on whether to continue his studies. The literature also indicates that the three stages interact with one another in complex and sometimes covert ways (Alexander & Eckland, 1975; Sewell et al., 1969). There are many theories and studies dealing with the subject of selecting an institution of higher learning, a study program and a profession. The theory developed by Roe (1957) perceives the parents' attitude towards the child in infancy as the basis for his attitude towards choosing a profession in the future. Holland's (1959) theory notes that a person develops as a result of interaction with his environment. Vroom's (1964) theory talks about the "distance" from the final choice – sometimes people are prevented from realizing their ambitions due to inability or the high cost of study. Super's (1970) theory claims that the professional career pattern will be formed based on the parents' socioeconomic status, level of education, personal traits and on the individual's opportunistic environment. The student invests some of the best years of his life, pays tuition and ancillary payments and sometimes reaches the "finish line" in a state of frustration. This is the case when he fails to achieve self-fulfillment in terms of a profession that will enable him to establish himself throughout his lifetime, because the profession is unsuitable for him or because he won't find employment in the discipline that he studied (Kolan, 1998).

Not long ago an attempt was made to classify the studies dealing with the patterns of choosing institutions of higher learning by students in accordance with the theoretical models used by the researchers (Paulsen, 1990a). Thus, for example, the studies assimilating the psychological environment, the climate at the institutions, its effect on the students and the students' suitability for the institution have been grouped together into a single category. The social studies that examine the choice of an institution of higher learning in terms of the status-building process are grouped together into a second category. The studies that examine the process of selecting an institution of higher learning from an economic perspective as a form of investment are grouped together as a third category.

The undergraduate degree has become the accepted norm of today, just like the matriculation certificate that preceded it (Trow, 2003). Therefore, the past generation has flocked to institutions of higher learning en masse. In view of the above, the question that arises is this: what influences the student at the stage when he is choosing his major and his alma mater, regardless whether he is a Jew or an Arab? This question, in effect, falls within the discipline of two groups of studies: sociological studies and economic studies.

The need to find suitable employment after graduation is worthy of mention in this context, because in a modern and developed economy like Israel's, academic accreditation constitutes a requirement for virtually every sphere of employment. In this respect, the status of young Arabs is different from that of their Jewish counterparts. Current data indicate that only 76% of Arab citizens, who hold college degrees are employed, compared with 88% of all Jewish graduates. The average duration of unemployment for Arab college graduates in Israel is 45 weeks, compared with 31 weeks among the Jews; the percentage of those who despair of finding work among the Arab sector is 8 (!) times as high as in the Jewish sector: it is approximately 24%, compared with less than 3% in the Jewish sector (Levi, 2006, 3). Figures provided by the NGO Sikui [A Chance] indicate that every year over 650 Arab students complete their studies in the exact sciences. Only about 300 of them find jobs in their professions (op cit, 4). The average salary earned by Arab college graduates is lower by nearly one third (!) than that of their Jewish counterparts: It stands at NIS 6,400, compared with NIS 9,500 among Jewish college graduates (Levi, 2006). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the problems faced by Arab graduates when they enter the job market lead to a situation whereby no small number of them cast doubt on whether higher education is actually worthwhile (Swirski, 1995; 1997). The following chronicle, quoted from one of the major daily newspapers, speaks for itself in this context (Sinai, 2004):

"Sammy Miari of Sakhnin is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Economics at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Around 18 months ago he participated in a number of tenders for the position of economist in the Civil Service – in the Budgets Division and at the Treasury, at the Ministry of Justice and at the Bank of Israel. He was called for interviews at the Treasury and the Ministry of Justice. He didn't even reach that stage at the Bank of Israel. During a phone call with one of the supervisors at the Finance Division he was told that on paper, his qualifications are suitable. "I told him that I am an Arab, because I thought that maybe he hadn't noticed my accent. His tone of voice changed. He said that he'd get back to me, but I haven't heard from him.

"After failing to get any of the jobs, he sent letters to the Governor of the Bank of Israel, to the Civil Service Commissioner and to the Justice Minister, in an attempt to find out why. In response, the Ministry of Justice told him he was overqualified, the Treasury told him that he hadn't passed the screening process for the callback interview, and the Bank of Israel vigorously denied that he had encountered a discriminatory attitude because he was an Arab. Miari himself hesitates to proclaim that doors were closed to him because he is an Arab, and even notes that the attitude towards him at the university was positive. But he has given up on his chances of finding a suitable job and is looking for an opportunity to study and work abroad."

And this quote from a young Arab man pretty much says it all:

"I don't think (that I'll go to college) because I look at my friends who went to school and can't find work. I have to be realistic, and have begun to think about looking for a job to support myself. If I go to college, I will have to agree to use my connections in order to find a job. I have a friend who went to college and he's working in the construction industry; why?" (Haaretz, December 14, 2004.)

Statistical data corroborate this picture. Due to difficulties encountered by Arabs in the Jewish economy, the Jewish participation rate of the 25-54 age-groups (the principle working group) in the work force was 84% for men in 2006. It was a mere 78% for Arab men (CBS, 2007, 5).

2. The College of Judea and Samaria (CJS) and the Western Galilee College (WGC)

Two regional colleges were studied for the purpose of this research- The College of Judea & Samaria (CJS) and The Western Galilee College (WGC). The Israeli regional colleges started out in 1974, one after another, as university extensions. In 2001 the CJS was granted academic autonomy, and WGC is nowadays following in its footsteps. At the time this study was conducted, most of the students at the CJS attended the departments of the independent college; only a minority of them was enrolled in programs under the responsibility of Bar Ilan University, while the students at the WGC were all enrolled in programs under the responsibility of Bar Ilan University.

The distribution of students from the Jewish sector and the Arab sector at all the regional colleges is an indication of diversity. At the Safed College approximately one half of the students are Arabs; at the WGC over 40% of the students are Arabs. In contrast, at many colleges the percentage of Arab students is minimal (Davidovitch, Soen and Kolan, 2006). At the CJS the percentage of Arab students in 2003/4 was 2.4%. The percentage of Arab students at the CJS is lower than the weighted overall

average of the colleges, yet the percentage of Arab students at the CJS since the year 1999/2000 indicates that there is a definite growth trend (Davidovitch, Soen and Kolan, 2006). The number of Arab students in the 2005/6 academic year has doubled in comparison with the figure for 2004/5. In 2006/7 it continued to grow and reached the 265 figure.

At the WGC the situation is materially different. A multi-year analysis indicates that at the time the academic programs that are under the responsibility of Bar Ilan University were opened in 1994/5, the rate of Arab students was approximately 16%. Since then it has been increasing steadily, and in 2004/5 it stood at 44.7% (Davidovitch, Soen and Kolan, 2006).

A perusal of the data furnished by the CBS indicates that the growth potential of Arab students will increase over time, due to the demographic composition of the Northern District, where the Arab constitutes the majority. The profile of the Acre County, where the College is located, is a salient example of this. According to the figures, Arabs aged 20-24 constituted 66.0% of this age group in the County. Among the 15-19 age groups, they constituted 65.3%, among children aged 5-14 they constituted 72.0%, while among young children aged 0-4, they constituted 74.5% (CBS, 2002, 2-28). In other words, one might safely assume that in the years ahead there will be an increase in the percentage of young Arab high school graduates wishing to pursue higher education in their area of residence. The significant increase in the percentage of Arab students at WGC (with all the cultural and linguistic problems involved) raises the question of whether this might not – in the present and, even more so in the future – influence Jewish students to seek a different institution of higher learning where the percentage of Arab students is lower.

In summary, the two institutions are very different from one another in size, in the demographic features of the region where they are located, in the curricula that they offer their students and in the composition of the students. The goal of the study was to assess the differences in the two groups of students, i.e. the Arabs and the Jews, in terms of their considerations for enrolling at each of the institutions.

3. The Study Rationale

Among the components of the perception of “accessibility to higher education” (Wilensky, 2005), the article will deal with one component, the registrant’s considerations when he chooses a college. The analysis by nationality will provide us with the information on how the student chooses his academic course of study in each of the two groups. Previous work done in this field is almost non-existent.

Over a decade has passed since the master plan for the colleges was prepared and Amendment 10 was made in the CHE law. Together they constituted a turning point in the Israeli system of higher education in all matters pertaining to the growth in the number of students. Most of the growth occurred at academic institutions that are not universities (CHE, 2004), namely – in colleges. In response to the development of knowledge in the various spheres of life, the institutions of higher learning developed curricula that generated additional demand among populations, which, in the past, had virtually no chance of attaining a college education due to their socioeconomic status (Sherman, 1995; Ayalon, Yogev, 2002; Davidovitch, 2004). ; Soen & Davidovitch, 2004; Guri-Rosenblit, 1999; Iram, 1998).

The study goal, the study population, the study tool and the study questions

As mentioned, the goal of the study was to deal with the practical aspects of selecting an institution and to examine whether there is a difference between the decision considerations of Arab and Jewish students when opting for college attendance. This was accomplished by monitoring the desired courses of study, the relationship between the enrollment considerations, the college and the student’s nationality (Jewish or Arab), as well as by studying the information sources that affected the students’ enrollment.

The study participants comprised 85 Arab students, out of the 111 who attended the CJS at the time of the survey and a sample of 140 Arab students out of the 551 Arab students attending the academic program at the WGC. The latter were randomly selected.

In the study we made use of a questionnaire that was compiled based on the data that was presented in Davidovitch’s study (2004) on the subject of the expansion of higher education in Israel and at the regional colleges.

The study questions dealt with in this article are as follows:

1. Which disciplines will Jews and Arabs prefer?

2. What are the Arab and Jewish students' considerations in choosing an academic institution?
3. What are the information sources for choosing the academic institution in both groups?

The statistical processing that was performed in order to find the differences by national origin and college included bi-directional variance analyses. In cases where correlations were found between the variables, the Bonferroni method was used in order to examine their origin.

In order to examine the differences in the means of the various questions for each college separately with regard to the non-uniform questions, t tests were performed on bilateral independent samples.

4. Study Findings

4.1 Preferred Disciplines

The two colleges differ considerably from one another in the range of study programs they offer: The CJS offers a wide range of programs in the social sciences and the humanities, engineering, health studies, the natural sciences and the exact sciences, as well as a pre-academic preparatory program. The WGC focuses on the social sciences and pre-academic preparatory programs.

The findings indicate that the programs preferred by the Arabs at WGC are education (39.4%) and sociology (34.3%). In these programs the percentage of Jewish students is rather low (12.8% of all the Jewish students attending the WGC are studying education and 22.9% of all the Jewish students are studying sociology). Conversely, the latter prefer the criminology program, which was chosen by 27.5% of all the Jewish students, compared with a mere 10.2% of the Arab students.

The programs preferred by the Arabs at the CJS are the social sciences (26.7%, excluding economics and business administration; 39.6%, including economics and business administration) civil engineering (13.5 %) and health administration (24.3%). In these programs the percentage of Jews is lower in health administration (15.1%). It is higher in the social sciences (48.0%). A mere 4.0% of the Jewish students studied civil engineering; on the other hand, 10.6 % studied electronic & electrical engineering.

Table 1: Distribution of the Students at the CJS by Field of Study and National Origins

National Origin Department	Arabs		Jews		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Electrical and Electronics Engineering	12	10.8	608	610.	620	10.6
Civil Engineering	15	13.5	231	4.0	246	4.2
Behavioral Sciences	8	7.2	586	11.5	666	11.4
Economics and Business Administration	15	13.5	1070	18.6	1085	18.5
Industrial Management Engineering	1	0.9	450	87.	451	7.7
Architecture	4	3.6	278	84.	282	4.8
Health Administration	72	24.3	868	15.1	895	15.3
Physiotherapy	3	2.7	147	62.	150	2.6
Chemistry and Biotechnology	4	3.6	275	84.	279	4.8
Multi Disciplinary Social Sciences	20	18.0	698	12.1	718	12.3
Mechatronics	1	0.9	124	22.	125	2.1
Social Work	1	0.9	284	4.9	285	4.9
Israel in the Middle East	0	0.0	55	0.9	55	0.9
Total	111	99.9	5746	99.9	5857	100.1

Table 2: Distribution of the Students at the WGC by Field of Study and National Origins

National Origin Multidisciplinary Program	Arabs		Jews		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Economics	9	6.6	22	20.2	31	12.6
Education	54	39.4	14	12.8	68	27.6
Sociology	47	34.3	25	22.9	72	29.3
Criminology	14	10.2	30	27.5	44	17.9
Political Science	12	8.8	13	11.9	25	10.2
Computer Sciences	1	0.7	5	4.6	6	2.4
Total	137	100.0	109	100.0	246	100.0

4.2 The relationship between the enrollment considerations, the college and the student's national origins

In the questionnaire filled out by the students at the two colleges they were asked to answer the following question: "What motivated you to enroll at this particular college?" The following considerations were examined:

- * Academic convenience – easy admission criteria, the student's feeling that studies at the college are easier, the student's acceptance at the college after having applied to a number of other schools and being rejected, the student's receipt of a scholarship for the specific program that he chose.
- * Academic prestige – high academic level, academic infrastructures that impressed the student (library, laboratories). Better opportunities in the labor market, follow-on studies and the reputation of the degree.
- * Convenient study conditions – flexibility in terms of scheduling, concentrated study days and the like.
- * Physical or financial convenience factors – the college's proximity to the student's place of residence, the possibility of living in the dorms, transportation, greater ease in coping with tuition due to the college's payment terms.
- * Academic continuity – the fact that the student attended the college in the past (a pre-academic preparatory program or the school for practical engineers) and chose to continue because of his positive experience.
- * External factors – the student's family guided him, he was referred to the college by his place of employment.
- * Recommendations by friends.

The picture that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire was diverse and complex. It became evident that for some of the considerations there are big statistical differences between the students at the two colleges, and for others there are differences between the Jewish and Arab students, regardless of the college that they attend. In any case, it is worth noting that we found that three common considerations were salient at both colleges (the total number of Jewish and Arab students). The most important consideration is the institution's admission criteria (mentioned by 64.6% of the students at WGC and by 59.8% of the students at the CJS). The second most important consideration is friends' recommendations (mentioned by 31.4% of the students at the CJS and by 23.8% of the students at WGC). The third most important consideration is greater ease in combining studies and work (mentioned by 26.4% of the students at the CJS and by 23.0% of the students at WGC). Hence there is no doubt that the first consideration for choosing a college is its easy admission criteria. This indicates the great importance of the two public colleges that were examined in all matters related to making higher education available to the populations that apply to them. Providing a window of opportunity for populations that would otherwise not have attained a higher education was the main reason for the reform instituted by the CHE in the 1990s, i.e. opening the colleges. Hence, the findings of this survey indicate that both institutions alike are realizing the intentions of the Council for Higher Education. The major question that still remains unanswered is whether there is a difference in the weight of the various considerations between the Arab and the Jewish students. The findings indicate that the sets of considerations in the two groups stem from the background, conditions and circumstances of the two student groups. Therefore, there are both similarities and differences. The following four considerations were salient in the Jewish students' decision-making process:

- * The institution's admission criteria (60.3%)
- * The institution's proximity to the student's place of residence (41.7%)
- * The value of the degree (34.5%)
- * The possibility of combining studies with work (34.0 %)

The following four considerations were salient in the Arab students' decision-making process:

- * The institution's admission criteria (64.1%)
- * Friends' recommendations (30.7%)
- * The value of the degree (26.9%)
- * The institution's proximity to the student's place of residence (26.7%)

Table 3: Distribution of Students' Enrollment Considerations by College and National Origins (%)

Registration considerations	M	JSC		WGC		Total	Total	Total	Total	F=(1,455)			
		SD	Arabs	Jews	Arabs	Jews	Arabs	Jews	JSC	WGC	College	National Origin	National origin X College
			N=85	N=97	N=140	N=137	N=225	N=234	N=182	N=277			
Considerations related to admission criteria													
Admission	M	58.82	60.82	69.29	59.85	64.06	60.34	59.82	64.57	1.06	0.65	1.53	

criteria at this institution	SD	49.51	49.07	46.30	49.20	47.70	49.04	49.15	47.90			
I applied elsewhere and wasn't accepted	M	8.24	3.09	17.14	8.76	12.69	5.93	5.66	12.95	6.59	5.68	0.33
	SD	27.65	17.40	37.82	28.37	34.54	24.55	22.85	33.69	*	*	
Registration considerations		JSC		WGC		Total Arabs N=225	Total Jews N=234	Total JSC N=182	Total WGC N=277	F=(1,455)		
		Arabs N=85	Jews N=97	Arabs N=140	Jews N=137					College	National Origin	National origin X College

Considerations that meet personal needs

It's easier for me to combine work with studies	M	18.82	34.02	21.4	28.47	20.13	31.24	26.42	22.95	0.13	7.14	0.96
	SD	39.32	47.62	41.18	45.29	40.42	46.25	44.48	43.33		**	
The institutions is near where I live	M	10.59	20.62	42.86	62.77	26.72	41.70	15.60	52.82	76.80	12.39	1.35
	SD	30.95	40.67	49.67	48.52	46.21	49.89	36.70	50.02	***	***	
The possibility of living in the dorms	M	15.29	5.15	0.71	2.19	8.00	3.67	10.22	1.45	19.49	4.75	8.54
	SD	36.21	22.23	8.45	14.69	24.21	18.21	29.94	11.95	***	*	**
The possibility of using rides	M	10.59	1.03	12.14	0	11.67	0.52	5.81	6.07	0.01	24.48	0.35
	SD	30.95	10.15	32.78	0	32.01	6.54	22.85	24.05		***	
The possibility of coping with tuition more easily	M	23.53	28.87	7.14	8.76	15.34	18.81	26.20	7.95	29.93	1.09	0.31
	SD	42.67	45.55	25.85	28.37	34.07	37.73	44.19	27.09	***		
Personal considerations related to the institution												
Pleasanter social environment	M	10.59	22.68	30.71	27.01	20.65	24.84	16.63	28.86	9.10	1.07	3.80
	SD	30.95	42.09	46.30	44.56	42.25	43.52	37.70	45.40	**		*
Better attitude of lecturers	M	11.76	10.31	17.14	16.06	14.45	13.18	11.04	16.60	2.75	0.14	0.003
	SD	32.41	30.57	37.82	36.85	35.90	34.43	31.36	37.28			
Easier studies	M	10.59	5.15	12.86	13.14	11.72	9.15	7.87	13.00	2.97	0.75	0.92
	SD	30.95	22.23	33.59	33.91	32.57	29.83	26.72	33.69			
Academic infrastructures that impressed me	M	10.59	4.12	5.00	5.84	7.79	4.98	7.36	5.42	0.72	1.51	2.55
	SD	30.95	19.99	21.87	23.54	22.76	22.11	25.83	22.67			
I attended this school and decided to continue	M	7.06	8.25	7.14	3.65	7.10	5.95	7.65	5.40	0.94	0.25	1.01
	SD	25.77	27.65	25.85	18.82	25.76	22.96	26.72	22.67			
Less bureaucratic attitude towards students	M	4.71	11.34	4.29	11.71	4.50	11.52	8.02	8.00	0	7.37	0.02
	SD	21.30	31.87	20.33	32.23	20.65	32.01	27.58	27.08		**	
Better	M	12.94	17.53	17.14	13.87	15.04	15.70	15.23	15.51	0.01	0.04	1.29

chance of graduating SD 33.77 38.22 37.82 34.69 36.32 36.16 36.18 36.28

Registration considerations	JSC		WGC		Total Arabs N=225	Total Jews N=234	Total JSC N=182	Total WGC N=277	F=(1,455)		
	Arabs N=85	Jews N=97	Arabs N=140	Jews N=137					College	National Origin	National origin X College

Recommendations by outside parties

Friends' recommendation	M	32.94	29.90	28.57	18.98	30.76	24.44	31.42	23.78	3.28	2.24	0.60
	SD	47.28	46.02	45.34	39.36	46.02	42.49	46.51	42.68			
Impression from Open House or Study Fair	M	7.06	10.31	4.29	8.76	5.67	9.53	8.68	6.52	0.75	2.38	0.06
	SD	25.77	30.57	20.33	28.37	22.52	29.25	28.40	24.69			

Considerations related to academic prestige

High caliber of the other students	M	11.76	1.03	6.43	1.46	9.10	1.25	6.40	3.94	1.49	15.21	2.05
	SD	32.41	10.15	24.61	12.04	27.87	11.27	23.90	19.56		***	
Better opportunities in the labor market	M	8.24	0	2.86	3.65	5.55	1.83	4.12	3.25	0.25	4.56	6.71
	SD	27.65	0	16.72	18.82	21.61	14.49	19.28	17.76		*	**
More opportunities for continuing to advanced degrees	M	14.12	4.12	22.86	10.95	18.49	7.54	9.12	16.90	5.79	11.45	0.09
	SD	35.03	19.99	42.14	31.34	39.75	27.37	28.40	37.60	*	**	
The granting of a valuable degree	M	15.29	18.56	38.57	50.37	26.93	34.46	16.93	44.47	40.62	3.03	0.97
	SD	36.21	39.08	48.85	50.18	45.83	48.43	37.70	49.78	***		

* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001

Two of the four salient considerations are common to both Jews and Arabs. The first is the institution's admission criteria. It is equally important to both groups. As mentioned, it is an indication of the colleges' important contribution to the acceptance of students who might not have been able to attend a university. It is supported by an additional consideration that was noted by large percentages of both student groups: The institution's proximity to the student's place of residence (the second most important consideration among the Jews and the fourth most important consideration among the Arabs).

In this respect Israeli reality, as it emerged from the survey, corroborates what was also found to be valid in studies conducted in the US. The two most important considerations, in the eyes of the two groups of students that were examined in this study, pair the sociological angle and the economic angle. Due to the fairly low socioeconomic status of the college students, they come to the halls of academe with a scholastic background that makes it hard for them to be admitted into a university. Not only that, they are very sensitive to the economic burden that studies at institutions of higher learning place on the students or their families. A number of studies conducted in the US discuss the implications of the economic burden on the selection of an institution of higher learning (Manski & Wise, 1983; Jackson, 1978; St. John, 1994). An important study was conducted in the US on the pairing of the sociological angle and the economic angle and their effect on the choice of an institution of higher learning (St. John et al, 1996). The college's proximity to the student's place of residence eases the economic burden considerably. Hence the importance of this consideration, which also arose in a study conducted recently in Australia (Smith et al, 2000). The possibility of combining work and studies, which was one of the important considerations in choosing an institution among the Jewish students, could also alleviate the economic burden, of course. The conclusion that placing an emphasis on immediate needs and not on the value of the university experience itself is perhaps the basic contrast between those who have cultural capital and those who do not have cultural capital (James et al., 1999, 43) is definitely worthy of mention in this context.

However, the evident differences in the weight of the considerations at each of the two colleges that were examined should be addressed. At this point one should also take note of the differentiation by college and the differentiation by national origin.

4.3 Ranking by College and by National Origin:

An analysis of the situation at WGC reveals that there are indeed differences in the relative weight of the considerations, but they are not dramatic. In both groups the admission criteria, the institution's proximity to the student's place of residence and the value of the academic degree are the three highest-ranking considerations in terms of importance.

First place in the set of enrollment considerations of the Jews at WGC was: The institution's proximity to the student's place of residence (62.8%). Second place in the ranking was: the institution's admission criteria (59.9%). Third place in the ranking was: the value of the degree (50.4%).

First place in the set of enrollment considerations of the Arabs at WGC was: the institution's admission criteria (69.3%). Second place in the ranking was: the institution's proximity to the student's place of residence (42.8%) Third place in the ranking was: the value of the degree (38.6%).

However, one should note that in some cases the differences in the relative weight of the considerations among both groups were fairly great, for example in the case of the importance of the institution's proximity to the student's place of residence. Here the difference between the two groups was approximately 20%. This issue of the great importance attached by the Jews to the institution's proximity to their place of residence is interesting, and is definitely worthy of further investigation. One of the possibilities is that had it not been for the nearby availability of WGC, the Jewish students would have considered enrolling at a different college. A large number of colleges now offer the possibility of studying the social sciences.

Be that as it may, one should definitely note that the value attached by the two groups to the institution's proximity to the student's place of residence indicates the importance of the regional function that the college fulfills. The WGC is a regional college par excellence. The prestige of the degree awarded by Bar Ilan University (which sponsors WGC and is a research university) and the admission criteria at the college also indicate that students who could not meet the university's admission criteria enjoy an option for attending an institution of higher learning near their place of residence that also grants them a university degree. A high percentage of the students (it is significantly higher among the Jews than among the Arabs) chose the college because of the prestige of its university degree. One may assume that otherwise, they might have considered enrolling at a different college. The emphasis placed by the students on the consideration of the prestige of the degree indicates a greater preference for the university than for the college. Here, too, the implicit conclusion is that the college opened a window of opportunity for those who registered at it. And this, after all, was precisely the intention of the CHE.

The situation at the CJS is different from the situation at the WGC. However, the Jews and Arabs alike share two considerations: The institution's admission criteria and friends' recommendations. Conversely, the third consideration between the two groups is different. The issue of being able to combine work and studies is known to be of importance to the Jews. The issue of being able to cope with the tuition is known to be of importance to the Arabs. The profile that we obtained is as follows:

First place in the Jews' ranking at the CJS was: the institution's admission criteria (60.8%). In second place: the possibility of combining work and studies (34.0%). In third place: friends' recommendations (29.9%).

First place in the Arabs' ranking at the CJS was: the institution's admission criteria (58.8%). In second place: friends' recommendations (32.9%). In third place: the issue of being able to cope with the tuition (23.5%)

However, it is evident from this ranking that despite the differences, both groups, i.e. the Arabs and the Jews, share one conclusion: The economic consideration is of paramount importance. Among the Jews it is manifested in the fact that they focus on the possibility of combining work and studies. Among the Arabs it is manifested in the fact that they attach importance to the fact that the college enables them to cope with the payment of tuition (at the CJS tuition is paid in easy installments). The cultural difference between the two groups is reflected at this point. Among Jews both males and females seek work. Not so among the Arabs. There is a traditional society. Thus, whereas 50% of the Jewish women aged 15 and above belonged to the work force in 2005, the Moslem figure was a mere 14.6%! (CBS 2006/280). Since many of the Arab students are female work is not an option in any case.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that the considerations involved in the practical aspect of college studies, such as: lecturers' attitudes, easier studies, academic infrastructures, bureaucratic aspects, the chances of graduating with good grades, the caliber of the students, opportunities in the labor market and the possibility of subsequently studying for an advanced degree – were found to have a low weight among both the Jews and the Arabs. This finding is interesting in and of itself, mainly in view of the fact that studies indicate that members of various social strata make "logical" or "reasonable" choices in

all matters pertaining to higher education (MacLeod, 1987), based on their observation of those around them and the conclusions that they draw about what is “good” and “appropriate” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). By and large, the studies indicate that people tend towards what economists call optimization. In other words, people formulate strategies based on the maximization of the capital (in the sociological sense of the word) that is at their disposal in order to guarantee optimal results (DiMaggio, 1979). In light of all the above, this finding definitely deserves further study.

4.4 The information sources affecting registration to the colleges:

In this context of understanding the considerations that led the students to enroll at the colleges, the researchers wished to ascertain what sources of information were used by the students in order to derive the details based on which they made the decision to enroll at the college of their choice. The studies that were conducted in the US in this respect attribute considerable importance to it at the search stage. It turns out that the search – and, in any case, utilizing information sources – begins at a very early stage, in the sophomore year of high school (Hossler et al, 1989), when students begin to communicate with a number of potential institutions (Attinasi, 1989), to visit potential campuses, to purchase handbooks and discuss the relevant institutions with their friends (Hossler et al, 1989). This stage of accumulating information depends on the sophistication and thoroughness of the future student, while his sophistication is derived, in the researchers’ opinion, from his socioeconomic background (McDonough, 1997; Olson & Rosenfeld, 1984). The higher the students’ socioeconomic status, the more varied the information sources that they use in their decision-making process (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000).

In Israel the process apparently begins much later, if only for the simple reason that in the Jewish sector the military service stage separates high school studies and higher education, and the military service stage is generally followed by another break, in order to “chill out” and recover from the rigors of army life. It consists of backpacking all over the world (Salmon, 1988; Maoz, 2005; Noy, 2001/2; Almaliach, 2006; the internet, 2006). It is now part of the Israeli Jewish youth culture.

Be that as it may, it is evident from the findings of our study that the weight of the information sources utilized by the students is not identical at the two colleges. There are sources whose weight in the students’ decision to enroll at one college is far greater than at the other college. However, there are no statistically significant differences in the weight of the sources between the two groups as a whole. One very important information source at both colleges, as reported by the students, is personal recommendation: Personal recommendations by relatives, friends, neighbors and acquaintances. This is in keeping with the findings in Ayalon & Yogev’s study (2002). However, the weight of this source in “recruiting” the students to a college is significantly different at the two institutions. It is far more important at WGC than at the CJS. At WGC it was noted by 51.6% of the respondents, while at the CJS by only 28.2%. The second most important information source is the media: The press, radio and television. But in this case as well there is a significant difference between the contributions to the recruitment of students at the two institutions. At the CJS it was mentioned by 23.0 of the respondents. At WGC a mere 10.5% of the respondents mentioned it. The third most important information source is publications of the colleges and the university of which the college is an extension. Here there is no significant difference between the two institutions.

Distribution of Information Sources about the Colleges by College and National Origins **Table 4:**

Information sources about the college		JSC		WGC		Total	Total	Total	Total	Ariel College	National Origin	National origin X College
		Arabs N=85	Jews N=97	Arabs N=140	Jews N=137	Arabs N=225	Jews N=234	JSC N=182	WGC N=277			
Press, radio and television	M	30.59	15.46	8.57	12.41	19.58	13.94	23.03	10.49	13.84	2.81	7.92
	SD	46.35	36.34	28.10	33.09	37.55	34.43	41.89	30.67	***		**
Publications of institutions of higher learning	M	22.35	13.40	6.43	24.09	14.39	18.75	17.88	15.26	0.58	1.59	14.83
	SD	41.91	34.24	24.61	42.92	33.08	39.83	38.17	35.93			***
Family, friends, neighbors and acquaintances	M	22.35	34.02	57.14	45.99	39.75	40.00	28.19	51.56	25.98	0.003	6.19
	SD	41.91	47.62	49.67	50.02	49.75	49.29	45.30	50.06	***		*
High school, army or workplace	M	5.88	5.15	1.43	5.11	3.66	5.13	5.52	3.27	1.40	0.60	1.34
	SD	23.67	22.23	11.91	22.10	17.40	22.11	22.85	17.76			

Advice or information as a result of contacting the institution	M	2.35	4.12	12.86	10.95	7.61	7.54	3.24	11.90	10.74	0.001	0.48
	SD	15.25	19.99	33.59	31.34	28.52	27.37	17.90	32.45	***		

5. Summary and Conclusions

This study deals with the considerations that led Arab and Jewish students to enroll at two colleges: the CJS and WGC. We assumed that the two colleges, with their unique characteristics, express a reality that is characteristic of Israel's public colleges. This pioneering study is still waiting for a study of additional public colleges in order to corroborate or refute this assumption.

The fact that at WGC it is possible to attend a social sciences program that is offered under the auspices of a university appears to be a highly significant consideration in the eyes of the applicants, and especially in the eyes of the Jews, and mainly in the eyes of the female students who prefer this field. There were both similarities and differences in the Arab and Jewish students' considerations for registering for academic studies. The institution's admission criteria and its proximity to the student's place of residence are of importance to Arabs and Jews alike. Economic convenience was another important consideration shared by both groups. At the CJS, this economic convenience was manifested in the ability to combine working and studying and in the college's proximity to the student's place of residence, as aforesaid. Among the Arabs it was manifested in the importance that they attach to the college's proximity to their place of residence. In the Arabs' opinion, the location was of major importance in the set of enrollment considerations, as were friends' recommendations. And, last but not least: an additional consideration whose weight was similar among the two groups of students, although it was not one of the top four in terms of importance – is the pleasant social atmosphere on campus. Here, too, it has become evident that Israeli reality is similar to that of other Western countries (Dunn & Wharton, 2003; Ivy 2001; Heckscher, 1985).

It is also noteworthy that at both colleges approximately one third of the Jewish students chose the academic institution that they attended as their first choice. At both institutions, the Arabs students enrolled at more than one institution of higher learning. However, at both colleges the study program chosen by the Arab students was their first choice, in their opinion. In other words, based on an analysis of the consideration in these studies, it is evident that the Jewish students placed a foremost emphasis on the institution when enrolling, while the Arab students placed an emphasis on the course of study. This is an extremely interesting point that is also worthy of further investigation. All in all, however is the principal surprising finding of the study: Despite the fact that the Jewish sector graduates enjoy a relative advantage over graduates of the Arab sector in terms of both admission criteria and chances of finding work upon graduation, there is no material difference between them in terms of enrollment considerations.

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