Client Project

(Apr 3, 2024 - 6:00am)

(00:00:00 - 00:01:17)

**Moderator #1:** The focus group is facilitated by College Pulse, and College Pulse is a research firm that studies the opinions of college students across the United States. And my name is doctor Deb Mashek. I'll be our moderator today. And I will be asking the questions, facilitating discussion, and and managing our time to make sure that I can get you out of here at the top of the hour as promised. The purpose of the conversation today is to learn more about how college students think about the conflict in Gaza and Israel, and the focus group is part of a a larger study being conducted by College Pulse in partnership with a research team that studies education. So like I said, we're gonna be here for about sixty minutes. And due to the time constraint, I might need to move us along. This is such a a important topic to be talking about. And I so I apologize in advance if we're in the middle of a great discussion and I start transitioning us. It's just so we can get to all of the questions. I propose that we abide by three, three ground rules. So I'm gonna put those out there and then ask you for a thumbs up if you agree to these. The first one is that there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions, so please share openly about your opinions and your experiences.

(00:01:18 - 00:01:47)

**Moderator #1:** Number two is that what is said here stays here, so I it's critical that we all honor each other's privacy and hold everything in confidence that's said here today. And then number three is that keep in mind that your perspectives, your experiences are likely really different from those of others in in the room. And so please be respectful, speak one at a time, and be curious about our differences. So if those sound good to you, can I get a thumbs up?

(00:01:49 - 00:02:01)

**Moderator #1:** Fantastic all. I appreciate it. Before we get started, just a reminder that we are recording this focus group session. By participating, you're consenting to us using that recording for research purposes only.

(00:02:02 - 00:02:15)

**Moderator #1:** We keep your identity confidential, of course. And if at any time you are like, I don't wanna I I no longer wanna be recorded, you can just exit the call. Are there any questions before we get started?

(00:02:18 - 00:02:27)

**Moderator #1:** Rocking. Okay. So we've got a lot of questions. And if you want me to repeat anything at any point, just let me know. Good deal? Okay. So the first question.

(00:02:29 - 00:02:31)

**Moderator #1:** Let me find my little button over here.

(00:02:32 - 00:02:38)

**Moderator #1:** The first question is where is this? I'll find it here in a second. Sorry. You guys are the first group.

(00:02:39 - 00:02:42)

**Moderator #1:** Here we go. How do you obtain.

**[Q1] How do you obtain information about Israel and the conflict in Israel and Gaza? To what extent do you actively seek out information vs. passively receive information? Are there particular sources you turn to? What sources do you find most trustworthy?** (00:02:42 - 00:11:58)

**Moderator #1:** Information about Israel and the conflict in Israel and Gaza? And to what extent do you find yourself actively seeking out information versus passively receiving information? And I'm just gonna if you don't mind can I just ask everyone to share a perspective on this one and we'll start with panelist one?

**Moderator #1:** Yes. It is. Yeah. Where are you able to see what your, panelist number is?

**Panelist #1:** No. But I think it, like, it it came up earlier, and I don't see another panelist one, so I'm gonna assume that's me.

**Moderator #1:** Okay. Okay. So thank you. So if anyone is uncertain of their moniker at any point, we do this to help protect privacy. But just just let me know, and I can tell you tell you your number. Okay. Panelist one, how are you obtaining information? Are you seeking it out or passively receiving it?

**Panelist #1:** So I would say it's a combination of the two for sure. I mean, I think it's hard not to passively receive information, these days, you know, through endless phone notifications.

**Panelist #1:** And email updates and all of that. And then when I'm actively seeking out information, I would say it's mostly on online news sources and via sort of, like, daily, like, mailing updates from sources that I trust, with with with different news information and also some via social media. Although I feel like for me, that's I I try to stay away from using social media as a primary news source these days.

**Moderator #1:** So you mentioned sometimes that you seek out information. Are there particular sources that you turn to that you do find particularly trustworthy?

**Panelist #1:** I would say that I generally I I have my, you know, Apple News notifications turned on for certain news outlets. I would say I go to the New York Times. For general news, often, when I'm thinking about news, you know, relating to the war in Israel and Gaza. Often, I am using a combination of, you know, more general media outlets as well as various Jewish, news outlets that I, that I enjoy enjoy using for their information.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. Can you would you mind sharing a name or two of the Jewish outlets that you like?

**Panelist #1:** Yeah. The American Jewish Committee provides, like, daily sort of updates, and those often compile a lot of sources, so I appreciate those.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. That kinda rolls it up for you. That's great. I appreciate your your share there. Okay. Panelist number two in the fabulous black puffer coat.

**Panelist #2:** Hi.

**Moderator #1:** Hi.

**Panelist #2:** So I would say a little bit similar to panelist one. I don't have social media, so not through social media, but I definitely check, Apple News, like, which gives me, like, all different news outlets. And then I kind of go to the Israel Hamas war section, and then it kind of just gives you all different news outlets, that are, like, publishing that day, I guess, on the topic. And then aside from that, I also get, like, updates from my family or, like, whenever I'm, like, speaking to someone on the phone, they'll tell me, like, what's going on in the news, and, like, I use that as part of my news source.

**Panelist #2:** And I would say that's mostly it. I also have the New York Times, like, through my school, like, through school subscription, so I, like, use that sometimes to check, but that's not my, like, most used, I guess, news source.

**Moderator #1:** That's more of a sometimes, but the more regular stuff seems to be the Apple.

**Panelist #2:** Yes.

**Moderator #1:** News.

**Panelist #2:** Yes.

**Moderator #1:** Feed. Great. Thank you. And panelist number three.

**Panelist #3:** Hi. So I use, similar to the other panelists, New York Times. I get, like, newsletter sent every morning to my email that I read every day. So that usually will, like, touch on, the Israel Palestine conflict, like, either every day or, like, multiple times a week. So that's probably the main source there. And then in passing, like, when people will post things on social media because I feel like the New York Times stuff will be much more, I guess, like, objective stuff versus, like, a lot of stuff on social media might seem not outlandish, but, like, more impassioned type content that isn't featured in the New York Times. So then, like, the stuff on social media, I'll kind of explore further just based on, like, the links and stuff I see people post there. But, definitely, the majority is coming from the New York Times.

**Moderator #1:** With that follow-up from referral sources when it feels useful to you. Great. Thank you so much. And panelist number four.

**Panelist #4:** Is that me?

**Moderator #1:** Yes. It is. Thank you.

**Panelist #4:** Okay.

**Moderator #1:** For double checking.

**Panelist #4:** Well, in the in the fall semester, I think I was actively seeking out more new sources, but then it really started to distract me from being able to do anything else. And I kind of made the conscious decision to try to pull back a bit, so now I guess I'm more possibly receiving information.

**Panelist #4:** I do get a daily letter from the New York Times because I'm on, like, my school subscription, like, free subscription.

**Panelist #4:** And I don't thoroughly read it every day, but depending on the subject of the email, I might open it if it's something that particularly interests me. So if it was relating to Israel, I would definitely open it.

**Panelist #4:** On social media, I've.

**Panelist #4:** I've blocked the keyword Palestine, to be honest, because I just kept on getting content that was upsetting me. And, I guess, I just, like, feel like it was getting too distracting. And I also.

**Panelist #4:** For a lot of the people that I follow, I muted them, so I stopped seeing their posts because they were posting a lot of content that, like, I disagreed with. And it was I felt like they were reposting misinformation, and it was making me really upset to see so many people that go to such an esteemed institution that are such smart people just kind of mindlessly posting this misinformation. And there was such a strong urge to be messaging them and being like, are you, like, reading any of these sources or, like, the screenshot of a Twitter.

**Panelist #4:** Post? Are are you, like, following up on any of this? And I knew that it wouldn't be wise to actually message them. So to resist that urge to that temptation, I just muted them. But I still do see posts, from people that are posting, like, screenshots and whatnot from the other perspective. And, I guess, sometimes there are posts that sneak through the accounts that I muted because I didn't get everyone, and there's so many people posting about it. And, occasionally, I will see posts that I that, come from, like, the other perspective that I don't hold. And, a lot of times when I see those posts, I actually just go to the sources directly because I don't really trust them to give an accurate summation. And a lot of most of the time, what happens is I'll see that whatever source they're claiming says something much less dramatic than the claim that they're trying to make.

**Panelist #4:** It's such a half truth that it's hardly considered a truth at all.

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. I guess that's it. And and sometimes, when my curiosity gets the better of me, I'll honestly just type, like, Israel into into Google News and just see the top headlines or into YouTube.

**Panelist #4:** Last semester, I was also listening to, sometimes the podcast, The Daily, which I think is, like, a New York Times podcast, and they had a few episodes.

**Panelist #4:** On on the Israel Hamas war. So.

**Moderator #1:** Okay. And I'm I'm hearing a lot of, in your in your strategy there, the.

**Moderator #1:** The needing to curate that as self care. And so we're gonna talk more about that in, another question too, so I wanna pick up on some of those themes then. Okay. And then in total sensible order, panelist, seven.

**Panelist #7:** Okay. Sure. I didn't realize that I was number seven, but.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. I'm not sure how that happened, but number.

**Panelist #7:** Cool.

**Moderator #1:** Seven. Yeah.

**Panelist #7:** I would say I'm primarily passively receiving it.

**Panelist #7:** However, when it's presented to me, I do tend to, like, at least read into it a little bit more.

**Panelist #7:** I mainly get my news from The Wall Street Journal, so I oftentimes am reading articles from there. Sometimes I will also get articles from the New York Times and and read those.

**Panelist #7:** I certainly see a lot on social media. Sometimes I'll indulge myself and, like, read into it. However, definitely take all of that with with kind of a grain of salt.

**Panelist #7:** And and, you know, if people refer me to other articles, I will also read those.

**Panelist #7:** But and, generally, like, it's really Wall Street Times, Wall Street Journal, New York Times for sort of any of the articles that I'll I'll engage with on a regular basis without a referral.

**Moderator #1:** I'm I'm curious. You mentioned sometimes you're presented with articles or the referral. Who tends to be your referring source? Who's.

**Panelist #7:** Family and friends, generally. Yeah. More family.

**Moderator #1:** Referring?

**Panelist #7:** Than friends, I would say, but.

**Moderator #1:** Okay.

**Panelist #7:** Occasionally, both.

**Moderator #1:** Great. Thank you. So how has the conflict in Israel and.

**[Q2] How has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all?** (00:11:58 - 00:28:14)

**Moderator #1:** Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all? And whoever feels moved to to share is welcome to jump in on this one.

**Panelist #4:** I can.

**Moderator #1:** Are.

**Panelist #4:** I.

**Moderator #1:** Other.

**Panelist #4:** Can.

**Moderator #1:** People.

**Panelist #4:** Share.

**Moderator #1:** Hearing?

**Panelist #4:** First?

**Moderator #1:** Okay. Thank you.

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. I think people were just, like, waiting to see who was gonna go first.

**Panelist #4:** Last semester, I felt really, like, affected my day to day life. I.

**Panelist #4:** I I don't have any, like, family in Israel even though I know probably a lot of people in here do, but I have a lot of family friends in Israel. And, you know, the initial attack on October seventh was obviously really upsetting, But I actually find that I was more distracted by the response to that than the initial attack itself because attacks on Israel, as sad as it is, aren't that uncommon nor unexpected. But what was unexpected for me was to see how almost how much support there'd be on campus, especially considering that these campus demonstrations started long before the ground invasion of Gaza. And so the the campus demonstrations in support of Palestine seemed to be more a response to the initial attack than to the retaliation, which had some concerning implications for me being that there was gonna be protests regardless of how Israel responded.

**Panelist #4:** So those demonstrations, I I live really close to them. I can hear the news helicopters going around my building whenever they're happening. We also probably all get emails when they're happening, notifying us that the gates to campus are closing because they don't wanna be letting anyone off of campus onto campus because they're trying to control how men how big these demonstrations are gonna be getting.

**Panelist #4:** So that's something to think about, having to plan my route to class, what gates are gonna be open, which are closed. I was personally, like, really annoyed that the only gates that they were leaving open are the ones that are always right next to where the demonstrations are happening because it forces you to have to walk right through it, and I would prefer to go through another way so I could avoid it.

**Panelist #4:** There was even, like, a class I was in at the end of last semester demonstration was happening right outside the building, and we were having, like, a graded, class, like, seminar on a research paper. And it got so loud that everyone in the class just stopped talking and started looking out the window. And you could hear it crystal clear And, like, the entire class just stopped until, eventually, that group, like, moved on because they were, like, screaming into megaphones and everything. Like, it was just impossible to continue.

**Panelist #4:** This semester, I've been less affected, especially because I've taken the choice to basically curate, like, all of my, my news feed, my social media, and everything. But I definitely still find myself thinking about it a lot, and there hasn't been as many on campus demonstrations.

**Panelist #4:** But at the beginning of the semester, I did find myself, in a class where the teacher had a very different stance than I did. And on the first day of class, she made a statement saying how it's been a hundred days since Israel waged war on Gaza. And she was in class. She was wearing a kefir, and she was talking about how this class is gonna take an anti colonial stance on the world, and thus, we have to take an anti Israel stance because Israel is a colonialist colonialist apartheid capitalist nation, which I fundamentally disagree with. I thought that was really biased, and I looked at the syllabus, and there was a whole unit on analyzing the intersectional identity of women living under the apartheid of Israel. And I just was like, oh, this is not aligned with my desire to unplug from this. And I would probably get really upset in this class, and I also don't think I would feel comfortable enough to speak freely because, basically, everyone else in the class is going to be.

**Panelist #4:** Disagreeing with my opinions. And in this environment, it kind of feels like you're either with us or you're against us, and they vilify anyone that doesn't agree with them. And it would become like a whole thing, and I would be, like, fearing for my my safety. Like, I don't know. They wouldn't actually attack me, but I might be, like, ostracized and and shunned. So I dropped that class, and I had to find another one.

**Moderator #1:** Okay. Those are some powerful examples. Thank you. And panelist one, I saw at at the beginning you were getting ready to come in. Would you like to come in now?

**Panelist #1:** Oh, sure. Question, I guess, before I start speaking. So just in terms of, like, what we are and are not supposed to reveal about ourselves, our identities, where we go to school, like, what is what is the sort of situation there? I just wanna make sure I'm being cognizant of that when I speak because I'm I I I'm comfortable,

**Moderator #1:** Yeah.

**Panelist #1:** But I don't wanna, like, overstep.

**Moderator #1:** No. Yeah. No. Thank you for asking. You are welcome to share whatever you feel comfortable.

**Panelist #1:** It.

**Moderator #1:** Sharing.

**Panelist #1:** Because, like, we we are not supposed to keep anonymous where we're like, what campus we're on or anything.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. You don't have to. If you.

**Panelist #1:** Okay.

**Moderator #1:** Would like to, you are welcome to. So whatever feels.

**Panelist #1:** Okay. Got.

**Moderator #1:** Safest.

**Panelist #1:** It. Got it.

**Moderator #1:** For you.

**Panelist #1:** Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah.

**Panelist #1:** I just I just.

**Panelist #3:** Wait.

**Panelist #1:** Wanted.

**Panelist #3:** Before.

**Panelist #1:** To check.

**Panelist #3:** You.

**Panelist #1:** It. Yeah.

**Panelist #3:** Before you start, could I just ask panelist number four that I just shared if you're comfortable? I'm just curious. What school do you go, dude?

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. I go to Columbia. I I actually.

**Panelist #3:** Got it.

**Panelist #4:** Thought that we might all be going. I didn't know if we were all from the same same school or not.

**Panelist #3:** Yeah. No.

**Panelist #4:** No? Okay. Well, there's been protests. There's been, like,

**Panelist #3:** No.

**Panelist #4:** So many protests on Columbia's campus because it's known as, like, a, like, political institution.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah.

**Panelist #4:** It's been crazy.

**Moderator #1:** Great. Thank you for those clarifying questions. So go ahead.

**Panelist #1:** Yeah.

**Panelist #1:** Panelist number four. I I I couldn't immediately immediately sense which campus you were on by the description of the helicopters and and the gates and such. So I I am about an hour and a half away, at Princeton in New Jersey, and we you know, we're we're not in the heart of New York City. Right? Like, we do not have a campus that's sort of, like, in the middle of an action or, like, in a lot of action. Our campus is, like, kind of just, like, next to this quiet little town. And I think as a result of that and the relatively small size of Princeton as a whole and some of just the general culture.

**Panelist #1:** At this institution.

**Panelist #1:** The climate here compared to a lot of pure campuses, in my opinion, has been a bit more calm. And that's not to say, you know, it's been smooth sailing and there's been absolutely no problems that that would be entirely inaccurate in my opinion. But, I am not worried about protests every single day. There's is protests sometimes, but generally, they stay relatively small, and relatively calm. In terms of in terms of how the war has affected, like, my overall well-being.

**Moderator #1:** And your, yeah, your experiences in particular, just anything that you've noticed.

**Panelist #1:** On October seventh last year, I was nearing the end of my time as Hillel president.

**Panelist #1:** So when the war began, it was sort of this, like, influx of just, like, trying to figure out how we can support, specifically the Jewish community on campus and peers coming to me, you know, with emotional struggles and me trying to deal with my own emotions as well. And it was definitely a very challenging time. I mean, I I've I've said to people that, like, dealing.

**Panelist #1:** Dealing with, like, helping to navigate the Hillel response, to October seventh and the following weeks and months taught me more than any college course ever has and was the most challenging thing I've experienced during college, but also, the most educational.

**Panelist #1:** So I definitely found that a lot of my attention was sort of being diverted from schoolwork and things outside of the classroom to dealing what with what was going on, in that round last semester. This semester, I, you know, I'm I'm a senior in the spring semester, so I'm no longer, you know, actively in any sort of Jewish leadership position on campus. And I think as such sort of like the, institutional responsibilities that came about as a result of the beginning of the war are not really my problem anymore. And, yes, the war very much still affects, like, the conversations I have on campus and the way that I go about my day to day life. But it feels it feels much less like an omnipresent, like, factor in in my everyday life on campus.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. Because your role has shifted too, I'm hearing there.

**Panelist #1:** Exactly. Yep.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Moderator #1:** Anything bubbling up for anyone else? And just so you know, you don't have to answer every question. So but there's space if you would like to.

**Panelist #3:** I'll I'll quickly just add, similar experience in terms of not having the Columbia, like, craziness. I go to Vanderbilt, and it's been almost, like, not nonexistent, but, definitely nothing newsworthy until last week when, this wasn't directly related to kinda anything in the news. It was more so that, the student government was trying to, like, pass an amendment that they wouldn't let any funding go to clubs that had anything to do with, like, Israel or, like, any type of, like, pro Israel stuff or anything that violated, like, the BDS movement, and the school, like, didn't let them pass the amendment. So then they, stormed the building on campus and occupied it for, like, twenty one hours or something. And, like, a reporter got arrested. So that's kind of been the biggest thing, and that was actually last week. But in terms of, like, disruption, I would say very minimal, at my school.

**Moderator #1:** And so for you, you haven't been.

**Moderator #1:** Having that direct consequence on on campus for your, like, your experience?

**Panelist #3:** Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** Okay.

**Panelist #3:** Yeah.

**Panelist #7:** Yeah. I also go to Princeton.

**Panelist #7:** So I and I would agree with panelist number one that it's not, as bad here as I hear about at, like, Columbia or, my girlfriend goes to University of Michigan. And and even there, it's like I mean, there there's a story every week of some, I mean, really, some crazy things that if I were experiencing would make me feel incredibly uncomfortable to be on campus.

**Panelist #7:** Here, it's like, it's certainly it it's always in the background, and it is something that I'm always thinking about. And there certainly have been uncomfortable encounters, but I I am at least lucky enough that it doesn't, like, impact my life every day. Like, if there it's just, like, some days.

**Panelist #7:** There was, similar to panelist number four, I actually did have a class last semester, with a professor who was spreading some very harmful rhetoric, as if it was fact.

**Panelist #7:** It was actually, co taught by three professors, two of which said some very harmful increasingly harmful things two weeks in a row. I went to speak to the first one after week one. She said, I hear you, but I'm not gonna do anything or change anything that I said.

**Panelist #7:** And then cried some tears of white guilt on the way out to be like, I hear you, but I'm also still not gonna apologize for what I said to a hundred sixty five freshmen in this class, because I mean, this class, it was an introductory course primarily underclassmen.

**Panelist #7:** And then to follow that up, like, the next week, like, the next professor straight up said, like, we need to stand together against apartheid and genocide and oppression.

**Panelist #7:** And, like, after going completely off topic of the lecture. Like, panelist number four's class had this rhetoric baked into the syllabus. This course this lecture specifically was supposed to be about US military occupation of Hawaii, and she managed to make it about Israel. So that was, like especially just following it up, really frustrating. And I did sort of follow-up with, like, just representatives at the school, and there was, like, no institutional response because faculty have, like, full latitude to say whatever they want even if it's completely unrelated to the stated topic of the course. So that was definitely, like, disheartening, especially sort of to see the response from from this class.

**Panelist #7:** But, you know, I I think that was by far the most harmful experience that I've had. Besides that, it's just, like, there are protests and they're whack, and it just kinda feels like noise.

**Panelist #7:** But, yeah,

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. Thank you. That example you shared has a very, like, left.

**Panelist #7:** That's.

**Moderator #1:** Field.

**Panelist #7:** It.

**Moderator #1:** Feeling, like it pops up in the middle of class, which is its.

**Panelist #7:** Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** Own intensity. Thank.

**Panelist #7:** No.

**Moderator #1:** You.

**Panelist #7:** It's like, how can we make anything and everything about Israel and how Israel is an oppressor?

**Moderator #1:** Okay. Thank you.

**Panelist #7:** Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** Panelist number two, do you wanna chime in on this one, or you wanna take question the next question first?

**Panelist #2:** I'm trying to think if someone said if I have an anything to say that, like, different, I guess. But I would say the most, like, offensive thing that I feel on, like, a daily basis is when it come like, when statements come from the university itself or from professors. I definitely see a lot of professors walking around on campus and, like, throughout campus wearing kefias, and that's pretty upsetting to me just because I feel like, in my opinion, like, professors shouldn't be so, like, over like, overtly political and, like, make these types of statements to their students. And then I've also definitely been to events that are, like, run by my university and, like, by my college that have, like, people get that had speakers that were, like, very problematic and said, not only anti Israel, but definitely things that I've thought were antisemitic. And I've tried to report them, but they haven't really gotten anywhere. So it's definitely frustrating to feel like my university isn't as proactive as I would like it to be. And then I also live, like, on my dorms. I can hear all of the protests that happened, which were also more, like, in the previous semester, but, I definitely can hear the all the protests that are happening, like, loud and clear, and I hear sometimes I think that it's okay. I mean, I definitely think it's okay to protest. I'd like to stand up for, I guess, a group of people, but sometimes I also think that the protests are anti like, very antisemitic. And when they scream things that I feel like are, like, like, genocidal towards, like, Jewish people, I feel very, like, I feel very like, I'm in my dorm, and that's where I and I can still hear these chants, and that's very upsetting to me, because I'm not actively seeking out to be at these protests and at these rallies because, you know, they would upset me.

**Moderator #1:** And you're literally in your home space.

**Panelist #2:** Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** There.

**Panelist #2:** Yes.

**Moderator #1:** So if you think for a moment about the Jewish community broadly construed, how has your relationship with the Jewish communities, community or communities, changed since October seventh? And, you know, reflecting perhaps a bit on why do you think that change has occurred.

**Moderator #1:** And how about panelist number two, do you want to start this time?

**Panelist #2:** Sure. So I'll say that it has definitely strengthened the, it has definitely strengthened, like, the community here, at least that I'm a part of because I feel like it's brought in people from all different like, people that I wouldn't interact with on a day to day basis, people who are, like, similar to me or not so similar to me have definitely felt, like, ostracized by the university. So we've all, like, come together and knew I I know for a fact that, like, two student groups were formed and they've brought a lot of speakers, and there's been a lot of change that's happened in a positive way because of this. In a smaller way, there have definitely been people who, me and my friends consider to be,

**[Q3] Think for a moment about your relationship with Jewish communities, broadly construed. How has your relationship with Jewish communities changed, if at all, since October 7? Why do you think that change has occurred? What do you think caused that change?** (00:28:14 - 00:34:34)

**Panelist #2:** Friends or, I mean, we're part of the same Jewish community, but they've definitely taken a strong stance on the other side, and I definitely feel that divide growing even wider when, you know, we see, like, Jewish students, like, people who I know are Jewish and part of my community, but taking a stand for, what I think is very problematic things.

**Moderator #1:** I'm gonna ask some follow-up questions on that here in a little bit too about the the friend relationships. So thank you for previewing that.

**Moderator #1:** How about for others? How have your relationships with the Jewish communities changed?

**Panelist #1:** I can jump in.

**Panelist #1:** I think, you know, my my relationship with the Jewish community has probably gotten stronger, in a lot of ways because I think there were just various factors, specifically last semester that led to me spending even more time within the Jewish community than I had before, and just finding a lot of comfort and love, like, within the community, and it really feeling like a supportive space on the one hand. And then on the other hand, I think that, you know, the the community here, and I imagine at a lot of other schools as well, is very diverse in terms of viewpoints, and the Jewish community does not all think in one way. And I think that there is there is definitely a distinction between the Zionist community on campus and the Jewish community on campus. And, you know, I I I don't I don't, like, I don't feel like I can speak for every Jewish person at Princeton.

**Panelist #1:** And I think as a result of as a result of, you know, October seventh and everything that followed, the Jewish community also became more fragmented. And people who believe different things and think in different ways and felt that way before October seventh, felt that way to an even greater extent afterwards, which definitely also led to some more tense and uncomfortable interactions within the Jewish community because it can be difficult to, you know, all pray in one room together, on a Friday night and then the next Tuesday be on different sides of, beyond different sides of a protest on campus and still be members of the same community and also have complete ideological, like, differences.

**Panelist #1:** So I think there was there's just simultaneously been, like, a lot of feelings of togetherness and then some feelings of being pulled apart from Jewish peers.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Panelist #7:** Yeah. I mean, it's it's definitely created tension both with, like, Jewish friends and non Jewish friends and, like, just other people that I interact with on a regular basis.

**Panelist #7:** Like, I Princeton has, like, eating clothes, which are just it's like a coed frat that you eat at, basically. It's the best way I could explain it, but, like, it's just a space that I hang around a lot on campus.

**Panelist #7:** And I think certainly at least in the immediate week, based on sort of what some people were saying and posting, it I felt less comfortable being in that space, like, substantially.

**Panelist #7:** There are still people in that space that I try to avoid talking to at all costs because I like, it is just very triggering and, like, not, like it's just I don't I thoroughly do not enjoy being around them, and the fact that they're in the room makes me very uncomfortable.

**Panelist #7:** I think with regard to, like.

**Panelist #7:** And there are also, like, friends that I've reached out to who have posted concerning things and have, like, doubled down on it and has put strain on friendships.

**Panelist #7:** I think there is also one specific friend. This is not actually on this is not college. This is a high school friend that I'm still in contact with, though, where I think, ultimately, my relationship has gotten stronger with him because he initially was sort of, like, really being an asshole about this. But then sort of came around, and we had a very, like, long, heartfelt conversation about it. And now I think we're, like, on better terms than before. So that was sort of a very strange experience, but certainly outweighed by the other number of friends that I have strained relationships with over this.

**Panelist #7:** I think in the Jewish community on campus, again, like panelist number one said, like, it it is definitely, like I think it does feel a little bit in this area specifically, the community feels sort of fragmented on campus.

**Panelist #7:** And, like, there's definitely a lot of disagreement within like, amongst my Jewish peers. And, like, to some extent, I think that that's, like, very healthy. And to some extent, I think that views held that my Jewish peers are not in their own best interest, and that's sort of hard to grapple with, especially because they believe it very strongly, and are sort of feeding into, like, this sort of induced guilt of what is, like, of the war.

**Panelist #7:** And so that has sort of been hard to grasp, and deal with. But, you know, I I again, like, overall, like, the people that were my closest friends are still my closest friends and, like, nothing that, like nothing too detrimental has happened. It's just put a lot of, like, sort of low level strains on relationships.

**Moderator #1:** So I'm gonna bring another question into the mix because we are talking about friends. But if anyone would still like to talk about, their relationship with the Jewish communities, feel free to to loop back at any point, which is how how do your views about Israel or the conflict in Israel and Gaza compare to those of your friends? How closely aligned are your and your friends' views about Israel or the conflict? And how has the conflict affected your relationships with your friends? So your a couple of you have already started to touch on this. I just wanna make the question explicit. What is the impact been on your friendships, and how how aligned are you with your friends?

**[Q5] How do your views about Israel or the conflict in Israel and Gaza compare to those of your friends? How closely aligned are your and your friends' views about Israel or the conflict? How has the conflict affected your relationships with your friends, if at all?**  (00:34:35 - 00:40:29)

**Panelist #3:** I could start.

**Panelist #3:** I would say that, it's about a fifty fifty split for me between being, like, perfectly aligned with friends and then being on the other side, I guess, of things. I'm of the school thought that, like, I'm not gonna let this issue, come in between a friendship unless, like, they're just, like, spreading misinformation, and I feel like it's, like, dangerous. But I, like, respect anyone's opinion and think that, you know, even if I disagree with their opinion, I'll try to, like, engage with them on it. But at the end of the day, like, I'm not gonna lose a friendship over this issue. I think the only example of, like I think there was just one person that I was friendly with that, like, continuously posted things on social media that I just thought were, like, totally inaccurate. And it was, like, every day, so I just, like, unfollowed that person and then just chose not to, like, interact with them anymore. And, like, I know they definitely, like, noticed because they said something to one of my other friends, but it wasn't someone that was, like, super important to my life or, like, they're kinda just like a mutual friend anyway. So that was kinda like the one instance. But, overall, I I really don't let it, in between friendships.

**Moderator #1:** Panelist, far, how about how about for you?

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. I.

**Panelist #4:** Okay. So I don't have, like, any close friends that I very strongly disagree with. But I do have a lot of acquaintances that I follow on Instagram that were posting a lot of things, that I was cognizant about. I don't post on social media.

**Panelist #4:** I didn't long before this and especially not now because.

**Panelist #4:** I don't I would rather that people don't who don't really know me that well not know what opinion I have, just because I feel like that makes it easier for me to navigate the world, if people don't really know.

**Panelist #4:** But, you know, I do have, you know, some friends that I agree with, and I can talk to them about it. But outside of that, I'm, like, afraid to talk about it because most of the it feels pretty overwhelming that people on this campus are are taking, like, a a stance that's opposed to to mine. And in in situations that I can't distance myself from, like, in in classes or in clubs, like, I'm the I'm the vice president of the astronomy club, and some of the other people on the board for the astronomy club, like the president, for example.

**Panelist #4:** I like, sometimes they come to meetings wearing kefias, and I see what they post on Instagram and, you know, trying to maintain that relationship.

**Panelist #4:** Thought in my head, and I am definitely monitoring my speech when I'm around them. I did have an, incidence, I guess, you could say, where I live in a suite with six people, and I went into it only knowing one person.

**Panelist #4:** So we're kind of a group of three pairs who each only went into the suite knowing one other person, and I was talking with my friend in the hallway about the situation, I I wasn't taking much of a stance. I was more so just complaining about the demonstrations because, I feel like the demonstrations are are more of a performative activism than anything else because they aren't raising money to substantially help the Palestinian people in any way. And if anything, I felt like they were kind of diverting funds because these students were getting themselves arrested, diverting money away from the people that actually are in the middle of this conflict?

**Panelist #4:** But then there's these two other girls that are in my suite that I know, are very, like, pro Palestinian, anti Israel because because I see what they post on Instagram. And I think that, like, they overheard me, and then they were telling other people that knew me, like, about this. And, like, it was getting spread about me. Like, oh, she's one of those, like, Zionist. I didn't even say that I was Zionist. I literally just said that I thought that the protests were, like, not an effective means of activism. But it's it's it's like any form of disagreement is, like, automatically. Like, you're either for us or you're against us. And, also, just to quickly loop back to the previous question, I I personally I hadn't worn a star of David, before this conflict, but since it began, I bought one, because, I guess I just felt like, oh, I wanna just, like, show my identity more even though I feel like I'm already kind of visibly Jewish. My sister, who before the conflict was actually kind of anti Israel, and I had fought with her about it before, has actually flipped her opinion on it since then because she's been so surprised by, like, how many people were dismissing the October seventh attack. She also bought a star of David, and I've been going to more hello events than I had previously.

**Moderator #1:** And so your your actual behavior in terms of what you're wearing, where you're going has shifted since October seventh?

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Moderator #1:** Anyone else wanna share reflections on the impact on friendships or communities?

**Moderator #1:** So here's another question. Data from our research suggests that nearly a third.

**[Q4] Data from our research suggests that nearly one-third of non-Jewish students say they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. Why do you think they might believe this? To what extent do you think the opinion is a function of this specific issue vs. a general challenge with being friends with people who see the world differently?** (00:40:29 - 00:50:12)

**Moderator #1:** Of non Jewish students say they would not want to be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. So a third. Why do you think they might believe this?

**Moderator #1:** Panelist,

**Panelist #2:** I I don't know.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah, thank you.

**Panelist #2:** I don't know. I can't say too much, I guess, to why, but I think that a lot of people are which whatever information they're getting and the fact that they're on that, I guess, pro Palestinian or I think that's pro Hamas a little bit, but whatever opinion they're of on that side, I think that they have extremely strong opinions, and they're not willing to hear other viewpoints. I know that I've been to a lot of events where we've really tried to have, like, multiple sides, like, pro Israel, pro Palestinian, speakers and events, and people have been very anti like, there have been protesters who have been very anti us having this dialogue. And there have been people who protested the event, which was just for dialogue, not for one or the other side. So I think that people are very, very one-sided in their views, and it's okay to have a, like, a point of view, but they're not willing to hear the other point of view. And I think that it's become very extreme on our campus, and to the point where people don't wanna be acquaintances or have conversations with people who hold different viewpoints of them. And I think that they also have a very strong, like, moral, like, they think that it's very, like, they I think that they think that Israel is very like, anyone who support Israel.

**Panelist #2:** Is, like, genocidal and has all these and they have a lot of, like, strong words attached to that, and so they wanna distance themselves from that.

**Moderator #1:** To what extent do you think that's a function of this particular topic or a function of just people who have different opinions in general or being friends with people who see the world differently?

**Panelist #2:** I think it's specific to this topic, because I think that.

**Panelist #2:** I think that, with this conflict and the people who are on, I guess, the other side, they're.

**Panelist #2:** To me, when I think of the protesters who are, I guess, like, like, not that I don't agree with. They're every every, like, term that they use is very extreme, and I, like, fundamentally disagree with that.

**Panelist #2:** And I think that that manifests it manifests itself where they don't wanna even associate with anyone who, like, has a different viewpoint. And to them, there's a very big moral component where they think that we're oppressors and we're very for like, we are very morally unjust.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Panelist #1:** I think that there's a strong desire these days and, like, a need that a lot of people are age field to, you know, fit in with the culture in spaces with young people and on college campuses by holding whatever the seemingly wokest majority viewpoint is. And, you know, if you don't hold the woke viewpoint, then you're problematic, then you, you know, are gonna be friends with everyone else. And.

**Panelist #1:** In, you know, in this case, the woke viewpoint has.

**Panelist #1:** Been effectively decided to be a pro Palestinian anti Israel stance.

**Panelist #1:** And.

**Panelist #1:** The knowledge to, you know, have any fully developed feelings, about the war and about the conflict overall. But, you know, you're, oh, like, the the.

**Panelist #1:** Club that also supports, you know, climate.

**Panelist #1:** Climate related issues is those those members are also are also pro Palestine. And therefore, if I wanna if I wanna do this, I also have to do this. And I'm curious how the statistic that you mentioned, the nearly one third statistic, how your how the responses that College Pulse got to that question would have shifted if you'd replaced the word. I I don't know what you said it, pro Israel stance or some what was the term?

**Moderator #1:** Yes. It suggests that nearly one third of non Jewish students.

**Panelist #1:** Yep.

**Moderator #1:** Say they would not want to be friends with someone.

**Panelist #1:** Yep.

**Moderator #1:** Who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state?

**Panelist #1:** Yep. Okay. So I I I'm just curious if what what would what the responses would have been if you replaced the existence of Israel's Jewish state with not one like, Jewish student, period. And I would like to think that you would not have gotten.

**Panelist #1:** Quite as high of a response rate, And I do think that there some cognitive dissonance that exists where people don't necessarily directly make the connection between.

**Panelist #1:** What saying one thing suggests and what saying another thing suggests in the way that they act. And, like, you know, I I find it difficult sometimes when I stand, you know, on the opposing side of a protest with someone who I know quite well, and then I'm in a conversation with them the next day. And they're asking me really, interested questions about my Jewish identity. They're, you know, finding connections between their identity and my identity and truly, like, wanting to engage in these sort of, like, interreligious dialogues. And then we have these super opposing views in other ways that we try to, like, push aside in other conversations. And, like, I in those in those moments, I'm like, this other person does not hate me because I'm Jewish, and I can truly believe that. And then also, do they hate me because I support Israel? And.

**Panelist #1:** What does that mean, and how do I reckon with that sort of distinction, and what am I supposed to believe in this situation?

**Moderator #1:** Yeah. So navigating that dissonance is.

**Panelist #1:** Yeah.

**Moderator #1:** Its own task.

**Panelist #1:** Absolutely.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. What I've been what I've been seeing a lot of is, people saying there's no two sides to genocide.

**Panelist #4:** We can disagree about hairstyles, but we can't disagree about human rights. I I've seen, like, like, people post things like this on social media, like, reposting, like, like, infographics. Like, is that or like, yeah. I can have friends that I disagree with, but not when it comes to human rights. And there I think that there's this conflation with supporting the existence of Israel and supporting everything that Israel has ever done, which seems like that's a big loss of nuance for highly educated people to be making, and yet it's being made. That, if you're Zionist.

**Panelist #4:** Like, really, what it needs to be Zionist is supporting the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. But it's also come to mean supporting every action of the Israeli government and every action of the Israeli military and having no regard for Palestinian freedom or life or wanting to wipe it off the map. And it's just become basically a slur. Like, to be called Zionist is to be called a slur. That's how people are using it. I've even seen the word shortened to zyo. They say, oh, those zyos, which it it's it's just so bizarre. It honestly makes me wanna laugh.

**Panelist #4:** I've even.

**Panelist #4:** Not personally, but, like, I I know that there's I've heard through the grapevine that someone else overheard people talking saying, oh, we're not gonna go to the dining hall with the kosher with the kosher dining hall within it because we wanna avoid all those Zionist Jews.

**Panelist #4:** Like, oh, do you are you not hearing yourself right now, honey?

**Panelist #4:** And and, like, when when last semester, Hillel was having this big Shabbat. It's called mega Shabbat, and the goal was to get a thousand people altogether.

**Panelist #4:** We were they were gonna hold it in, like, on the basketball court, which was, like, big enough. And then, the students for justice in Palestine came out very proud of themselves. We've made the decision not to protest outside of the Shabbat. Like, that shouldn't be a it's a religious it's a religion it's not that wasn't a political thing. It was it it was a it's a religious night, and it's it's just I find myself stunned at how at how they're able to to say these things and not hear themselves speak.

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. Just just honestly stunned that even having an Israeli flag now means, oh, yeah. I think killing babies is good. Like, that's what that's what I think they hear. They see Israeli flag. They think you like killing babies.

**Panelist #4:** Like, no. People people aren't gonna like no.

**Moderator #1:** So for you, that stat, it sounds like you think is in large part due to a gross oversimplification of nuance and position.

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. Yeah. For sure.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Moderator #1:** Any other ads here?

**Moderator #1:** Okay. So this next question is best case scenario, how should the conflict in Gaza be resolved?

**[Q6] Best case scenario, how should the conflict in Gaza be resolved?**  (00:50:15 - 00:58:59)

**Moderator #1:** A big one. Panelist seven that was a great smile. What are you thinking? What comes up for you?

**Panelist #7:** I mean, obviously, like, we're not gonna have an answer for that. I I think anybody who thinks that they have an answer for that is incredibly naive.

**Panelist #7:** I don't think either.

**Panelist #7:** Nor Israeli nor Palestinian leaders have an answer for that.

**Panelist #7:** However, to whatever extent they claim they do, like, I think it's an incredibly loaded and complex issue.

**Panelist #7:** I think that there has been an immense amount of damage done.

**Panelist #7:** Just in in terms of relationships between the two parties, not just in the last five, six months, but, you know, since since inception. Right? Like, this at no point were were relationships good and, like, October seventh and the subsequent conflict that ensued, like, certainly aren't helping matters, but they're just worsening something that was already bad.

**Panelist #7:** So, I mean, to speculate on that, especially as somebody who, like, isn't personally, like, directly involved in it. Like, obviously, what happens in Israel has indirect implications for my life. But at the end of the day, like, I'm American and, you know, I live in New Jersey.

**Panelist #7:** You know, I I certainly think that, like, you can't, like, you can't negotiate with terrorists at the end of the day. And, like, I don't think there will be any sort of resolution with Hamas remaining in power.

**Panelist #7:** I I also don't think that the conflict will ever be resolved with Netanyahu in power, to be quite frank. I think former Israeli prime ministers truly have cared about peace, and Palestinian leaders have never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity to make it. However, I think Netanyahu has sort of really turned his back and just, like, like, banked on enhancing national security for insecurity that I think, to some extent, he's contributed to.

**Panelist #7:** So I don't really think it'll be with him in power. Abbas is on the twenty something year of his four year term. Like, there's just so much corruption in terms of every government involved in this in this conflict that I don't think it's any resolution is possible, with with them in power. And so it's it's a matter of, you know, taking them out of power. And, like, first and foremost, like, let's not compare Netanyahu to Hamas, or Abbas to Hamas. Right? And I think that needs to be dealt with first.

**Panelist #7:** However, I do think that there needs to be some sort of political shift in terms of political leaders, and sort of the primary movement.

**Panelist #7:** To make peace. Because at the end of the day, like, it has to like, to make peace, like, the parties involved have to want it, and want it despite the, you know, the sort of immediate negative impacts to their lives, and the implications of it. So that's sort of my my two cents.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Moderator #1:** Who else has a view on this, about how this conflict should be resolved?

**Panelist #2:** I can just say a little bit to answer a little bit differently. I think that not even talk like, talking about, like, what political things happen, I think that also needs to be a recognition on both sides of, like, we, like, we see your existence and, like, we believe that you guys have a right to exist.

**Panelist #2:** And I think that on both sides, that doesn't exist. So to I guess like, I heard this we had a speaker on campus recently who said that the only way that people can like, the people in that region can coexist is if both sides compromise on their idea of justice. And I think that before anything political even happens, people need to, on both sides, compromise on, like, that idea and also recognize that both people have a right to exist. And that would be, like, the first step to actual peace and coexistence.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you.

**Panelist #4:** Yeah. And, I mean, for me, the the hostages is is pretty.

**Panelist #4:** Central to this discussion. It can't end until there's some resolution to that. Like, having them returned, even the ones that have died, having their bodies returned, at least, they can't just stay missing forever. We don't know. Are they alive? Are they dead? We don't know what's happening.

**Panelist #4:** The idea that people would be would be putting pressure on Israel to come to a resolution that doesn't include the return of the hostages is frankly preposterous.

**Panelist #4:** And I don't think if it was any other two if it was any other country in the world that people would would have that expectation. Like, the US would never be expected to disengage while the people that they were currently engaged with were holding American like, US citizens hostage.

**Panelist #4:** On the other hand, I also wish that, I I I do think that the Israeli military has been doing some things that makes it really hard. It's some things that has been really hard to defend. Some things, like, when they accidentally shot some of the Israeli hostages, for me, that was like, oh god. Why did you do that? It just it feels like it's giving the other side more ammunition, and I just wish that there was a bit more.

**Panelist #4:** Care being taken, because it it makes it harder for the people that want to defend Israel's right to exist when they aren't being careful. And I I hope that whatever resolution comes from this, that there's also humanitarian aid because I I think that, you know, the people in Palestine, they deserve to live. They deserve, to have basic human rights. I I agree with that, and I I I don't want Israel to be giving more immunization to the people that are saying that it's human rights violators and that they they're they don't care about the lives of Palestinians. I want I want the I want Israel to be able to prove them wrong and and to show that they are facilitating this. So.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you. And we have time for one more one more share on this.

**Panelist #3:** I can just voice that concern with the hostages. I think, like, how it should be resolved even though it's there's more nuance than that. This, like, outcome would be unlikely was that, like, you know, all the hostages got released and Hamas was just removed from the situation, and the Palestinians were able to, like, elect a duly elected, like, representative form of government. But, obviously, those are all ideal outcomes that just won't happen. So I guess curious to see how things, you know, unfold over the next few months.

**Moderator #1:** Thank you. Okay. So I can stick around if anyone has questions for me, but that that's the end of our our formal, questions. And just sincere thank you. These insights that you shared will absolutely deepen and bring such important context to our our understanding of how students are thinking about this conflict. So thank you so much for taking the time. In the next twenty four hours, you're going to receive an email, and it's gonna have follow-up information, including instructions on how to receive your incentive and a quick follow-up, just a couple reflection questions if you're willing, Contact information if today's conversation has kicked up any thoughts or feelings that you would like to discuss with someone. So we'll provide all of that in there. And, again, thank you for your participation. You're welcome to exit now or stick around and ask me any questions that might be on your mind. It's a pleasure to meet you all.

**Panelist #3:** I was just curious. What was your name again?

**Moderator #1:** Deb Mashek.

**Panelist #3:** Do you work for College Poles?

**Moderator #1:** Good question. So I am an outside contractor for them, because I do research and focus groups and things like that. So I help out with that.

**Panelist #3:** Got it. Alright.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah.

**Panelist #3:** Cool. Thank.

**Moderator #1:** Yeah.

**Panelist #3:** You very much. It was.

**Moderator #1:** Such.

**Panelist #3:** Great.

**Moderator #1:** A pleasure to meet you. Take care.

**Panelist #3:** Alright. Bye.