

Intercultural Competence among Jewish and Arab Students Studying Together in an Academic Institution in Israel

Orly Redlich

I. INTRODUCTION

Abstract—Since the establishment of the state of Israel, and as a result of various events that led to it, Jewish citizens and Arab citizens of the state have been in constant conflict, which finds its expression in most levels of life. Therefore, the attitude of one group member to the other group members is mostly tense, loaded, and saturated with mutual suspicion. Within this reality, in many higher education institutions in Israel, Jews and Arabs meet with each other intensively and for several years. For some students, this is their first opportunity for a meaningful cross-cultural encounter. These intercultural encounters, which allow positive interactions between members of different cultural groups, may contribute to the formation of "intercultural competence" which means long-term change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior towards 'the other culture'. The current study examined the concept of the 'other' among Jewish and Arab students studying together and their "intercultural competence". The study also examined whether there is a difference in the perception of the 'other' between students studying in different academic programs, and between students taking academic courses on multiculturalism. This quantitative study was conducted among 274 Arab and Jewish students studying together, for bachelors or master's degree, in various academic programs at the Israel Academic College of Ramat-Gan. The background data of the participants are varied, in terms of religion, origin, religiosity, employment status, living area, and marital status. The main hypothesis is that academic, social, and intercultural encounters between Jewish and Arab students, who attend college together, will be a significant factor in building "intercultural competence". Additionally, the existence of "intercultural competence" has been linked to demographic characteristics of the students, as well as the nature of intercultural encounters between Jews and Arabs in a higher education institution. The dependent variables were measured by a self-report questionnaire, using the components of "intercultural competence" among students, which are: 1. Cognitive knowledge of the 'others', 2. Feelings towards the 'others', 3. Change in attitudes towards the 'others', and 4. Change in behavior towards the 'others'. The findings indicate a higher "intercultural competence" among Arab students than Jews; it was also found higher level of "intercultural competence" among Educational Counseling students than the other respondents. The importance of this research lies in finding the means to develop "intercultural competence" among Jewish and Arab students, which may reduce prejudice and stereotypes towards the other culture and may even prevent occurrences of alienation and violence in cross-cultural encounters in Israel.

Keywords—Cross-cultural learning, "intercultural competence", Jewish and Arab students, multiculturalism.

Orly Redlich is with the Educational Counseling program for master's degree, academic college of Ramat Gan, Israel (e-mail: orly.r@iac.ac.il).

CONFLICTS between groups can occur in the face of struggles, misinformation on the 'other', conflicting cultural views, differences in needs and preferences, or differences in values, perceptions, beliefs and culture [1]-[3]. Studies conducted in various countries, such as Turkey, Ireland, Kosovo, and the United Kingdom, have suggested that multicultural encounters can often lead to challenging situations, power struggles and conflicts. The studies revealed, among other things, feelings of social separation, sectarian alienation, and unpleasant interactions. Additionally, the intercultural encounter brings tensions, resentment, frustrations, concerns, and a low sense of physical and emotional safety [4]-[7]. Throughout history, there have been cross-cultural conflicts around the world between recognized minority groups and the dominant majority groups, for example: the Albanian ethnic minority in Macedonia, the Wallonian minority group in Belgium, the French-speaking minority in Canada, and the Russian ethnic minority in Latvia [8], [9].

Numerous studies that have examined the contributing factors in reducing tensions between conflicted groups indicated the importance of "intercultural competence" and intercultural encounters. "Intercultural competence" opens doors to relationships between cultures in conflict by seeking to know the background of 'other' group members, to understand who they are dealing with, where they grew up, what worries them and how they respond. These can help deal with them and minimize the chance of increasing conflict [1], [10]-[14]. Therefore, this study focuses on the existence of "intercultural competence" among two conflict groups - Jews and Arabs in Israel.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Intercultural Competence

The concept of "intercultural competence" has evolved over the past fifteen years in the context of technological advances and globalization processes that offer multicultural encounters that often sharpen cross-cultural conflicts, cultural misunderstandings, tensions, and intolerances [15]. Researchers agree that "intercultural competence" refers to the individual's ability to function effectively in intercultural situations, to think and act in appropriate ways toward people of different cultures, thereby showing more openness, curiosity and empathy toward the 'other' and reducing labeling

and prejudice [16]-[18]. Therefore, "intercultural competence" is defined as a long-term change in the individual's level of knowledge of the 'other' (consciousness), attitudes toward the 'other' (feelings) and skills towards the other (behavior) that enable positive and effective interactions with members of other cultural groups. Thus, it is a change of consciousness, emotional and behavioral towards 'others' [19], [20].

"Intercultural competence" is of great importance nowadays, as it allows the individual to manage and integrate at the cultural, sectoral, and international levels. It is characterized by the importance of the other's knowledge, language, and culture, and encourages intercultural dialogue, understanding and communication. In doing so, it provides a basis for dialogue and coexistence in the context of minority groups, migrant populations, and conflict groups [15], [21]. The concept now appears in a broad context of research and disciplines such as world leadership, international communication, intercultural management, and consulting, as well as in multicultural international education such as higher education institutions in the world [19].

B. Cross-Cultural Encounters in Higher Education around the World

The higher education system produces encounters, usually primary ones, between people from different cultures and ethnic communities around the world, where they are exposed and meet with the 'others'. Due to the academic integration of students from different cultures, educational institutions are becoming a richer cultural environment than before. Culturally diverse classrooms reflect the diversity of society and may be natural arenas for cross-cultural skills training and environmental climate cultivation that promotes cultural diversity. Accordingly, the research literature describes academic institutions and the academic environment as an opportunity for a multicultural encounter. Alongside their instrumental importance, studies in higher education institutions may also constitute a social environment and space for other experiences. Exposure to different people and ideas affects students' behavior, values, and perceptions, as well as their social and political attitudes. The implication is that in the academic environment, interactions between students from diverse cultural-ethnic backgrounds are constantly taking place, where joint classroom learning may foster relationships and collaborations between them [22]-[28], [12].

Various studies from around the world examining the dynamics of students from different groups in the same country, and their intercultural abilities, have revealed that student dynamics were complex, reflecting on conflicts and communication problems. The studies have revealed situations of social inequality, negative interactions, attitude of racism and exclusion of the minority group [29]-[31], [10]. Conversely, there are studies that describe better dynamics between students from different backgrounds, and they have found that personal contact between groups, collaboration and multiculturalism is positively related to students' "intercultural competence". It has also been found that learning with intercultural content increases students' intercultural

knowledge, contributes to their awareness and cultural sensitivity, and increases cultural skills [22], [23], [32]-[35].

C. Multiculturalism and the Concept of "Other" in Israel

Professional literature portrays Israeli society as a multicultural and divisive society. The State of Israel is defined as a Jewish state, which, following a political, social, and economic history, contains many non-Jewish groups: the Arab population, migrant workers, refugees, and asylum seekers. The two main ethnic groups are Jews and Arabs, with an Arab minority living in Israel with a population of 20.7%. Both groups share the same land and exist side by side as national groups with a history of ongoing conflict [2], [8], [36]-[38]. Israeli Arabs are perceived as 'others' in Israeli society, partly because of the significant cultural differences between Jews and Arabs in different spheres of life. The concept of the 'other' is related to the relationship between groups from different backgrounds, accompanied by positive feelings towards the affiliation Group (ingroup) such as appreciation, loyalty and understanding, while the feelings towards the 'other' group (outgroup) are characterized by resistance and lack of understanding. Hence, the construction of the 'other' concept is based on physical differences, externalities, and national characteristics [39], [40].

As part of dealing with the Jewish-Arab conflict, Israeli-Arab meeting groups developed with the aim of changing perceptions and stigmas between the groups and improve their relationships. It was found that quality meetings between Jews and Arabs were associated with reducing stereotypes and threatening feelings of each group towards the other [2], [41]-[43].

An intercultural meeting does not take place in Israeli routine, since the social and cultural structure in Israel, as well as the education system in it, advocate the concept of unique multicultural education. This education encourages each sector to learn and preserve its culture and is generally not exposed to another culture or sector. Only in universities and in some colleges do Jews and Arabs meet. Therefore, the academic institution in Israel has great significance in dealing with existing discrimination and social gaps, especially towards citizens of the minority group. Thus, special importance is given to the role of higher education institutions as a meeting point between Jews and Arabs and the basis for the development of "intercultural competence" [16], [26], [44]-[46].

D. Intercultural Encounters at Israeli Academic Institutions

Academic institutions in Israel are a good example of a multicultural meeting that includes students from different cultures, religions and nationalities, and students from conflict societies. Thus, the cultural-ethnic diversity in the Israeli academy makes the college classroom a microcosm of society.

The multicultural encounter at the academy has double meaning: on the one hand, it is a clash of cultures that can produce a conflict that will interfere with learning, and on the other, this may be an opportunity for meeting, communicating, interacting and engaging with 'others' [12], [27], [47]. Various

studies have suggested that cross-cultural encounters do not necessarily lead to "intercultural competence" and may even reinforce stereotypes and prejudices. Therefore, an intercultural encounter will succeed in promoting "intercultural competence" provided these encounters are reflected in personal and social experiences with people from other cultures and include aspects of critical learning about social reality in the country [27], [28], [48].

In the Israeli context, various studies conducted in academic institutions in Israel indicate different findings; studies examining the intercultural encounter at education colleges between graduate students, Jews and Arabs, showed that both sides perceived the socio-cultural climate as open and multicultural and that social relations between groups were perceived as positive in general. Most students noted positive collaboration in fulfilling of their assignments and found that the learning experience had a positive impact on strengthening their attitudes towards multiculturalism. It has also been found that multicultural encounters, even when held in an open atmosphere, are not enough to positively change students' attitudes and feelings from both groups [12], [28], [49].

Other studies [50]-[52] at teacher training colleges have found that both groups have little knowledge of the customs, culture, and values of the other group members. It was also found an association between a low degree of familiarity with the "other" group and negative attitudes toward it. Further studies show that Arab students feel alienated and insensitive in social, linguistic, and religious terms, and that Jewish and Arab students interact only with their group members. It has also been found that Arab students show greater willingness to cooperate and study with Jewish students [50]-[52]. This finding is similar to Schiff's study [53] conducted at a university and found that the minority group holds a positive view of the second group and sees the meeting in the academic arena as enabling and encouraging, and sometimes creates a change in attitudes towards the other group. Lev-Ari and Sabek [27] also examined the connections between "other" group encounters and learning experience, and the development of "intercultural competence", among Jews and Arabs students for master's degree in education at colleges and universities. Their study found that the academic learning experience contributes significantly to "intercultural competence", with the Arab students expressing more significant knowledge of the 'other' than the Jewish students. Another study by Soen [54] that examined the feelings of Jewish and Arab students on an Israeli campus, reinforces the claim that the academy serves as a bridging arena and promotes "multicultural competence".

E. Research Rationale Following the Literature Review

Most of the research conducted in Israel and examined the intercultural encounter in higher education institutions, focused on education colleges and education faculties in university [27], [28], [51], [54], [55], whereas other studies have examined a change in intercultural attitudes only following a multicultural intervention program [56], [57]. Despite the positive change that emerges from the studies,

most students still do not hold positive attitudes towards multiculturalism, especially in the Jewish majority group. It was also found that closer relationships with the other culture characterized students who studied in special education programs, such as educational counseling program, exclusion youth program, and educational leadership program. It seems that students in these studying programs are required for unique interpersonal skills and higher social sensitivity than students in other programs. Therefore, it was decided that the present study will be conducted at a multicultural academic college, which has diverse studying programs and will examine the "other" concept among students in different programs such as Nursing, Healthcare Management, Technological Systems, Economic, and Educational Counseling. This is to examine the degree of "intercultural competence" among students from various study programs, and the differences between Education students and other programs' students. The study also examined the specific contribution of multicultural courses to changing the perception of 'others'.

The main hypothesis is that the existence of "intercultural competence" is associated with demographic characteristics of the students, as well as the nature of intercultural encounters between Jews and Arabs in a higher education institution.

III. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH PROCESS

This part of the study will discuss the sample characteristics, the research survey, and the construction of the variables.

A. Sample Characteristics

The quantitative research participants were sampled at a multi-cultural college in Israel - Ramat Gan Academic College. A self-report questionnaire was sent to 2545 students-1861 of whom are currently studying in various programs and 684 of whom are master's graduates from the past three years, in Educational Counseling and Healthcare management programs.

274 students responded to the questionnaires. 190 of them are actual students and the rest are graduate students. Most of the respondents (71.2%) are Jewish, and the rest are Arabs (Muslims, Christians, or Druze). The vast majority (93.8%) are Israeli born, 226 women (82.5%) and 48 men (see Table I).

73 participants (26.6%) are bachelor's degree students, studying Healthcare Management, Nursing, Technological Systems, Management, and Social Sciences. 117 respondents are master's degree students (42.7%) who study Educational Counseling and Healthcare Management. 84 respondents (30.7%) are master's graduates of Educational Counseling and Healthcare Management (see Table II). Most participants (75%) reported that they were studying with students from different cultures, and 71% reported that in more than 60% of their courses were students from the "other" group.

B. Research Survey

The questionnaire included 12 categories of self-report

questions on multiculturalism; the first eight categories were related to attitudes towards multiculturalism and to the 'other' group, and the last four categories are the "intercultural competence" (IC) measures, as follows: (KOB) - Knowing the 'Other' group Before college (*I met before collage with the other group*); (ATM) - Attitudes Towards Multiculturalism (*I agree that Jews and Arabs contribute equally to Israeli society*); (MCI) - Multicultural Climate in College (*Students from different sectors freely express themselves during lessons*); (II) - Intercultural Interactions in college (*I collaborate in preparing assignments with students from another sector*); (CC) - Curriculum's Contribution to acquaintance with 'others' (*Studies familiarize me with different culture groups of my own*); (MCo) - Multicultural Courses in college (*I studied courses dealing the Jewish-Arab relations*); (NGR) - National Group's Reference to the 'other' group (*Students from my national group treat 'the others' with sympathy and empathy*); (OGR) - 'Other' Group's Reference to the national group (*Students from the 'other' group refer to my national group with sympathy and empathy*). The last four categories are: (CKO) - Cognitive Knowledge about 'the Others' (*I know at least two main values of the other culture*); (FFO) - Feelings For the Others in college (*I'm feeling angry towards the other group*); (CAB) - Change in Attitudes and Behavior towards 'the others' (*I'm ready to develop social*

relationships with 'the others'); (MBA) - Multicultural Behavior and Activity (*I'm talking about the others without judgment*). In addition, participants filled out a demographic data questionnaire, including their degree type (bachelor's or master's) and their academic study program.

TABLE I
 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic Characteristics		N	%
Sector	Jewish	195	71.2%
	Arabs	79	28.8%
Respondents Group	Student	190	69.3%
	graduates	84	30.7%
Gender	Female	226	82.5%
	Male	48	17.5%
Age Group	30-18	94	34.4%
	40-31	92	33.7%
	50-41	70	25.6%
	60-51	17	6.2%
Marital Status	Married	172	62.8%
	Singles	73	26.6%
	Other	29	10.6%
Income Level	lower than average	82	29.9%
	Average	107	39.1%
	Higher than average	85	31%
Total		274	100%

TABLE II
 STUDY CHARACTERISTICS

Study Program	Degree Type				Total	% Respondents
	Bachelor's Degree Students	Master's Degree Students	Master's Graduates			
Healthcare Management	N	24	52	30	106	38.7%
	% program	22.6%	49.1%	28.3%	100.0%	
Educational Counseling	N	0	65	54	119	43.4%
	% program	0.0%	54.6%	45.4%	100.0%	
Nursing	N	30	0	0	30	10.9%
	% program	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Other Bachelor's Programs	N	19	0	0	19	6.9%
	% program	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
Total	N	73	117	84	274	100.0%
	% Respondents	26.6%	42.7%	30.7%	100.0%	

C. The Construction of Variables

The dependent variables of the study are the four measures of "IC" among students: CKO ($\alpha = 0.851$); FFO ($\alpha = 0.862$); CAB ($\alpha = 0.888$); and MBA ($\alpha = 0.862$).

The independent variables are the demographic characteristics: Sector and Study program; KOB ($\alpha = 0.836$); ATM ($\alpha = 0.850$); MCI ($\alpha = 0.787$); II ($\alpha = 0.853$); MCo ($\alpha = 0.744$); CC ($\alpha = 0.944$); NGR ($\alpha = 0.844$); OGR ($\alpha = 0.867$).

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The present study examined three hypotheses, using Multiple Comparisons analysis, Correlation Coefficients analysis and finally the regression analysis.

A. Multiple Comparisons

The first hypothesis seeks to examine the effect of the sector on multicultural attitudes, arguing for the existence of

higher "IC" among Arab students, compared to Jews.

The comparison shows (see Table III) that the level of "IC" as well as two of its measures: CKO and change in attitudes toward others, are higher among Arab students than of Jewish students. Similarly, the degree of KOB, ATM and CC, among Arabs are higher than Jewish respondents. In contrast, the perception of MCI and OGR among Arab students is lower than that of Jewish students. In conclusion, these results mean that the "IC" and multicultural attitudes towards 'others' are related to the respondents' sector.

The second hypothesis seeks to examine the effect of the study program on multicultural attitudes and argues for the existence of higher "IC" among students from empathic-biased programs (such as educational counseling) than students in other programs. To this end, differences in perceptions and attitudes among students from different study programs were examined.

TABLE III
ATM AND THE 'OTHER' GROUP, BY SECTOR

variable	sector		Multiple comparisons ^a
	Jews (A)	Arabs (B)	
KOB	2.42	3.15	B > A
ATM	3.68	3.90	B > A
MCI	3.64	3.35	A > B
II	3.13	3.33	
CC	2.46	3.05	B > A
MCo	0.48	0.45	
NGR	3.91	3.77	
OGR	3.70	3.40	A > B
CKO	2.70	3.85	B > A
FFO	4.03	3.89	
CAB	2.09	2.29	B > A
MBA	3.16	3.30	
IC	2.93	3.23	B > A

^athe multiple comparison column shows post-hoc test results to examine mean differences between the appropriate groups (rows) at a significance level of 0.05 after adjusting for multiple comparisons according to Benjamini-Hochberg.

TABLE IV
ATM AND THE 'OTHER' GROUP, BY STUDY PROGRAM

variable	healthcare management	educational counseling	nursing	Multiple comparisons ^a
	(A)	(B)	(C)	
KOB	2.98	2.30	2.78	A > B C > B
ATM	3.89	3.66	3.56	
MCI	3.67	3.44	3.57	
II	3.19	3.25	2.92	
CC	2.54	2.69	2.78	
MCo	0.40	0.62	0.12	A > C B > A C
NGR	3.90	3.95	3.47	A > C B > C
OGR	3.58	3.76	3.13	A > C B > C
CKO	3.22	2.94	2.85	
FFO	3.97	4.08	3.66	B > C
CAB	2.13	2.14	2.27	
MBA	3.04	3.45	2.80	B > A C
IC	3.02	3.06	2.86	

^athe multiple comparison column shows post-hoc test results to examine mean differences between the appropriate groups (rows) at a significance level of 0.05 after adjusting for multiple comparisons according to Benjamini-Hochberg.

The analysis results (see Table IV) indicate that MBA and MCo of students from educational counseling program were positively higher than all other respondents, also their FFO were higher than nursing program students. It was also found that the reference of the National group to the 'other' group as well as the OGR are positively higher among respondents of educational counseling and healthcare management programs than respondents of nursing program. In contrast, KOB and ATM were found to be lower among educational counseling students than students in healthcare management and nursing programs.

In conclusion, the results indicate more positive feelings for 'others' and more multicultural behavior among students of

educational counseling program, compared to the other groups, although they were less exposed to 'others' before college. However, they were more exposed to 'others' through a variety of multicultural courses during their studies.

B. Correlation Analysis

In this section, the association between different relevant variables is examined through correlation analysis. It, generally, gives a rough picture of the relevancy of the variable but does not tell about the causation.

The third hypothesis was that the variables "IC" and its measures are positively correlated with the multicultural Independent variables: KOB, ATM, MCI, II, CC, MCo, NGR, OGR.

The correlation analysis (see Table V) indicates that, except for MCI and MCo, there is a clear association between the variables KOB and CKO, and with ATM, II, CAB, MBA. A positive correlation was also found between CKO and FFO, and between CKO and KOB. Finally, positive and significant correlations were found between MBA, II, CC and FFO, NGR, OGR

Examining the correlation coefficients between the "IC" and other variables of the study reveals significant positive correlations, except for the variable 'variety of multicultural courses'. For example, the association of 58% between IC and II means that the more positive interactions with the 'other' are, the greater "IC" will be. Similar association of 51% also found between IC and CC exemplifies that the curriculum contributes greatly to significant acquaintance with 'others'. Similarly, the association of 50% between IC and ATM means that the more positive ATM are, the greater "IC" will be.

TABLE V
CORRELATION MATRIX BETWEEN STUDY VARIABLES

	KOB	ATM	MCI	II	CC	MCo	NGR	OGR
KOB	1							
ATM	.26**	1						
MCI	0.11	0.33**	1					
II	0.15*	0.33**	0.45**	1				
CC	0.16*	0.29**	0.23**	0.35**	1			
MCo	-0.11	0.06	-0.04	0.06	0.14*	1		
NGR	0.04	0.21**	0.29**	0.36**	0.14*	0.02	1	
OGR	-0.11	0.17**	0.40**	0.38**	0.15*	0.09	0.62**	1
CKO	0.54**	0.38**	0.09	0.31**	0.30**	0.02	0.02	-0.09
FFO	0.04	0.36**	0.49**	0.50**	0.25**	0.00	0.55**	0.57**
CAB	0.13*	0.25**	0.23**	0.34**	0.36**	-0.02	0.13*	0.09
MBA	0.18**	0.30**	0.19**	0.38**	0.49**	0.14*	0.22**	0.17**
IC	0.35**	0.50**	0.38**	0.58**	0.51**	0.05	0.36**	0.29**

**p < 0.01 * ,p < 0.05

The findings show that all these associations depend on one another. The data clearly illustrate that when a student chooses to study in a multicultural academic institution, he meets the other culture, often for the first time, in the academic, social, and personal aspects. It enriches his knowledge of the other culture, deepens his acquaintance with the 'other', and challenges his ATM and the other culture. The curriculum, the student interactions, and the multicultural climate at the college will be an important component of developing the

student's "IC", along with the other variables

C. Regression Analysis

The results that have emerged of the analyses so far indicate differences in the level of "IC" between Jews and Arabs. The analyses also revealed that there is a partial impact of the academic study program on "IC". Therefore, to examine the mutual influence of demographic characteristics and other study's variables on respondents' "IC", multiple regression analyses were conducted. The overall variable "intercultural ability" was used as a dependent variable and the other background variables were used as independent variables, additionally to other measures of multicultural attitudes.

The analysis results (see Table VI) indicate that the model significantly explains ($F_{(20,252)} = 19.068, p < 0.01$) changes in the variability of the "IC" variable ($R^2 = 62.3\%$).

TABLE VI
MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSES OF "IC" ON DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, STUDY PROGRAM AND MULTICULTURAL MEASURES

independent variables		B	t	η^2
	Intercept	0.42	1.761	0.013
Marital Status	married	0.10	1.034	0.005
	singles	0.11	1.381	0.008
sector	Arabs (relation to Jews)	0.13	2.567*	0.028
	Men (relation to women)	0.13	2.211*	0.021
age		0.00	1.594	0.011
income level		0.02	0.726	0.002
children	With (vs. no children)	-0.05	0.551	0.001
residence		-0.01	0.698	0.002
degree type	bachelor	0.06	0.651	0.002
	master	0.02	0.372	0.001
study program	Healthcare management	0.07	0.789	0.003
	Educational counseling	0.24	2.373*	0.024
multicultural measures	KOB	0.11	4.427**	0.078
	ATM	0.13	4.293**	0.074
	MCI	0.06	1.850	0.015
	II	0.15	4.729**	0.088
	CC	0.12	5.139**	0.103
	NGR	0.07	2.003*	0.017
	OGR	0.02	0.688	0.002
MCo	-0.02	0.439	0.001	

$F_{(20,252)} = 19.068**$

$R^2 = .623$

**p < 0.01 * ,p < 0.05

This model found that the level of "IC" of Arab respondents was higher than that of Jews ($b = 0.13, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.028$), and that the level of men's "IC" was higher than that of women. It was also found that the level of "IC" of educational counseling respondents was higher than that of nursing respondents ($b = 0.24, p < 0.05$). In addition, the effect size analysis suggested that the "IC" of educational counseling respondents was higher than that of healthcare management respondents ($p < 0.01$). Furthermore, the analysis revealed a positive relationship between the level of "IC" and KOB ($b = 0.11, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.078$), ATM ($b = 0.13, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.074$), II ($b = 0.15, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.088$), CC ($b = 0.12, p < 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.103$), and NGR ($b = 0.07, p < 0.05, \eta^2 = 0.017$). So, on the bases of the findings and research studies, we can

conclude that Arab students have higher level of "IC" than that of Jews students, and educational counseling students have higher level of "IC" than that of other study programs' students.

The level of "IC" is positively related to early acquaintance with others, ATM, student interactions and relations, and a study program that enables personal acquaintance.

The author can conclude that, overall, results are significantly positive.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The importance of the present study lies in its contribution to the body of knowledge in the context of multicultural encounters at higher education institutions, and in identifying the means for developing "IC" among undergraduate and graduate students. The study also examined the differential contribution of different academic study programs, other than education, to the development of "IC" and to change in attitudes and behavior of Jewish and Arab students, towards the "other" group.

In a multicultural state like Israel, it is of paramount importance to have meaningful intercultural encounters and to develop "IC". This study may present a unique way to reduce prejudice and stereotypes about the other culture, and perhaps to prevent the effects of conflict and violence in Israeli society.

The findings indicate a higher "IC" among Arab students, perhaps because they are a minority who wants to integrate into the majority group, both in college and society [8], [58]. This certainly represents an opportunity to leverage this positive direction for the benefit of Israeli society and start a change through the social integration in the academy.

The results also showed that the level of "IC" among educational counseling students is higher than other respondents, probably due to the profession nature, which is more empathetic, accepting and enabling. It may also be related to the characteristics of the students who choose a therapeutic profession [59], [60]. Another explanation is that within the study program of educational counseling, students are exposed to the 'other' culture on a more intimate level, through workshops in small groups and emotional-therapeutic courses that facilitate closeness and personal contact.

On the basis of these findings, the study suggests that the last insight should lead us to re-identifying energy investment objectives of academic institutions, which will indeed promote "IC". That is, the results are encouraging us to invest in personal acquaintance between multicultural students and deepening emotional familiarity with the 'other' group. This can take place in various programs, such as: learning in small groups, guiding process groups, and other programs to promote collaborative personal discourse, not necessarily on a multicultural issue.

Another interesting finding shows that "IC" among men is higher than that of women. It may be explained by men being a minority in college, or by the uniqueness of men, given their choice of "softer" professions [58], and it can also be explained by men having more knowledge of the 'other' group

[27]. The present study did not focus on this aspect so it should be examined in further studies.

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