

**A Discourse of Diversity: Arab Students' Perspectives on Institutional Climate - A Study of Two Public Colleges in Israel**

Dan Soen, Associate Professor, Ari'el University Center, Israel; Professor Emeritus, Kibbutzim School of Education, Tel-Aviv, [soen@macam.ac.il](mailto:soen@macam.ac.il).

Nitza Davidovitch, Director of Academic Development & Assessment, Ari'el University Center, Israel, [d.nitza@yosh.ac.il](mailto:d.nitza@yosh.ac.il).

Michal Kolan, Managing Director, Ra'anana College, Israel, [hmk@aktcom.co.il](mailto:hmk@aktcom.co.il).

**Abstract**

*This paper summarizes the findings of a study conducted at two public colleges in Israel: the Academic College of Judea and Samaria (ACJS), Israel's largest independent public college, and the Western Galilee College (WGC), a much smaller institution an extension of Bar Ilan University. The paper is based on the analysis of a survey completed by 459 students.*

*This study examined three aspects related to the climate of the institution, and the fabric of the interpersonal relations between these two groups of students: (a) Arab students' perceptions of equality and consideration for minority groups; (b) Students' perceptions of the relationships between the two groups; (c) Arab students' apprehensions stemming from their minority status.*

*Findings highlight a complex, mainly positive reality. Considerable findings stand in contrast to prevalent public beliefs, and to the situation on other campuses in Israel.*

*The important lesson of this study is that - despite differences in religion, culture and nationality, despite the complexity of the minority experience in Israel, and despite the dark shadow cast on Arab-Jewish relations by the Israel-Palestinian conflict - a rather positive climate prevails on these campuses as far as the relations between these two groups is concerned.*

## 1. Introduction: Colleges operating in a multi-cultural bi-national context

The study whose findings are analyzed below was conducted in several departments of two public colleges in Israel. It intended to focus on the relationships between two study groups - Arab and Jewish students - as the basis for inferences on the climates of these two institutions as far as possible.

The researchers' point of departure was that the colleges operate in a multi-cultural, bi-national, pluralistic society (pluralistic in terms of a situation, in which society is comprised of groups that differ by ethnic origin, cultural background, national affiliation, etc. Such societies are sometimes defined **plural** rather than pluralistic societies [Novis-Deutsch, NA]), under unique geopolitical and historical circumstances that contribute to the spirit of the times. Central Bureau of Statistics data indicate the population of the State of Israel was 7.1 million on the eve of the Jewish New Year in September 2006. Of this population, 5.37 million (76%) were Jews and 1.40 million or 20% of the population was Israeli Arabs (or Israeli Palestinians as they are sometimes referred to). The remaining were "others" - new immigrants and their offspring who are not registered as Jews. Parenthetically we noted that these data do not include Israel's population of foreign guest workers, which was estimated at 189,000 at the end of 2003 (CBS 2006, 209/2006). These data clearly point to the bi-national character of the State's population. In the same breathe; these statistical data also indicate that in 2005 1.93 million Israelis were born outside Israel; that is to say, they came as immigrants from overseas. This group constitutes 35% of the "Jews and Others" categories. The largest group of Israelis born outside Israel (950,000) was born in the Former Soviet Union, 157,000 were born in Morocco, 110,000 in Romania, 77,000 in North America (primarily the United States), 70,000 in Iraq, 70,000 in Ethiopia, 64,000 in Poland (CBS 2005, 100/2005). These data shed light on the multi-cultural nature of Israel's population. They are also crucial to understanding the Jewish-Arab relationships in Israel. They highlight the fact that the Jews, who constituted roughly a third of the population at the end of the British mandate, became the majority overnight as a result of the War of Independence. They also draw attention to the fact that whereas the remaining Arabs numbered a mere 69,000 at the first national census carried out in 1948 (Lustick, 1985, 62) their number swelled about twenty times (!) since then. They explain why Israeli society has always been immersed in national tension between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority: as a result of the dominant national ethos, most of the majority population considers Israeli society as a mono-cultural national community (Yona, 2004).

The bi-national and multi-cultural aspects of Israel's character are relevant in understanding the inter-personal relations between students. Bi-nationalism is relevant because Israel is considered an ethnic national state. Israel also officially defines itself as a **Jewish** state. The ethnical type of a nation state is characterized by ethnic nationality, that is also defined as an *excluding nationality* (since it excludes all those who do not belong to the dominant group) that is built on deep emotional and rather closed-circuit elements of identity, on a unique culture and a shared history, all emanating from the **ethnic** origin of the dominant group. Anyone who fails to share these deep identity elements is "excluded" from the national framework (Saban, 2000).

The topic of multiculturalism is sometimes regarded a research focus that branches out to form three axis (Sever, 2001): demography, structure and ideology. The first axle addresses various aspects of the natural growth of the various cultural groups. The second addresses the power relations between the various cultural groups, while the third axle focuses on the latent ideological aspects lying at the root of society, as they are reflected in its daily life. In our case what is relevant is the dialogue of mutual respect and consideration between the different cultural groups to which the State of Israel is officially committed (Moutner et al., 1998).

It was the researchers' intention in this study to focus on the third axle, and study the inter-relations between Arab and Jewish students in two colleges, bearing in mind the inter-cultural and bi-national encounters taking place on these campuses between the two groups of students. A second question which the researchers' posed was whether the nature of the relationships between the two groups would be different on these two campuses - the first being a small campus with a large population of Arab students, located in an area with a dominant Arab population, while the second, being a large college in a region with a unique character (formerly a Jordanian territory, conquered by Israel during the 6 Days War in 1967) and a negligible number of Arab students.

## 2. The benefits of diversity, multiculturalism and multi-nationalism on campus

Both in the Western World and in Israel, higher education is in the midst of a sweeping process of growth (Soen & Davidovitch, 2004; OECD, 2003). In this process, campuses have, for the first time, opened their doors to populations, which have, for the most part, been excluded from higher education institutions prior to the most recent generation. As a result of this process, which has led to a

considerable proletarianization of the students (in the sense that nowadays many belong to the lower socio-economic strata), several sociologists currently argue for the significance of institutions of higher learning in enhancing students' *social insights*. Social scientists argue that it is very important for students to be aware of the entire diversity of the social tapestry (Rothman et al., 2003):

*"Diversity is not merely a desirable addition to a well-run education. It is as essential as the study of the Middle Ages, of international politics and of Shakespeare. For our students to better understand the diverse country and world they inhabit, they must be immersed in a campus culture that allows them to study with, argue with and become friends with students who may be different from them. It broadens the mind and the intellect – essential goals of education."*

Ultimately, there is widespread agreement among social scientists that the contribution of ethnic, cultural and national diversity on campus is not inconsequential. Because ethnic differences are related to differences in worldviews, opinions and perceptions, as well as more than a few fixed stereotypes, the increase in weight of minority groups on campuses may introduce students to experiences, perceptions and opinions that potentially broaden the mind about "the other" (Chang, 2005). The positive balance of democracy in these inter-group encounters stems from students' adoption of new perspectives, their broadening cultural and ethnic understanding, their deepening sense of citizenship, etc. (Gurin et al, 2002). Students' opportunities on campus are important, especially for the younger group of students, aged 20-30, who are at a critical stage in their development (ibid). Moreover, the impact of higher learning institutions on students is especially strong when the social climate on campus **differs from students' familiar home and community climate**; when the campus is sufficiently complex and diverse as to create an intellectual experience and pinpoint a range of potential possibilities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

It is widely agreed, therefore that studying in a college in the student's home environment, or in an institution whose climate is a nothing more than a reflection of the student's homogeneous community of origin, generates no individual struggles or non-routine reasoning. Both, however, are essential to students' identity development. Therefore, it is precisely the college with a diverse student body that promotes student identity development. This is the advantage of such colleges over homogeneous institutions that reproduce a student's home atmosphere and prevent exposure to "new winds." This point is repeatedly confirmed by surveys and studies on students who attend programs on diversely populated campuses. The latter studies repeatedly show that students had very few inter-cultural contacts and relationships in their formative years, before arriving on campus. This situation changed substantially when they commenced their studies in institutions whose student bodies were comprised of students of many minority groups. Here, they first opened themselves to numerous contacts and relationships with the "others," members of groups other than their own (Whitla et al., 2003).

These opportunities to interact with students of "other" groups were found to be especially beneficial for students of the **majority** group. Apparently, the greater the diversity in the student body composition, the greater the probability that students of the majority group would have ties with members of minority groups and conduct discussions on issues relating to ethnic diversity (Chang, 1999; Gudeman, 2001). Support for the long-term effects of such experiences is presented in a study that found that such interactions between students from majority and minority groups have a positive long-term impact **even after the completion of college**. When such students from the majority group begin their adult lives after earning a degree, the impact of their multi-cultural college interactions is evident in the sense of social responsibility they develop, and in their involvement in various activities for their community (Villalpando, 1996). Also notable is the strong positive opinion of two American researchers who analyzed the contribution of higher learning institutions to heightened civil awareness (Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997).

Aristotle strongly supported this opinion. He claimed that civil unity could be achieved through diversity and difference. In Aristotle's opinion, a democracy based on a tapestry of differences and heterogeneity will prosper more than a government based on homogeneity. Also, the secret of democracy is social discourse. Freedom of social discourse and openness toward others have the potential to resolve inter-group conflicts and thus to bolster a democracy (Pitkin, & Shumer, 1982).

To this point we presented support for the opinion that diversity and heterogeneity are important for students' social development. Nonetheless, in this context, warnings have been sounded that diversity alone is no more than the first step in a long and arduous process. Attention should be directed to numerous details that are essential both to enhance the success of the process as well as to minimize the potential problems that might arise as a result of inter-group encounters (Milem, 2001). Among other things, consideration should be given to campus climate, the contents of lectures and faculty members' ability to adapt their teaching methods to diverse students' needs.

However, there are more than a few extra necessary conditions for fruitful inter-group relations. One stems from the very argument that diversity allows students to become familiar with differences in groups and between groups. In this respect one has to bear in mind that students attend colleges with different levels of ethnic, cultural or national diversity in their student bodies. This numerical representation of diverse groups has been termed *structural diversity* (Hurtado et al., 1999). Structural diversity increases the probability that students will encounter others of diverse backgrounds; yet simply attending an ethnically or culturally diverse college does not guarantee meaningful inter-group interactions. To enable this, the number of students of the minority group on campus ought to be significant. Otherwise, their uniqueness, the special attention they receive, and possibly their "conspicuousness" might have negative results. Under such circumstances, not only will no benefit arise from inter-group encounters, rather, such encounters may even **reinforce negative stereotypes** held by the majority group regarding the minority group (Kanter, 1977).

Furthermore, in addition to efforts directed to integrate large numbers of minority students on campuses, attention should also be given to the establishment of the proper psychological climate that encourages positive perceptions and attitudes among the different groups. Needless to say, a behavioral climate conducive to inter-group socializing should also be cultivated (Hurtado et al, 1999).

Extensive research findings have documented the negative effects of small minority groups on campus since the 1980s. Field and laboratory research has shown that "tokens" attract disproportionate attention and are either evaluated unfairly or evaluated on the basis of their normal reactions to differential treatment by majority group members (Lord & Saenz, 1985; Mellon, 1996; Sekaquaptewa & Thompson, 2002; Yoder, 1994). Yet, on the other hand, scholars of inter-ethnic relations have also indicated that the risk of confrontations between minority and majority group members is correlated with increases in the relative proportion of the minority group in the total population (Blalock, 1967; Hurtado et al., 1999). At the same time, however, we have already explained that such confrontations do not necessarily have a *negative* impact. As early as the 1980s, one researcher argued that the primary virtue of a university is its ability to generate *creative confrontations* (Palmer, 1987). Such confrontations, when they occur in an appropriate campus atmosphere, ultimately generate a genuine transformation in inter-personal relations.

Finally, a series of studies points to the greater complexity that exists in the fabric of relations among students on ethnically and culturally heterogeneous campuses. Studies have frequently shown that, on one hand, participants acknowledge intensive inter-ethnic interactions on campus, but, at the same time, they note that their campus is characterized by ethnic-based confrontations, prejudice and sectarian withdrawal (Astin et al., 1991; Duster, 1991; UCMI, 1989). This, ostensibly, is a paradox.

In this context it is worthy to note that, in view of the diverse nature of the research on inter-group contacts, findings of a meta-analysis were published in 2005, summarizing a five-year effort to thoroughly evaluate all the studies conducted between 1940-2000 on this issue (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). The analysis comprised 515 individual studies including 714 independent samples and 1,365 surveys with a total of 250,493 participants from 38 countries. It attempted to evaluate a series of elements included in all studies. The first important point was the impact of inter-group contacts on prejudices, and the factors that mediated this impact. The second point was the affects of inter-group contacts with different groups and in different inter-group contexts.

The findings of the meta-analysis speak for themselves:

- The more extensive the inter-group contacts, the less inter-group prejudice. This conclusion was statistically significant in 93% of the studies. The meta-analysis confirmed an inverse relationship between contact and prejudice.
- The more stringent the methodology used by the studies, the stronger the above inverse relationship between contact and prejudice. This indicates that inter-group contacts can certainly reduce prejudice and negative stereotypes.
- The effects of inter-group contact ultimately spread from immediate participants of the inter-group contact and are subsequently incorporated by the entire group.
- The contacts have a different impact on minority and majority group members. Strong contacts have a greater effect on majority members compared to minority members.

In other words, in the appropriate circumstances and setting, inter-group contacts on campus may facilitate a positive relationship dynamics between students of majority and minority groups. This is an important conclusion. Its implications for Israeli reality may be extremely significant in view of the anticipated growth in the number of Arab students who attend academic institutions in Israel. The encounter between these two groups, Arab and Jewish students may, therefore, be a blessing to both sides, provided that the opportunity is not missed.

### 3. The background of Arab and Jewish students at the colleges

The starting point of the researchers is that the two groups of students enter the college from settings that can be defined as empirical pluralism or singled out environments, characterized by segregated educational systems, which effectively reproduce separate and distinct cultures (Smoocha, 2001; Yogev, 2001). The heart of the problem lies in the enormous gap between both cultures - the majority and minority cultures - that is reflected in the fundamental characteristics of these two societies living alongside each other. The setting of the Arab minority is patriarchal, implying a *collective, hierarchical society* with a pyramidal authority structure (Walid, 1998). Needless to say, in this society, individual identity is secondary in significance to collective identity. In everyday life, the latter is dominant. In contrast stands the Jewish majority setting. Drawing its reference patterns from Western culture, its foundation is the *individual*, his or her rights, values and opinions, rather than the group. Thus, a priori, these two worlds are diametrically different in terms of their point of origin, even without referring to a second important fact, which complicates the encounter further. This fact is the current nature of Israeli culture, which is lacking in appeased multiculturalism that facilitates non-violent discourse between representatives of cultural diversities and the diverse social needs of Jews and Muslims, Israelis and Palestinians, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, and other binary groupings. The problem is that inter-community and inter-cultural discourse in today's Israel is inherently violent. This violence stems primarily from the dominant national ethos noted above. Thus, any balance of rights, opportunities and restrictions is typically determined by brute force (Gur Zeev, 1998).

The main motive for this study is the fact that institutions of higher learning in Israel are, in view of the above, the first arena of encounters of Arab and Jewish students (Swirski, 1990). Campus environments are discontinuous from the home environments of most of the Arab students. Due to the national separation that persists in most Israeli settlements the great majority of students have lived and studied in segregated communities before coming to the college. This kind of pre college educational background means that most Israeli students (Arab as well as Jewish) enter college without experience with the other group's peers. As stated by Gurin et al. (2002) colleges that diversify their student bodies and enhance genuine interaction across ethnicity lines provide the first opportunity for many students to learn from peers with different culture, values and experience. Therefore, the question facing the researchers is whether the joint encounter and the institutional climate at both colleges ultimately lead to what is defined in social studies as "a discourse of diversity" - a discourse based on understanding and awareness of the inter-relations between language, culture and power (Chochran-Smith, 1995). Power is especially important in view of the fact that Israel is - as mentioned above - a declared **ethnic national** state. We can infer the effective significance of power in the everyday life of a bi-national state from data on the emotional distress of Israeli Arabs, reflected in a survey conducted by the Central Bureau of Statistics. These data indicate that in 2003, stress was "frequently or always" experienced by one third of all adults in Israel (over age 20), but by 53% of all Arab respondents (CBS, 2005, 143/2005).

The educational system in Israel is a self-proclaimed multicultural system. The Ministry of Education also declares that Israeli society must simultaneously accomplish two aims: on one hand, defend the right of all citizens to express their unique culture, and on the second hand, reinforce civic culture as a shared foundation (Society and Youth Administration, NA). This perspective creates the potential and obligation to accept the "otherness" of a different culture, to be transformed through it and in it, and develop together in the space of the large diversity of human possibilities (Gur Zeev, NA).

Multicultural education implies that each party learns about the other and about itself (Abu Backer, 2002). Multicultural education implies employing overt and covert means, formal and informal aids. The present study attempts to examine whether the campuses in question properly serve a multicultural approach by facilitating extensive inter-personal encounters between both groups of students, or are they merely paying lip service to this approach.

### 4. The aim of the study, research questions, study population and research instruments

In view of the above, the aim of the study, whose findings are presented and analyzed below, is to examine the inter-relations between Arab and Jewish students attending two public colleges of a very different nature. One, the Academic College of Judea and Samaria (ACJS), is a large, independent college, attended by almost 6000 students in 2005/6, including slightly over 111 Arab students [Their number more than doubled by 2007] (Nevertheless, it should be noted that most of the Arab students are enrolled at the faculty of social sciences and liberal arts, were the overall number of students at the time of the survey was 2188). The second is the much smaller Western Galilee College (WGC), with

almost 2000 students in 2005/6, including students of the academic preparatory program. In this institution, Arabs comprise almost 45% of the study population.

Encounters between both cultural and national groups occur on both campuses. In a sociological sense, these two groups are a majority and minority, respectively. The present study, conducted in the second half of the 2004/5 academic year, examined the encounter *through the eyes of students*. We tried to evaluate **their** view of the social-academic climate on campus. We explored perceptions relating to four areas of their experience:

- Equality and consideration
- Unique difficulties and deliberations of Arab students
- Fabric of social life on campus
- Anxieties and apprehension stemming from the unique nature of the minority group

The research question was how Arab students in each college perceive the social-academic climate on campus. Do Arab students feel comfortable, do they feel threatened, or do they perceive themselves to be objects of discrimination?

A sample of 459 students, 182 of whom, from the ACJS, and 277 of whom, from the WGC represent the study population. 225 of the students were Arabs; 234 were Jewish. Of the ACJS sample 85 students were Arabs. They constituted 89.5% of the Arab students in the academic tracks at the time of the survey. There were more Arab students in the Practical Engineering School and in the academic preparatory school. These students were not included in the sample. The 97 Jewish students were a sample picked up from amongst freshmen students of the college: All the freshmen students attending compulsory introductory courses in the summer semester had to fill the questionnaire. Of the WGC sample 140 students were Arabs. They constituted about 63% of the Arab students in the academic tracks at the time of the survey. The majority of the Arab students studying in the WGC as the research was carried out attended the non-academic tracks. These were excluded from the study. The Arab students included in the sample were selected randomly from the students' registry. The 137 Jewish students were recruited in obligatory courses. Research assistants administered the questionnaires to the students.

To tap into students' responses with regard to the four research areas, students completed a questionnaire containing 19 items. Of these, 8 items concerned equality and consideration of the minority group, 3 items concerned the unique difficulties experienced by Arab students, 4 items concerned inter-personal relations on campus, and 2 items concerned the anxieties experienced by Arab students as a result of their belonging to a minority group.

Responses to the questionnaires were processed using appropriate statistical tools. The correlation between background data and national attributes at both colleges was examined through common breakdowns and chi-square tests. To examine the differences between both colleges and both national groups on the various items, we employed bi-directional analyses of variance. Bonferroni tests were conducted to identify the source of any correlations found between variables. This method uses the variance of error and takes into consideration the number of comparisons performed. The results are reported as significant at a level of  $p < .05$ .

### **5. Arab students' feelings regarding equality and consideration**

To explore the feelings of Arab students regarding equality and consideration, the following series of statements were presented in the questionnaire. Participants were requested to respond in the affirmative or negative:

- *I feel that Arab students receive completely equal treatment from the Student Association.*
- *Arab students receive completely equal treatment regarding scholarships.*
- *There is no discrimination against Arab students by instructors.*
- *I feel equal among equals.*
- *Instructors try very hard to help Arab students.*
- *There is consideration for the religious sensibilities of Arab students.*
- *Some Arab students receive accommodations on exams and assignments due to language difficulties.*

- *Arab students are active in the Students' Association at this college.*

Table 1 summarizes the rate of agreement of students by group: Arab students from the minority group and Jewish students from the majority group. This table facilitates a comparison of the situation on both campuses.

**Table 1: Perceptions of Arab and Jewish Students On Equality and Consideration on Campus (%)**

Item		ACJS		WG C		Total Arab s	Total Jews	Total ACJS	Total WGC	F Colleg e	F Nationalit y	Nationalit y x college
		Jewish *	Arab*	Jewish *	Arab*							
I feel that Arab students are treated equally by the Students' Union	<b>M</b>	86.9	47.2	82.2	41.8	44.5	84.6	67.0	62.0	0.98	63.0	0.0
	<b>S D</b>	34.0	50.4	38.4	49.5	49.7	36.8	46.7	49.0		***	
	<b>N</b>	61	53	107	122	175	168	114	229			
Arab students receive equal treatment regarding scholarships	<b>M</b>	86.3	63.8	77.7	35.7	49.8	82.0	75.0	56.7	12.5 ***	38.4 ***	3.5
	<b>S D</b>	34.8	48.5	41.9	48.1	49.8	39.7	43.9	49.9			
	<b>N</b>	51	58	103	126	184	154	109	229			
There is no discrimination against Arab students by instructors	<b>M</b>	51.3	62.3	85.0	48.5	55.4	68.6	56.8	67.2	4.4 *	7.1 **	23.8 ***
	<b>S D</b>	50.3	48.9	34.9	50.2	50.1	44.5	49.9	47.1			
	<b>N</b>	76	53	128	130	183	204	129	258			
I feel that I am among equals	<b>M</b>	98.7	65.2	88.9	60.7	63.0	93.8	82.0	74.8	2.8	51.4 ***	0.4
	<b>S D</b>	11.4	48.2	31.6		48.7	26.2	34.7	43.8			
	<b>N</b>	77	46	126	135	181	203	123	261			
Instructors try very hard to help Arab students	<b>M</b>	72.4	64.3	73.8	55.0	57.3	69.0	69.0	63.4	0.5	5.5 *	0.9
	<b>S D</b>	73.8	55.0	44.2	49.9	49.6	46.5	46.5	48.3			
	<b>N</b>	103	171	103	129	171	161	100	232			
Consideration is given to the religious sensibilities of Arab students	<b>M</b>	70.2	69.1	85.8	42.4	55.7	78.0	69.6	64.1	1.1	17.5 ***	15.7 ***
	<b>S D</b>	46.2	46.8	35.0	49.6	50.1	39.7	46.2	48.5			
	<b>N</b>	57	42	113	132	174	170	99	245			
Some Arab students receive accommodations on exams and assignments due to language difficulties	<b>M</b>	54.2	49.1	74.3	46.8	48.0	64.3	51.7	60.6	2.6	8.7	4.1 ***
	<b>S D</b>	50.3	50.4	43.9	50.1	50.1	47.1	50.2	49.2			
	<b>N</b>	59	57	105	126	183	164	116	231			
Arab students are active in	<b>M</b>	46.3	47.8	66.3	65.9	56.8	56.3	47.1	66.1	9.5**	0.0	0.0
	<b>S D</b>	50.5	50.5	47.5	47.6	48.9	49.1	50.2	47.8			

the Students' Union	N	41	46	92	123	169	133	87	215			
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\*p<.05\*\*p<.01\*\*\*p<.0010.71=  $\alpha$  ;

The above table points to an interesting picture in several key issues. First and foremost, it unfortunately appears that *both institutions have a problem in terms of discrimination against Arab students*, at least based on the subjective perceptions of Arab students. This feeling of discrimination is evident regarding the Student Association and the institutions themselves. It is interesting that this sense of discrimination is not experienced and sensed exclusively by Arab students. Almost one third of all Jewish students believe that instructors discriminate against Arab students, and almost one quarter of all Jewish students believe that there is no consideration for the religious sensibilities of their Arab peers. Nonetheless it is clear that each group of students experiences a very different reality. While an overwhelming 93.8% of Jewish respondents agreed with the statement "I feel among equals," only 63% of all Arab respondents agreed.

Notably, the sense of discrimination is much stronger at the WGC than at the ACJS. At the WGC, Arab students experience a very strong sense of discrimination regarding scholarships, consideration of their religious sensibilities and in their instructors' attitude toward them. The statistical differences between the two colleges are large and significant, with a more favorable situation at the ACJS. An interesting question is what could explain these differences between the colleges. It has been maintained that a critical mass of minority students emboldens them to transform their institutions; it heightens their political identity; it contributes to the alteration of power dynamics (Chang, 2002). Also, as already mentioned, the risk of tension between the minority and majority group members is correlated with increases in relative proportion of the minority group in the population (Blalock, 1967; Hurtado et al., 1999). This may account for the deeper sense of frustration among the minority group at the WGC. In this college the Arab students are almost on numerical par with their Jewish compatriots. They are emboldened by numbers. They expect full equality.

The positive aspect of the perceived picture of discrimination is that this feeling is neither universal nor overwhelming. A considerable percentage of Arab students at each college believe that their respective institutions show consideration to the religious sensibilities of Arab students, and that equality exists in their respective institutions. **Almost two-thirds of all Arab students declared that they felt among equals.** Although one might suggest that *feeling that one is an equal* points more to self-confidence of the respondents than to the campus atmosphere, the Hebrew phrasing of the statement in the questionnaire really focused on the atmosphere. Almost 60% of all Arab students noted that instructors try very hard to help them!

The situation described above should be viewed on the backdrop of an enduring sense of discrimination experienced by Arabs in Israel, and their feeling of being subject to an institutionalized policy of discrimination originating in the dominant worldview of the Jewish sector, which is that the state and its institutions should first care for the matters of the Jewish public (Mena'a, NA). This sense is shared by the majority of the Arab public in Israel and is eloquently expressed in writings of Arab intellectuals. Some have written that Israel knowingly conducts a series of acts to prevent Arab citizens their full share as due to their Jewish peers (Ghanem, 1998). Some go even further and determine that Israel has condemned Arabs to a status of second-class citizens (Sa'adi, 2000).

Thus, it is not surprising that Arab politicians express such feelings in various forums (Gereis, 2000):

*"I examine Israeli democracy based on results and not on a theoretical plane. In Israel there are effectively two democracies - a democracy for Jews and a democracy for Arabs. Democracy is not only the right to elect and be elected to the house of representatives; this right in itself is insufficient to ensure equal status for all citizens of the state..."*

*"...The State of Israel maintains a discriminatory governmental system towards its Arab citizens. It does not guarantee to them the same liberties or opportunities that it affords to its Jewish citizens. By doing so, the State of Israel not only exacerbates the differences between the populations, but also their sense of alienation and the polarization between them."*

These feelings, which are expressed in statements of Arab scholars and public figures, obviously are harbored in the hearts of Arab students, who express themselves clearly on this point (Makkawi, 1999):

*"Equal opportunities do not exist for both nations. We receive much less than the other group. There are many examples of this. Merely for being an Arab, you are exposed to significant differences in budgetary allocations to local governments...the occupational opportunities open to us are very limited. If, for example, you take an Arab mechanical engineer and a Jewish mechanical engineer, the Jewish*

*engineer has all the opportunities of working for plants defined as sensitive (the defense industry). Arab engineers have no chance of entering those plants. There are many places to which Arabs have no access."*

Thus, Arab students come to college campuses with an already existing sense of discrimination. **The fact that almost two thirds stated that they feel among equals at the college, despite the above, is reflective of the favorable atmosphere on campus.**

## 6. On the fabric of social relations between Arabs and Jews on campus

In some ways, Arab students' entry into higher education is similar to entry into higher education by their Jewish peers, and by all students of any group. In many cases, entering college or university implies leaving the family nest, investing extensive efforts in self-definition, establishing a new network of social ties, experiencing independence and coping with the tasks of studies and exams. The era of adolescence and young adulthood is a clear era of identity formation (Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1996). At the same time, for Arab students, the issue of identity formation is prominent beyond considerations of developmental psychology (Schiff, 2003). Leaving their protective and familiar home environment and the encounter with Jewish students on the latter's turf, is of fundamental significance for their identity formation.

The fabric of social relations between Arab and Jewish students has focal significance in decoding the discourse of diversity between these two national and cultural groups. These relationships are especially important because inter-personal relations and discourse with others have a great impact on self-identity formation as well as on the formation of *social identity*. Social identity is not formed through the individual's self-exploration of the self: it is formed as a result of an ongoing process of observing others and attempts to decipher others' opinions of us and our actions on the basis of their responses to our behavior (Blumer, 1969; Sarbin & Scheibe, 1983). With all regards to social identity, it has already been argued that the relationship with others is what enables the individual to position himself socially (Holland et al., 1998). In view of the above, it is not surprising that a positive fabric of social relations between Arab and Jewish students is one of the key elements in creating "inclusive identities" in Israeli society (Schiff, 2003). In view of the Arab-Jewish rift in Israeli society, there is special importance in exploring the fabric of social relations between these two groups on campus.

As mentioned, the present study attempted to explore the interactions between these two groups of students through a survey. The basic assumption of the team of researchers was that encounters and interactions - from the perspectives of both Jewish and Arab students - would be ultimately affected by the state of the national conflict (Maoz, 2000). Since the national conflict affects interactions, they would be characterized by confrontations that affect each other (Bar-On, 1999), because collective identities of Jews and Arabs have, for many years, formed around the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Maoz et al, 2002).

Indeed, expression of these assumptions is found in numerous articles depicting the inter-group life on various campuses. For example, one basic argument espoused by a female Arab student at the Hebrew University is "*We live in a 'pretend democracy.' It's a democracy if you are Jewish. Arabs are second-class citizens... the State does not help them advance. They place obstacles to prevent Arabs from making progress*" (Volodovsky, 2003). But, on the other hand, there are the following admissions: "*We don't experience discrimination or racism at the university on an everyday basis...it is easy to get along with the students,*" and "*I have made many Jewish friends. In class, the Jewish-Arab issue is not evident*" (ibid). At the same time, the following excerpt summarizes these overt reflections: "*Nevertheless, there is a kind of incessant fear of the different treatment granted to Arab students. It exists. Students know it. There are events that will always arouse the Arab-Jewish issue. You are an Arab in a Jewish majority, you are different*" (ibid). This is also the root of the violent, albeit isolated, events that were recorded in 1999 between Jewish and Arab students at Haifa University, and of the larger number of violent confrontations recorded between these two groups on the same campus in October 2000 following the October Riots in which 13 Arab protestors were killed by the security forces (Levy & Ath'amna, 2004; The Left Bank correspondent, 2002).

In any case, four statements were introduced to explore the fabric of social relations between the two groups of students at the college. One statement concerns the instrumental relations between these groups, and the second expressly concerns primary relations:

- *Arab students are not interested to know Jewish students*
- *There are Arab and Jewish students who work together on study assignments (instrumental, assignment-oriented relationships)*

- *The students in the department have become friends (primary relations)*
- *Some groups of students in the department do not get along with each other*

The first notable conclusion from the analysis of the study's findings is the existence of a broad consensus between both student groups, at both colleges, that **Arab students have no tendency towards segregation or seclusion**. They are certainly interested in getting to know Jewish students. Less than 25% of the Arab students included in the survey agreed with the first statement. On this point, both student groups share the same view, as 27% of the Jewish survey participants agreed with this statement. Thus, the majority of the student bodies at both colleges believe that Arab students are interested in crossing the cultural-national-religious divide in order to get to know Jewish students. In fact, this is one of the few points to reflect almost complete similarity between the two student groups. Their perception of the reality was identical. As will be shown later on, this *interest* does translate into interaction. It is definitely not a case where one encounters interest coupled with segregation!

This finding is interesting by itself, but becomes even more interesting on the background of findings of a study conducted several years ago at another Israeli Teaching College. That study found that the relationships between Arab and Jewish students were characterized by excessive mutual segregation, reflecting that these ethnic groups maintained their social boundaries, as well as a large degree of alienation (Lev-Ari & Mittelberg, 2002).

Arab students' desire to cross the boundaries of their group and become familiar with Jewish students is apparently fulfilled to quite a large extent at the two colleges in the present study. No wonder that the vast majority of both groups of students - Arabs and Jews alike - agree with the second statement, that is, that the students in the department are friendly with one another, although, there is a significant statistical difference between the two colleges on this point. Crossing ethnic-national borders is considerably greater at the ACJS (88% of the Arab participants) than at the WGC (73.7%). At the same time, cross-national interpersonal interactions at the WGC are also extensive. The interesting point is that the desire to become friends with their Jewish peers, expressed by Arab students at the WGC is greater than the desire expressed by Arab students at ACJS. However, based on the findings, there is broad openness between two groups of students at both institutions, and that is the main point.

At this point, it is notable to point out another interesting finding. The following statement was presented only to participants from the WGC: "Many friendships between Jews and Arabs have formed at the College." Participants were requested to express their agreement to this statement. 74.3% of the Arab students agreed while only 45.3% of the Jewish students agreed, and a significantly statistical difference was found between these two groups ( $p < .001$ ;  $t = 5.14$ ). This finding also indicates that reality is in the eyes of the beholder. The interesting question is whether the responses reflect the subjective impression of the students or whether this really is the reality. Is it possible that more Arab than Jewish students initiated friendship with the other side? This issue certainly merits further study.

At the same time, the findings concurrently indicate that the situation is probably more complex. At both colleges, and to a greater degree at the WGC, there is a hard core of students who do not get along with each other. This is indicated by the responses of over one half of the Arab students at the ACJS (54.8%). At the WGC, their weight approaches three-quarters (70.8%) of all Arab students! This is a large and statistically significant difference. The interesting point is that the feelings of Jews and Arabs largely diverge at this point. Only 28.5% of the Jewish students at the ACJS are aware of this problem. At the WGC, 63.4% of the Jewish students are aware of it. We may assume that the large differences in the subjective feelings of Arab and Jewish students stem from the deeper sensitivities of the former as members of a minority group. On the other hand, the awareness of an inter-group problem seems indeed to be much deeper at the WGC.

An interesting question is why this problem is more salient at the WGC than at the ACJS. The survey results do not supply a clear explanation. It is possible that the explanation lies in the fact that Arab students constitute a large group at the WGC. We noted above that when the weight of a minority group is large, this might create confrontations between the majority and minority groups. This point certainly warrants a thorough study.

Ultimately, the findings of the study indicate that there is extensive collaboration between the two groups on an everyday basis, although even on this point there is a statistically significant difference between the two colleges. Approximately 72.5% of the Arab students at the ACJS and over 90% (!) of the Arab students at the WGC declare that students from both groups work together on their academic assignments. On this point, there is a statistically significant advantage in favor of the WGC. However, as noted, **the great majority of students at both colleges maintain instrumental relationships**. Furthermore it is interesting that the proportion of *Arab* students who confirmed collaboration by both student groups on academic assignments is higher (81.4%) at both

colleges compared to the proportion of *Jewish* students who agreed with this statement (66.0%). Again, one might raise the question: Is it possible that more Arab than Jewish students collaborate with the other side?

The emerging question from the above is whether Jews collaborate less with Arabs on academic assignments, or whether this is a subjective assessment, and each group holds a different view of reality. Since this point was not actually examined, it is difficult to answer this question. At the same time, we note findings of a study conducted at another Israeli Teaching College in the late 1980s on the integration of Jewish and Arab students in the college. Findings of that study already indicated Arab students' greater inclination toward openness to contact with their Jewish peers. Arab students indicated greater interest in mutual ties. There was a large difference in the responses of both groups when questioned on the extent they tend to submit assignments with students who were not members of their national group. A mere 8% of the Jewish students responded that they regularly collaborate with their Arab peers on academic assignments, compared to 22% of the Arab students who responded similarly (Peleg, 1991).

**Table 2: Fabric of social relations between Arab and Jewish students at both colleges (%)**

Item		ACJS		WG		Total Arabs	Total Jews	Total ACJS	Total WG	F College	F Nationality	Nationality x college
		Jewish*	Arab**	Jewish*	Arab**							
Arab students are not interested in getting to know Jewish students	<b>M</b>	26.0	38.3	27.6	10.4	24.4	26.8	32.2	19.0	9.0**	0.3	11.5***
	<b>SD</b>	44.1	49.0	44.9	30.6	39.3	44.5	46.6	39.0			
	<b>N</b>	77	60	123	135	195	200	137	258			
Some Jewish students and Arab students work together on their studies	<b>M</b>	54.9	72.6	77.1	90.3	81.4	66.0	63.7	83.7	22.0***	13.2***	0.3
	<b>SD</b>	50.1	45.0	42.2	29.7	36.1	46.5	48.6	36.9			
	<b>N</b>	82	62	131	134	196	213	144	265			
The students in the department are friendly with each other	<b>M</b>	89.3	88.0	78.5	73.7	80.8	83.9	88.7	74.1	8.2**	0.5	0.2
	<b>SD</b>	31.1	32.8	41.3	44.2	41.8	37.9	31.7	42.9			
	<b>N</b>	75	50	116	133	183	191	125	249			
Some groups of students don't get along	<b>M</b>	28.6	54.8	63.4	70.8	62.8	46.0	41.7	67.1	20.7***	9.0**	2.8
	<b>SD</b>	45.5	50.4	48.4	45.7	47.2	50.1	49.0	47.0			
	<b>N</b>	63	42	112	130	172	175	105	242			

\* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\* p<.0010.68=  $\alpha$  ;

These data, reflected on the macro-level of analysis of Table 2 data, are also strongly reflected on the micro-level, in interviews with Arab students published in the press. The following excerpt, based on an interview with a third-year student of the ACJS Electric and Electronics Department from East Jerusalem, is typical (Shragay, 2005):

*"Pahuri never visited the College before he started studying there. 'I sent all the forms through friends. On the first day, I didn't even know how to get there. When I arrived, I couldn't believe that that was the college. First of all, 70% of the students are not settlers, they're ordinary people, just like in Jerusalem. And even the settlers, including the extremists among them, are now my good friends. I have been here for 2 ½ years and I have not encountered any indication of racism on part of students or teachers.' According to Pahuri, Arab students even receive special treatment at the college, 'the administration treats us really well. And not only us, but Druze and Ethiopians as well.' 'Nevertheless, don't you find it difficult to study at a college that is considered the settlers' college?'*

*'There is no such thing as a settlers' college. It is the college of those who attend and study there. There are 250 Arab students in the academic track, out of 7000 and that proves that Arabs are not interested in studying there and therefore the college makes special attempts to attract them.'*

And another excerpt from an interview with a student from the village of Gat, who is in his third year at the ACJS (Elboim, 2003):

*"I attended an intensive one-week course where I was the only Arab among secular and religious Jews," recounts Majdi. 'Every time an argument would break out, I found myself mediating between them. On the Saturday we spent together, I was their 'Shabbos goy.' In that course, I spoke to a right-wing young woman, and when her husband joined our conversation he was very excited. There are some people here who have never spoken to an Arab in their life, even though they live on a settlement in Shomron, near Arabs. Our joint encounter gives us the ability to listen to each other, and that is something that we can all benefit from.'"*

And, finally (Philosoff, 2005):

*"When Mahmoud Amash, aged 22 of Jissar a-Zarka, wants to emphasize how happy he is [at the ACJS], he says that he often stays there on weekends. When asked if he never had any problem becoming part of an academic institution located in the West Bank where most of the students are Jews, he shrugged it off. He said that even when he attended high school in the village, he had Jewish friends from Benyamina and Hadera (two Jewish towns not very far from his village. The authors). Furthermore, at the college, he has more Jewish friends than Arab friends.*

*"Amash, friendly and smiling, is a second year student in the undergraduate Criminology department. He lives in the college dorms and came to the college following an advertisement in the media. In his opinion, Arab students come to study there because, among other reasons, "not every university has a criminology [program]. It is easier to get accepted here, although the studies are difficult. There is assistance and mentors that make it easier to fit in.' He plans to rent an apartment in Ari'el next year and continue working toward a graduate degree in psychology at the College. On route from the library in the Dean's Building, it is evident that he has many friends on campus."*

## **7. Arab students' fears related to their minority status**

For most Arab students, attending studies at the colleges and joining the student body, provide their first unmediated encounter with the Jewish majority and Israeli reality where tension between the two groups prevails. As is well known, and as already mentioned above, most Jews and Arabs in Israel study in separate educational systems. Some Arab scholars view this segregation as an advantage (Zarzur, 1985: 493):

*"The segregation of the Arab educational system is positive in that it allows Arab children to gain education in an atmosphere that corresponds to that in their parents' home, and achieve mental harmony, due to the few contrasts between the two educational authorities - the family and the school. It also allows members of the Arab minority to cultivate their culture and preserve their unique and different nature within the Jewish majority environment, which may teach them to respect all those different and unique things typical to the other national group."*

At the same time, even those who view this segregation as an advantage, are well aware of the weakness of this model (ibid):

*"[Segregation] may perpetuate the mutual estrangement between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and impede the integration of Arab citizens in Israel's civic and social life."*

In any case, the academic campus is the first arena where students from both groups meet: in classes, cafeterias, and dorms. As noted by one scholar who studied this issue (Schiff, 2003), this contact between the two groups of students could lead to polarization, intolerance or disregard. On the other hand, the campus also constitutes an opportunity for empathy, friendship and understanding.

In other words, the encounter between the two groups could assume different forms, and the real question concerns the social-academic climate in the two institutions in question. In our attempt to trace a reliable picture of this climate, the last topic examined by the research team concerned Arab students' fears relating to their minority status and also to the fact that they spent their life in homogenous, protected setting of the Arab enclave before attending the college. One Arab student at the Hebrew University, quoted earlier, also noted (Volodovsky, 2003):

*"Nonetheless, there is this persistent fear of a different treatment afforded to Arab students. It is there. Students are aware of it. There are some events that will always stir the Arab-Jewish issue. You are an Arab in a Jewish majority. You are different."*

In this context, the following two statements included in the research questionnaire are particularly relevant:

- *Students should be careful of what they say in class.*
- *Some Arab students are afraid to express their opinions*

Two additional statements included in the questionnaire attempted to indirectly capture Arab sensitivities to their unique status as a minority group:

- *Only few Arab students participate in discussions and debates in class.*
- *The Arab-Israeli conflict is a frequent issue on campus.*

The first two statements indicate a clear differentiation by nationality, at a high statistical significance. Approximately 64.5% of the Arab students at the ACJS, and 72% of the Arab students at the WGC, noted that students must be careful of what they say in class, in contrast to 37.7% and 39.7% of their Jewish peers at the ACJS and WGC, respectively. Notable is the fact that Arab sensitivities as a minority group were higher at the WGC compared to the ACJS, despite the almost equal number of Arab and Jewish students at the WGC, and despite the very marginal presence of Arab students at the ACJS, which was expected to lead to a higher level of anxiety.

Students' responses to the second statement concerning the fear of expression of opinions were presented above. 74.6% of the Arab students at the ACJS and 81.2% of the Arab students at the WGC admitted that they were afraid to express their opinion. This statement, which was more explicit than the former statement, and specifically concerned expression of opinions, indicated that Arab students sentence themselves to great caution. We can assume that the small number of Arabs who participate in class discussions and debates results, at least partially, from the anxiety typically experienced by minority group members. The question is whether these fears result from a sense of personal and collective threat that accompanies Arab Israelis (Sina de Sevilya & Rothman, 2005), or is this one of the outcomes of the culture shock Arab students experience in the transition from the protective setting of their own autonomous educational system, to the bi-national campuses. 78.0% of the Arab students at WGC and 70.6% of the Arab students at the ACJS noted their fear of expressing their opinion in public. The sensitivities of Jewish students on this point were considerably lower. In fact only 37.7% of the Jewish students at the WGC and 51.2% of the Jewish students at the WGC were aware of this predicament of their peers. Once again it turned out that the Jewish students at the WGC were better attuned to the problems of their Arab peers than their compatriots at the ACJS.

Finally, responses to the questionnaire-statement on the Arab-Israeli conflict indicated a statistically significant and high level of differentiation by nationality. 58.9% and 50.8% of the Arab students at the ACJS and WGC, respectively, noted that in their opinion, the Israeli-Arab conflict is a salient topic of discussion at their college. Only 20.8% and 28.8% of the Jewish students at the ACJS and WGC, respectively, held a similar opinion. On this issue, the national groups had significantly different opinions. Arab students' feelings are undoubtedly a reflection of their apprehensions as members of a minority group. The Israeli-Arab conflict casts a dark shadow on ties between the majority and minority groups in Israel, and constitutes a salient issue on campus, more strongly than for their Jewish peers. Each group perceives reality on campus differently. It is possible that in this context, Arab students are "making mountains of molehills." On the other hand, Jewish students may have failed to attend to this topic as a result of their insensitiveness. In any case, the different responses of both groups to this statement once again focuses our attention on the typical minority feelings experienced by Arab students.

**Table 3: Arab students' fears relating to their minority status**

Item		ACJS		WG		Total Arabs	Total Jews	Total ACJS	Total WG	F College	F Nationality	Nationality x college
		Jewish*	Arab**	Jewish*	Arab**							
Students should be careful what they say in class	<b>M</b>	37.7	64.4	39.7	72.1	68.3	38.7	51.1	55.9	0.8	29.4***	0.3
	<b>SD</b>	48.8	48.4	49.1	45.0	45.9	48.9	50.2	49.7			
	<b>N</b>	69	45	121	129	174	190	114	250			
Some Arab students are afraid	<b>M</b>	32.4	74.6	44.4	81.2	77.9	38.4	53.5	62.8	3.6	64.2***	0.3
	<b>SD</b>	47.1	43.9	49.9	39.2	40.7	49.1	50.2	47.9			

to express their opinion	N	68	59	108	133	192	176	127	241			
Only few Arab students participate in class debates and discussions	M	37.7	78.0	51.2	70.6	74.3	44.5	57.8	60.9	0.3	31.8***	3.9*
	SD	48.8	41.9	50.2	45.7	44.7	50.0	50.0	48.8			
	N	69	50	123	136	186	192	119	259			
The Arab-Israeli conflict is a salient topic on campus	M	20.8	58.8	28.8	50.8	54.8	24.8	39.8	39.8	0.0	32.9***	2.4
	SD	40.9	49.7	45.5	50.2	50.1	43.9	48.4	48.4			
	N	72	51	118	132	183	190	123	250			

\* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\* p.<0010.60=  $\alpha$  ;

### 8. On the special challenges of Arab students

The fourth sphere examined in this attempt to draw a picture of the climate of the colleges, as perceived by Arab students, concerns the special challenges they experience (as members of a minority). In this context, we recall the fact that several studies have been conducted on correlations among variables between academic success and culture (Lerner, 2000; Biggs, 1976; Silver & Silver, 1997), and a fortiori, on correlations between variables relating to culture and the shock of the first encounter with university (Tinto, 1993; Justiz & Rendon, 1989). The cry of Puerto-Rican students in an anthropological study conducted in the United States on this topic (Hernandez, 2002:74), is typical:

*"I hate being here...I was born in the Bronx, and for part of my life I grew up in East Harlem and then moved to New Jersey. All my life I have been surrounded by Puerto Ricans, and when I came here I thought I was the only Puerto Rican in the school. There isn't even any Puerto Rican food anywhere...I go home for the weekend almost every two weeks. I still can't stand being here, but I have learned to live with it. I don't think I want to stay here next year. I don't especially fit in here: I have no one to talk to about what's going on in my neighborhood; nobody understands where I come from. There is no one here from my neighborhood, no one who understands me."*

US researchers who have examined the adjustment of minority groups on campus, have noted that these students frequently describe their initial exposure to the campus climate as a shock, the results of which sometimes required several years to overcome (Richardson & Skinner, 1992). Israeli reality provides more than a few examples of this. The words of Siham, a young female Druze who completed her studies at a university in Israel, speak for themselves (Weiner Levy, 2006:12):

*"In terms of schoolwork, I had a general shock...Suddenly you learn how theoreticians think, how psychologists treat individuals as human beings, how teachers should treat their students...suddenly you are exposed to an entire world of these concepts, liberties, freedom, right to vote, rights and obligations...With us, you don't even allow yourself to talk about all kinds of topics, especially those relating to the choice of a spouse and his freedom, because you live for others not for yourself...suddenly you discover a different world that talks about you and about mankind... and on all kinds of topics you never thought about...you are exposed to different options, and different lifestyles...that...possibly may suit you...and are easier...Where have we been? Tell me, where have we been? The entire time, I would tell myself: My God! What have we been doing this whole time?!"*

Anyone who studies the issue of Arab students' encounters with university reality concurs that the problem is not simple. As already mentioned above, when Arab students enter the doors of higher education, they are exposed not only to different teaching methods and a foreign language that is not their native language, and which they have frequently not mastered (Bashi & Tussia-Cohen, 1994) - they encounter a society with different values, face to face, and this sharpens their sense of marginality and alienation of their own culture (Layish, 1992). Arab students are on a campus where they acquire knowledge, but at the same time, this campus is where they encounter individualist Western culture, the culture of the dominant group. This culture is very different from their own traditional, patriarchal, collective and hierarchal society. While Western society emphasizes respect for individual needs, opinions and rights, traditional Arab culture subjugates the individual to the collective identity (Sagy et

al., 2001). This "complicates their lives." In contrast to the authoritative approach prevalent in traditional Arab society and schools (Al Haj, 1996; Walid, 1998; Dwairy, 1988), they see a different approach, one that encourages independent thought and provides an opportunity to acquire knowledge and authority, encourages critical thinking, exploration and questioning. This is genuine culture shock and the above quote is evidence of this.

In light of the above, we examined the unique challenges of Arab students through two statements:

- *Arab students are forced to devote more efforts to their studies.*
- *It is hard for Arab students to fulfill the required assignments.*

Furthermore, we analyzed two statements, which were already analyzed above, as they partially reflect the difficulties encountered by Arab students:

- *Only few Arab students participate in class discussions and debates*
- *Some Arab students are afraid to express their opinion.*

The first point which stands out in the analyses of these statements is the fact that over three-quarters of all Arab students at both colleges stated that they are forced to invest much more efforts in their studies compared to their Jewish peers. At the ACJS, 62% of the Arab students added that they found it hard to fulfill their academic assignments. At the WGC, the proportion of Arab students who experienced problems was lower, and stood at 42%. This difference is statistically significant; nevertheless, it is still high and reflects a genuine problem. As in other cases analyzed above, it appears that Jewish students' sensitivity to this point is not high: Jewish students are not aware of the problems experienced by their Arab peers. Only 38% of the Jewish students believe that their Arab peers need to invest much more efforts in their schoolwork compared to themselves, and only 33% of the Jewish students believe that their Arab peers find it difficult to fulfill their academic assignments.

The remaining two statements have already been analyzed above. The researchers believe that the responses to these statements first and foremost reflect Arab students' apprehensions as a minority group. No doubt, the gravest problem is the result of a conflict between two national groups. We have noted this above. At the same time, the small number of Arab participants in class discussions and their fear to express their opinions may partially stem from *cultural adjustment* problems and not necessarily from *political* problems alone. This possibility emerges from statements made in an interview with Sonya, a Druze university graduate (Weiner Levy, 2006:16):

*"Because of the segregation between men and women in our society, women do not feel free in the company of men and they always find it hard to express themselves...Eventually, towards the end of school, I changed a lot in this respect, I became accustomed to talk to men, and at work too. Sometimes I am the only woman in a meeting, and I sit there, and sometimes it is only at the end of the meeting that I notice that everyone around me is a man...and I say: What would I have done five years ago?"*

**Table 4: Special difficulties of Arab students at colleges**

Item		ACJS		WG		Total Arabs	Total Jews	Total ACJS	Total WG	F College	F Nationality	Nationality x college
		Jewish*	Arab**	Jewish*	Arab**							
Arab students have to invest much more effort	<b>M</b>	30.6	77.6	45.5	77.0	77.3	38.1	54.1	61.3	1.9	56.1***	2.1
	<b>SD</b>	46.5	42.2	50.0	42.2	42.1	49.2	50.2	48.4			
	<b>N</b>	62	49	110	135	184	172	111	245			
It is hard for Arab students to meet the requirements	<b>M</b>	27.0	62.0	38.5	41.7	51.8	32.8	44.5	40.1	0.6	11.8***	8.2**
	<b>SD</b>	44.7	49.0	48.9	49.5	50.1	47.6	49.7	49.1			
	<b>N</b>	63	50	109	132	182	172	113	241			
Only few Arab	<b>M</b>	37.7	78.0	51.2	70.6	74.3	44.5	57.8	60.9	0.3	31.8***	3.9*

students participate in class debates and discussions	<b>SD</b>	48.8	42.2	50.2	45.7	44.7	50.0	50.0	48.8			
	<b>N</b>	69	50	123	136	186	192	119	259			
Some Arab students are afraid to express their opinions	<b>M</b>	32.4	74.6	44.4	81.2	77.9	38.4	53.5	62.8	22.0***	13.2***	0.3
	<b>SD</b>	47.1	43.9	49.9	39.2	40.7	49.1	50.2	47.9			
	<b>N</b>	68	59	108	133	192	176	127	241			

\*p<.05; p<.01; p<.001      0.65 =  $\alpha$  ;

## 9. Summary

The study whose findings were analyzed above attempted to assess the mutual relationships between Arab and Jewish students at two academic colleges: in one college, the proportion of Arab and Jewish students is almost equal, whereas in the second college Arab students are a negligible proportion of the student body (although in the faculty of social sciences and liberal arts – where most of them study - their number is more significant). The researchers decided to conduct the study in view of the bi-national, multicultural nature of contemporary Israeli society that is conducted under an illusion of a bicultural national community. The researchers' intent was to examine whether the cultural national tension typical of Israeli society is reflected on campus, and whether an encounter occurs between two groups of students - the majority and the minority. The researchers aspired to examine the nature of the inter-group relations, on the backdrop of a society lacking appeased multiculturalism or non-violent dialogue.

In this framework, the researchers wished to examine whether a "discourse of diversity" emerged between students from such different cultural and national backgrounds, and whether the campuses under discussion facilitate – be it indirectly - interpersonal encounters between individuals from these two groups, or whether the reality creates seclusion, alienation and all-inclusive confrontation.

The research question was how the campus climate was perceived by Arab students, coming from a sector steeped in a deep sense of discrimination: Do they feel comfortable on campus, or do they feel discriminated or threatened?

The findings of the present study are rather complex, although positive for the most part.

From the positive aspect, we note that almost two thirds of the Arab students feel as equals to the people around them. However, there is no doubt that they face considerable discrimination. This is expressed in the fact that one third do not feel equal among equals, but is more prominent in other areas: Approximately 55% of the Arab students feel that they do not receive equal treatment from the Students' Association; 45% believe that instructors discriminate against them (while others believe that instructors make an effort to help them), and approximately 45% believe that there is no consideration for their religious sensibilities on campus. In other words, a considerable portion of students senses discrimination! Although they are not the majority, they constitute a considerable portion. In this context, the present study found statistically significant differences between the two campuses: the situation on the ACJS campus appears to Arab students as more favorable compared to how WGC students perceive the situation on their own campus.

As the present study was based on a survey, the findings must be qualified by noting they reflect the *subjective feelings* of the Arab students, and not necessarily the reality. At the same time, their sense of discrimination is consistent and encompasses several areas, and therefore, the obvious conclusion is that the situation certainly warrants an orderly investigation.

On the backdrop of these feelings of discrimination, the relationships between individuals of both groups is the bright side, especially on the backdrop of the serious national conflict that at least partially stems from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In contrast to this situation, approximately 75% of the Arab students on both campuses declared that they are interested in developing friendships with Jewish students. 81% of the Arab students reported cooperating with Jewish students on school assignments (instrumental relations) and 81% reported mutually friendly relations (primary relations). At the same time - and this is not a contradiction - there appears to be a hard core of students who do not share this attitude of openness. 63% of the Arab students reported that there are groups of students who do not get along with each other. A difference was also found between the two campuses in this context. Functional collaboration on academic assignments was higher at the WGC, but primary

relations between the two groups were more frequent at the ACJS. The hard core of individuals who were not willing to embrace mutual relations is considerably larger at the WGC than at the ACJS.

Despite the favorable fabric of inter-ethnic relations, study findings indicate that the Arab students are cautious and full of apprehension in their everyday lives on campus. This attitude of caution stems from the feeling quoted above: "*All the time there is this fear of the different attitude toward Arab students...you are an Arab in a Jewish majority. You are different.*" Over 68% of the Arab students noted that they had to watch what they said in class. 78% reported that some Arab students are afraid of expressing their opinion. 74% reported that only few Arab students participate in class debates and discussion. Undoubtedly these proportions are a reflection of Arab students' fears as a minority group, among others.

All in all, results show significant differences between the two national groups on multiple dimensions of the campus cultural climate. Arab students reported less equitable treatment by the students' association, the institution and the faculty. They also complained about difficulties sustained while carrying out the daily academic chores. The Jewish students' responses reflected limited perceptions of all these difficulties encountered by their peers.

The final area examined in our attempt to explore Arab students' perceptions of the climate at the colleges, was the special difficulties encountered by Arab students. These difficulties are a result not only of the national tension between the majority and minority groups, but especially a result of the cultural shock they experience when leaving their home towns and enter the campus. 77% of the Arab students reported that they are compelled to invest much more effort in their schoolwork compared to their Jewish peers, and 52% reported that they find it difficult to fulfill the requirements (compared to 33% of the Jewish students who reported similar difficulties). The researchers believe that we can assume that cultural difficulties account for part of the Arab students' fears of expressing their opinion, and for the low frequency of their participation in class debates and discussions.

Thus, the picture emerging from the analysis of findings is complex. The prominent positive side is the fabric of social relations based on familiarity and understanding. This is the instrument that ultimately creates a "discourse of diversity" and concurrently promotes an "inclusive identity."

From this perspective, the study indicates that both campuses are performing a positive service for Israeli society. Other findings, however, indicate that the encounter between these two groups of students does not transform reality with a magical wave of a wand. The minority group still experiences distinct problems relating to their minority status. A large proportion of the minority group has a "gut feeling" of discrimination in various areas of campus life. This is a finding that both institutions should take into consideration.

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