European Journal of Business and Social Sciences, Vol. 3, No. 5 , pp 102-112, **August 2014.** **P.P. 102 - 112**
URL: *http://www.ejbss.com/recent.aspx*
ISSN: 2235 -767X

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL PROFICIENCIES THAT ADVANCE THEIR SUCCESS IN A MULTI-CULTURAL COLLEGE IN ISRAEL

Dr. Bruria Schaedel
Senior lecturer Western Galilee College,
Akko, Israel
Auto's address: Shereith Apletha st no 12
Denya, Haiffa,34987
Israel
Telephone at home: 972-4-8343641
Mobile: 0522410343

ABSTRACT

The introduction of periphery students into Israeli colleges reflects the government's policy of equality in higher education for minority and underprivileged populations, as well as the growing demand for higher education among such groups.
Colleges that opened their doors and admitted students with lower credentials are expected to provide the physical, psychological and educational required environments, and facilitate the learning interactions of these students with the administrative and educational staff in order to support their personal and academic development.
This study examines the perceptions of 656 Jewish (45%) and Arab (55%) students regarding their learning environments and self-efficacy during their studies at the college. The quantitative and qualitative analysis presents similarities and differences between Jewish and Arab students' background and perceptions. The recommendations underline the importance of a future measures that are required in order to advance the success of the diverse groups of students in Higher Education.

Key words: *higher education, Jewish students, Arab students, Learning Environments, self-efficacy.*

1. Introduction

An increased demand for Higher Education (HE) among traditionally underrepresented groups, coupled with government policies encouraging diversity in HE, resulted in the development of regional colleges throughout the Israeli periphery during the 1990s (Shwed & Savit 2006). This development encouraged underrepresented groups, such as females, new immigrants, adult students, students of low socio-economic status (SES), and minorities (mainly Arab students – Moslem, Druze and Christian), to enroll in colleges and acquire academic degrees, which were vital for their employment and social mobilization.

Yet, college studies present various obstacles for many of the peripheral students. Their literacy level in Hebrew (as first language) and English (as a second language) is poor; this is particularly true in the case of Arab students – for whom Hebrew is a second language. Most of the students are first generation in the academia, and struggle with adjustment to the college learning environment, which is different from the one in high school. During High school, students were mainly required to engage in lower-order thinking strategies, and rote learning. In college, however, student are expected to engage in oral presentations and written assignments that involve higher-order thinking strategies, and excel in their proficiencies of oral and written Hebrew and English. Many students meet for the first time students from different localities, and of diverse cultural, ethnic, and national backgrounds, which results, for many, in social isolation, prejudices, and lack of aptitude to overcome these barriers (Dagan-Buzaglo 2007).

These recent changes in the HE student population requires closer investigation of the instructional and environmental preferences of Jewish and Arab students, and of the way in which these cross cultural differences, particularly in language proficiency and academic learning skills, affects their learning outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships between the educational settings in a multi-cultural Israeli college, and students' self-perceptions of themselves as learners and of their self-efficacy, which could help them overcome the social, academic, and psychological obstacles they face on campus. The study will point out the diversity of students' nationality: Jews vs. Arabs. An effort will be made to find links among the various students' backgrounds characteristics, their self-efficacy, and their academic achievements.

The introduction into HE of diverse groups of students and underachievers, who were previously excluded from such institutions, presents new challenges for teachers and students alike. These challenges arise particularly concerning the quality of academic standards sought after, and the type of teaching and learning environments that will be instrumental for students' academic experiences, their perception of themselves as successful learners, their motivation to succeed, and their cognitive and social growth.

As a result of the government policy that changed the nature of the academic student population in Israeli colleges with a strong shift to include more Arab students (Moslem, Druze and Christian) and new Israeli citizens (newcomers, older students and students of lower socio-economic levels),

The main assumption of this study is that the learning and teaching environments impact on students' self-efficacy and cognitive growth. Based on this assumption, four research questions were defined: (1) How do Jewish and Arab students perceive ELE in their college? (2) How do students perceive their self-efficacy? (3) Are students' preferences of their ELE related to their self-efficacy? and (4) Are students' demographic characteristics linked to their self-efficacy? The analysis may illuminate the need for the development of a college's curriculum and learning environment as a primary and vital requirement, as part of the effort to encourage higher academic achievements among under-prepared students of diverse backgrounds and to increase their chances for success at their current and future HE studies.

For this purpose, the first section of this paper will include a review of literature regarding Effective Learning Environments (ELE) and students' self-efficacy in HE; section 2 will describe the research methods, data variables, research analysis and findings; while in section 3, we will discuss the findings and consider implications for researchers and policy makers.

2. Literature Review

Students' satisfaction with college is based on an environment that supports their academic and social needs. It is also linked to their personal development, such as proficiency in academic and communication competency, critical thinking, more highly developed levels of personal skills and functioning, and the ability to work effectively with others (Baxter Magolds 2001).

Hence, Effective Learning Environment (ELE) is fundamental in shaping the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular activities that facilitate students' success. ELE relates to an institutions' conditions of teaching, learning approaches, and organization of their resources to induce higher levels of student engagement (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005).

Colleges that encourage ELE promote pedagogical and learning experiences that shift the emphasis from faculty teaching to student learning. They include a repertoire of teaching methods that align with students' abilities and preferred learning styles. They are characterized by a supportive contact between students and faculty, and favorable classroom experiences that stimulate learning and intellectual growth (Chickering and Gamson 1987). Similarly, they support interaction with administrators, faculty advisors, internship supervisors, mentors and out-of-class experiences, which contribute to students' learning and personal development (Kuh et al. 2005).

ELE includes pedagogical supportive services, which help students acquire effective study skills and improve retention of course material, by learning how to use on-campus resources, manage time, develop skills and literacy, set goal, and study for tests (Gardner and Jewler, 1995). ELE also includes access to technology, which enhances both teaching and learning (Twigg, 2005).

In addition to external support services, ELE also includes enhancement of students' personal success-supporting characteristics, which are dependent on attitude-behavior theories (Bean and Eaton, 2000, Bandura, 1997). According to this theory, personality traits such as self-efficacy help students persevere when faced with academic and social challenges. Students with strong, more developed self-concepts are more confident about their ability to succeed, while those who are less confident are more likely to fail when they encounter difficult situations. Similarly, students guided by internal control believe they can be successful, while those who are externally controlled may conclude that fate has determined their course, and give up when faced with difficulties.

Cultural perspective theory suggests that many traditionally underrepresented students and minority groups encounter challenges when they reach college, and are incapable of taking advantage of their institution's resources for learning and personal development (Austin, 1993b). First–generation students pursuing HE have less implicit knowledge about college. As a result, they are less prepared to deal with the challenges; they find it difficult to perform well academically and to adjust socially (Attinasi 1989). Low SES students face difficulties similar to those of first-generation students; in addition, their families lack the resources and social capital necessary to support their success in college (Coleman, 1988). In Austin's research (1993a), students' socioeconomic status was the best predictor of their earning a bachelor's degree, after controlling for academic ability.

Cultural and ethnic minority students have difficulties in social adjustment; they feel alienated, and do not believe that faculty, staff, and administrators are interested in their well-being and academic success (Turner, 1994).In this study, it was postulated that students' perceptions of their Learning Environment (LE) as being supportive and representing their assorted academic and social needs, which in turn affects their satisfaction and motivation to succeed in their present and future studies. We assumed that Jewish and Arabs students' perceptions of LE are related to their self-efficacy, age, national origins, and financial resourcefulness.

Method

2.1. Participants

The study took place at the Western Galilee College. The College opened its gates in 1972, providing professional courses and diplomas to students from the region. In 1994, the College gained accreditation from the Council for Higher Education and this breakthrough enabled students to register for undergraduate academic degrees. Today, 4 500 students study at the College, including Jews, Muslims, Druze, and Christians from the surrounding cities, suburbs, *kibbutzim*, community settlements and villages. The respondents in this study included 656 first-to third-year students, whose major topics of study represent all faculties, from Behavioral Studies to Business and Economics. They included 45% Jewish students, the great majority of whom were born in Israel, while 9% were immigrants from the FSU and Ethiopia. About half of the students, 55%, were Arabs, most of them Muslims (36%), and the rest Christians and Druze (about 9% each).

Item	Category	N=Jews	N=Arabs	Chi Square
Age	18-21	7	161	178.84***
	22-26	68	94	
	27+	25	46	
Family size	Less than 3	19	23	64.75***
	4-5 people	49	94	
	6 people or more	32	184	
Fathers' education	Elementary	10	88	108.2***
	High school	35	149	
	Higher education	55	64	
Mothers' education	Elementary	9	101	128.31***
	High school	37	128	
	Higher education	54	73	
First generation in higher education	Yes	52	166	2.27
	No	48	134	
Parents' income per month	Less than 5 000 ILS	33	75	99.36***
	Up to 12 000 ILS	57	22	
	Above 12 000 ILS	10	3	
What percent of your tuition is financed by your parents?	91-100%	58	228	23.74**
	51-90%	13	35	
	25-50%	12	28	
	1-24%	17	12	

Note: * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01 *** P < 0.001

Table No 1. : Demographic characteristics of the students

Jewish students start their HE studies at the ages of 22-24, after they serve 2-3 years of mandatory army duty, while Arab students are exempt from this service and therefore start their studies at a younger age of 17-18, after they graduate from high school The great majority of the student population resides in the northern part of the country, in rural villages and small cities, close to the college; over half of the Jewish and Arab students (54%) are first-generation in HE; the average income of all the participants' families is low, and the average among Arabs is even lower. Jewish families are more educated than the Arab ones. About 20% of the Jewish fathers maintain a higher degree, and about half of them (49%) graduated from high school. Among the Arab families, Christian and Druze parents are more educated than the Muslim families. Less than 10% of the fathers hold an office that requires an academic degree. The great majority of the fathers are employed in blue-collar jobs in various factories, and 15% of them are unemployed. The great majority of the families (56%) earn minimal wages (less than the average salary according to CBS, 2008-2012), and 6% earn an average salary. Over half of the mothers (53%) are housewives, 21% hold professional jobs, and the rest have blue-collar jobs. About half of the students (53%) hold part time jobs; the majority of the Jewish students (87%) are employed, while only 40% of the Arab students are employed. Jewish families finance about half (58%) of the students' tuition, while the great majority of the Arab families (84%) finance nearly all of the academic expenditures of their children.

Upon admission, all students are required to hold a matriculation certificate and pass the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT). The average matriculation score of the Jewish students is 81 (from a total of 100) and of Arab students, 76. The average SAT score of Jewish students is 535, while the average score among Arabs is 480.

All in all, the students at the college represent the multi-cultural habitat of the northern Israeli periphery. Apart from to their national, religious, and cultural distinctions, half of them are first generation students, and the most of them come from lower-middle class families. Yet, all families regard their children's studies in college as highly important, and they are willing to spend a substantial part of their small income in favor of their children's academic degrees.

2.2. Measures

A mixed-method design was applied in this study. The qualitative data was followed by the quantitative results, which helped to explain the quantitative ones (Creswell and Plano-Clark 2007).

The data of students' perceptions regarding their LE and their self-efficacy were obtained using a questionnaire of ELE study for college students. The questionnaire in this study included four parts: the first part explored the students' background information and includes 23 items relating to students and their families' demographic characteristics, such as: gender, religion, family size, education, income, employment. The second part included ELE components, based on Appatova & Prats' (2007) questionnaire. This part included 28 items of ELE (a = .89), using a 1-6 range Likert scale (1 = not important at all, 6 = very important). All the questions in this section start with the words: How important is it for your successful learning if…" for example: "you know various note-taking systems and how to use them effectively when you listen to a lecture or work with your textbook", or "there are various student services available for you on campus: educational services, psychological services, career development services, technology assistance, etc."

The third part is a Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Luszczynska, Scholz, and Schwarzer (2005), which includes ten questions ranging from 1 = not true at all, to 4 = exactly true (α = .88). The questions relate to the way in which students perceive goal setting, effort investment, persistence in facing

barriers, and recovery from setbacks. For example, "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough" or "I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort".

The qualitative data was collected using four open ended questions presented to the students. For example: "what are the main difficulties you encounter at the college?" and "do you plan to continue your studies after you obtain your degree?" The questionnaire was in written in Hebrew, and it was distributed to the students during the academic year of 2011.

2.3. Data analysis:

Statistical data analysis includes: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; the Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Pearson Correlation (2-tailed); Correlations of self-efficacy and demographic variables analyzed by Wikls' Lambda (F) Post-Hoc Multiple Comparison Bonferrroni, Univariate ANOVA; and Post Hoc Tukey.

3. Findings

The findings will be presented according to the research questions defined in section 1.

3.1. How do Jewish and Arab students perceive ELE in their college?

A factor analysis was conducted on the 28 items of the second part of the quantitative questionnaire, which included ELE components. The analysis indicates that these items can be categorized into five factors, with a cutting point of .55. However, since two separate items had a significant contribution to the total variance, they are considered as the sixth and seventh factors (the total of these items explains 64.41% of the variance).

Factor or Item	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loading		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
F(1) *Skills needed for academic success*	**8.95**	31.96	31.96	4.29	**15.31**	15.31
F(2) *Literacy and communication skills*	**2.51**	8.95	40.91	3.12	**11.13**	26.44
F(3) *Learning assistance and guidance services*	**1.81**	6.48	47.39	3.06	**10.92**	37.36
F(4) *Persistence*	**1.36**	4.86	52.25	2.86	**10.21**	47.58
F(5) *Learning in Small Groups*	**1.10**	3.94	60.61	1.64	**5.86**	59.38
F(6) *Equity*	**1.24**	4.42	56.67	1.66	**5.95**	53.52
F(7) *Competitive environment*	**1.06**	3.79	**64.41**	1.41	**5.03**	**64.41**

Note: * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01 *** P < 0.001

Table no 2: Factors of Effective Learning Environments and their total variance

The first factor: Skills needed for academic success: this factor includes six statements that contribute 15.31% to the variance (α = .85). The items refer to success in tests, note-taking, reading, being aware of one's individual learning style, time management, strategies of memory techniques, and interactions with academic staff members who care about student learning and success**.**

Jewish students perceive these skills as more important for their academic success than the Arab students (.58, $p < .05$).

The second factor: Literacy and communication skills: this factor includes five items, which contribute 11.13% (α = .81) to the variance. These items refer to writing, reading, oral communication skills, effective strategies to increase comprehension, and retention of information.

There are no differences between Jewish and Arab students' perceptions regarding the importance of these items for their success. However, students who obtained high scores in the matriculation and the SAT exams didn't find these items important for their academic success.

The third factor: Learning assistance and guidance services: this factor includes five items, which contribute 10.92%, (α = .79), to the variance. Students regarded familiarity with the campus and academic resources, including assistance with academic, personal, guidance, and technology issues, as essential. They also regarded prompt feedback in the learning process as equally important. Jewish students had higher expectations than Arab students as to the quality of interactions with the academic and administrative staff, and they would have preferred prompt feedback on their performances (.43, $p < .05$).

The forth factor: Persistence: this factor includes three items and contributes 10.21% (α = .83) to the variance. These items refer to the ability to set intermediate and long-term goals, and pursue them vigorously. Jewish students displayed a higher capacity to cope with and overcome obstacles compared to Arab students (.59, $p < .05$).

The fifth factor: Learning in Small Groups: this factor consists of two items, which contributes 10.21% (α = .47) to the variance. It refers to studying in small classes. Jewish students attribute greater importance to studying in small, intimate groups with their peers compared to Arabs students (.43, $p < .05$).

The sixth factor: Equity: this item contributed 5.95%, to the variance. It refers to the students' perception of equality across cultural, ethnic, religious, academic or social diversity. There is congruence in the Jewish and Arab students' pursuit of an egalitarian environment on campus.

The seventh factor: Competitive environment: this factor contributes 5.03% to the variance. The students preferred a relaxed and friendly environment over a competitive one. This finding may suggest that the students do not regard competition as an essential aspect of their college success. Males rated competition more favorably than females.

All in all, according to the students, the greatest contributor to their academic success is F(1). This factor adds 1/4 of the variance. Each of the factors F(2), F(3), and F(4) contributes 1/6 of the variance, and together they add one half of the variance.

3.2. How do students perceive their self-efficacy?

The analysis shows that self-efficacy influences the choices students make, the efforts they extend, and the persistence and resilience they exert when confronted with difficulties and emotional obstacles. In all ten items of this scale, the correlations scores for each item and $\alpha = .86$ are high. This finding indicates that the students are able to handle difficulties and complicated situations. The results show that students have the inner resources and confidence to make the extra effort in order to achieve the goals they set out for themselves.

Item	Mean Difference	Significance
1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	**.31(*)**	**.00**
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	**.24(*)**	**.00**
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	**.34(*)**	**.01**
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	**.31(*)**	**.03**
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	**.41(*)**	**.02**
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	**.23(*)**	**.00**
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	**.37(*)**	**.00**
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	**.39(*)**	**.00**
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	**.20(*)**	**.04**
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	**.25(*)**	**.00**

Note: * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01 *** P < 0.001

Table No 3: Differences in the perceptions of Jewish and Arab students regarding their self-efficacy

There **are significant differences between Jewish and Arab students' assessments of their self-efficacy.** The Jewish students are more confident, and believe they will succeed in their studies. By comparison, the Arab students are not sure of their success. Equally, Jewish students have greater confidence in their ability to cope with difficult situations than Arab students.

3.3. Are students' preferences of their ELE related to their self-efficacy?

A positive correlation ($p < .01$) exists between self-efficacy and all seven factors. However, the strongest connection is with F(1) *(Skills needed for academic success*)

($F(3,626) = 17.67$, $p < .00$) and F(4) *(Persistence*). This finding indicates that students' preferences of the ELE are in fact related to their self-efficacy ($F(3,626) = 17.398$, $p < .00$)

3.4. How is the students' background variable linked to self-efficacy?

A MAOVA multiple regression including all demographic variables was performed. The following details relate only to the significant results.

The predictors of **self-efficacy** can explain 19.5% of the variance. The main contributors to students' higher self-efficacy are students' pursuit of academic success; high scores in the matriculation exams (6 = .11, p < .00); students who hold a job (6 = .11, p < .00); and students who are Jewish (6 = .12, p < .00). Thus, the higher self-efficacy of Jewish students could be explained by their greater determination to succeed in college, and their persistence in overcoming financial challenges – choosing to work long hours and not to be entirely depended on their parents' support.

Students' perceptions of their ELE and their self-efficacy according to the open ended questions: when students were asked what difficulties they encounter during their studies, their replies varied. About a third mentioned their difficulties with written and oral language proficiencies, about 15% complained about the burden of complicated assignments, and about 10% indicated difficulties with written proficiencies when asked to present written assignments. When asked whether or not it is important for them to succeed in their studies, and whether or not they would like to continue with their studies after they graduate, the great majority responded that they exert far more effort and time in order to succeed in their present studies than in high school. Druze (93.9%) and the Muslim (91.4%) students displayed the highest motivation to succeed in their studies in college, followed by the Jewish (84.4%) and the Christian-Arab students (72.9%). Nearly half (44%) of the Arab students would like to continue their studies for graduate degrees, while a third of the Jewish students intend to continue their future academic education.

The students maintained that the extra hours designed to help students with low language proficiencies are insufficient, and they would like to have more intensive and of higher quality assistance. They wished that the library services would be improved (having more assistance from the librarians and more updated resources) and wanted better interpersonal interactions with the supporting staff (academic and administrative counselors).

4. Discussion and Recommendations

Students from the periphery encounter many learning and social challenges during their studies in college. Factor analysis shows that Jewish and Arab students are congruent in their perceptions as to the importance of support services on campus (F(2)), literacy skills development, oral communications, and strategies to improve comprehension and retention. Furthermore, they assign a high priority to F(6) – an egalitarian environment free of discrimination and prejudice – both in the classrooms and in their contacts with their peers, as well as with the academic and administrative staff (Nora and Cabrera, 1996).

Yet, it is interesting to note that, although both Jewish and Arab students acknowledged (in the open-ended responses) their poor command of languages and their application in academic coursework, they emphasized their motivation to pursue further studies after graduation. Significant differences are noted between the preferences of Jewish and Arab students regarding the following ELE factors: The Jewish students assign significantly higher importance compared to the Arab students to F(1) – skills needed for academic success and interactions with academic staff; F(3) – assistance with academic and administrative issues, guidance and tutoring services; F(4) – the ability to set intermediate and long-term goals, to be pursued vigorously; and F(5) – Learning in small groups. They perceive these factors as highly important, and also gave higher scores to their self-efficacy. The students preferences' of Effective Learning Environments are in congruence with attitude-behavior theories and self-efficacy theory (Bean and Eaton, 2000, Bandura, 1997), which suggest that students with high self-efficacy are inclined to seek out activities that improve their time-management skills, interactions with peers, and with faculty and staff. Accordingly, Jewish students with

high self-efficacy regard these factors as highly important for their academic success in college. They are eager to encounter and make use of campus resources to overcome their academic and social challenges. Conversely, Arab students with lower self-efficacy are disinclined to get support in order to improve the skills needed for their learning accomplishments; they prefer to avoid interactions with the academic and other supportive staff; and they don't regard studying in smaller classes and participating in supportive instructional programs as important to enhance their academic success.

The fact that Arab students are not eager to seek the academic support could be supported by the Cultural Perspective theory (Austin, 1993b), which suggests that minority groups circumvent the use of campus resources. This may be related to their feeling of estrangement and mistrust of the faculty, staff, and administrators' intentions of supporting their academic success (Turner, 1994). In addition, the ongoing conflict of the Jewish state with the neighboring Arab countries reflects on the interactions between Arab students and the other students, thus resulting in mistrust, isolation, low self-efficacy, and disbelieve in their ability to get genuine support, which will help them to succeed in their studies. On the other hand, the families of the Arab students have high expectations of their children's higher education, which is supposed to help them to climb up the social and economic ladder in their society.

Our findings indicate that in light of the social and economic ambiance in the country, which regards an academic degree as an essential requirement for social and economic mobilization, the college realizes the aspirations of Jewish and Arab students to succeed in college. However, Arab students are faced with greater barriers in their path towards academic success compared to Jewish students, mainly due to the cultural inhibitions, being a minority group in a Jewish college, in addition to their lower self-efficacy and their feelings of mistrust towards others – students as well as the academic and administrative staff.

We therefore recommend that colleges in the periphery invest in the enhancement of their academic, social, and financial support services to accommodate the diverse needs and personalities of the various students, in order to help them adjust to college. These changes will require joint efforts by the academic and administrative staff (student counselors, tutors, librarians), who will need to work together with the students in order to improve the learning and egalitarian climate on campus, and to make it free of prejudices. The colleges should widen the Effective Learning Environment services for all the periphery students, according to their preferences for ELE, and particularly augment the Arab students' self-efficacy. This can be done by seminars dealing with successful problem-solving techniques, learning and meta-learning techniques, self-esteem, self-confidence, and creative thinking. Equally, faculties and other agents on campus (dean, student organizations) should initiate multi-cultural social and academic extra-curricular encounters, to help the underrepresented students overcome their alienation and mistrust towards the academic and administrative staff.

The study bares theoretical and practical implications as well: It may improve our social perspectives of academic justice and equality on campus concerning the inclusion of Arab students and new immigrants in the Israeli culture, and our perspectives of the implications of the integration of diverse groups into the Israeli democratic society.

The practical implications of the study may induce reforms and changes in the teaching and management of diversity in the Israeli colleges, thus supporting students' academic achievements, which will promote greater equality in resources and attitudes towards students of diverse backgrounds.

One of the most important outcomes of the present research may be the creation of supportive on-campus centers, which would advocate the needs of diverse multicultural groups of students.

Acknowledgment:
*I would like to thank my dear colleague **Dr. SimhaShart** for her help in analyzing the data and the findings.*

References

1. Appatova, V., & Prats, H. (2007*). Effective academic environments for under-prepared college/university learners: Listen to student voices.* Paper presented at the 16th EAN Annual conference "Access to Success: the Student Experience from pre-Entry to Employment". Galway, Ireland.
2. Attinasi, L.C. (1989). Getting in: Mexican-Americans' perceptions of university attendance and the implications for freshman year persistence, *Journal of Higher Education,* 60(3), 247-277.
3. Austin, A.W. (1993a). What matters in college? *Liberal Education,* 79(4), 4-15.
4. Austin, A.W. (1993b). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited* (1st Ed). San Francisco: Jossy-Bass.
5. Bandura, A. (1997*). Self-efficacy: The exercise of control***.** NY: W.H. Freeman and Company.
6. Baxter Magolda, M. B. (2001). *Making their own way: narratives for transforming higher education to promote self-development*. Sterling: Va-Stylus.
7. Bean, J.P., & Eaton, S. (2000). A psychological model of college student retention'. In: J. M. Baxton (Ed.) *Rewording the departure puzzle: New theory and research on college student retention*. (73-89). Nashville, TN: University of Vanderbilt Press.
8. Chickering, A.W., & Gamson Z.F. (1987*).* Principles for good practice in undergraduate education. [Special insert in *The Wingspread Journal*, June 1987]. Racine, WI: Johnson Foundation.
9. Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* 94, 95-120.
10. Creswell,J.W., & Plano-Clark, V.L. (2007. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* Tousand Oaks, CA.SAGE.
11. Dagan-Buzaglo, N. (2007). *The right to higher education in Israel: A legal and fiscal perspective*. Adva Center: Tel-Aviv, Israel.
12. Gardner, J.N., & Jewler, A.J. (1995). *Your college experience: Strategies for success* (2nd Ed). Boston: Wadsworth-Tomson Publishing Company.
13. Kuh, G.D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J.H., Whitt, E.J. et.al. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. San Francisco: Jossy-Bass.
14. Luszczynska, A., Scholz, U., & R. Schwarzer, (2005). The general self-efficacy scale: multicultural validation studies, *The Journal of Psychology* 139(5), 439-458.
15. Pascarella, E.T. & Terenzine P.T. (2005). *How college affects students; A third decade of research***.** San Francisco: Josses-Bass.
16. Shwed, V., and Y. Shavit (2006). Occupational and economic attainment of college and university graduates in Israel. *European Sociological Review,* 22 (4), 431-442.
17. Twigg, C.A. (2005). Improving learning and reducing cost: Designs for effective learning. *Change* 35(4), 22-29.
18. Turner, C.S.V. (1994). Guest in someone else's house: Students of color. *The Review of Higher Education* 17 (4), 355-370.