

17.1.2025

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**Title**

Sense of place and college placement / Shlomo Getz ; Lilach lev-Ari

**Publication year**

2017

**Source/Footnote**

In: Higher education. - 74 (2017) 6, S. 933 - 948

**Inventory number**

46615

**Keywords**

Ausland : Israel : Studentenschaft, Studium, Lehre ; Studentenschaft : Studienverhalten

**Abstract**

It is generally assumed that young people with lower socioeconomic status (SES) face restricted access to higher education institutions, and particularly to those which are considered to be more prestigious. Differences in student placement in higher education institutions by place of residence are usually explained by their SES. We argue that place of residence is not only a geographical attribute, but also a social factor that influences self-identity and plays a significant role in student placement regardless of their SES. The study was conducted in Israel among first year undergraduate students, and analyzed the effect of living in four residential locality types (cities, small towns, Jewish and Arab villages) on institutional placement. The study focused on the patterns of student placement in institutions, controlling for individual SES and previous academic ability. Findings indicate that place of residence has a net effect on student placement, and it interacts with SES and with previous academic achievements. Less “successful” students, regardless of their SES, are less influenced by their residential locality. These differences in college placement are explained in part by the place of residence, which represents a way of life that creates a shared “sense of place” or “habitus” based on

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