Client Project

(Apr 4, 2024 - 6:00am)

**Hi everyone, welcome and thank you for participating today. This focus group is facilitated by College Pulse, a research firm that studies the opinions of college students across the United States. My name is Dr. Deb Mashek; I will be the primary moderator. I will be asking questions, facilitating discussion, and managing our time. The purpose of our conversation today is to learn more about how college students think about the conflict in Israel and Gaza. This focus group is part of a study being conducted by College Pulse in partnership with a research team that studies education. Our call today will last 60 minutes. Due to the time constraint I may need to move us along to the next question at various points, however there will be time for additional comments and questions at the end. We ask that during this focus group you abide by the following ground rules: First, there are no wrong answers to any of the questions, so please share openly about your opinions and experiences. Second, what is said here, stays here. It is critical that we all honor each other’s privacy by holding in confidence everything that is said here today.Finally, please keep in mind that your experiences and perspectives are likely different from those of others. Please be respectful, speak one at a time, and be curious about our differences. If you agree to these three ground rules, please give me a thumbs up. Excellent. Thank you all so much. Before we get started, we would like to remind you that we will be recording this focus group session. By participating, you are consenting to being recorded and for the recordings, including your responses, to be used for research purposes. Your identity will remain confidential, however, if at any time you wish to no longer be recorded, you may leave the focus group by exiting the call. Any questions before we get started? OK, let’s begin! If you’d like me to repeat a question at any point, just let me know.** (00:00:03 - 00:02:57)

**Deb:** I am doctor Deb Masiak. I'm your moderator for today's conversation, and I'll be asking the questions and hopefully moving discussion along and keeping us on time. My goal is to get us out of here by the the top of the hour. So if I need to kinda move us along at some point, I might do that. But other than that, the invitation is to have a a free flowing conversation, all that good stuff. Hey, Participant 2. Welcome.

**Participant 2:** Hello. Thank you.

**Deb:** So the focus group today is facilitated by College Pulse, and as you might know they're a research firm that specializes in understanding the opinions and perspectives of college students across the US. And the purpose of today's conversation is to learn how college students are thinking about the conflict in Israel and Gaza. So this is part of a study being conducted by College Pulse in partnership with a research or sorry, with a yeah. Research this team of researchers focused on education. And, I'm gonna ask that we abide by three ground rules. So let me put those out there, see how you feel about them. And if they feel good, I'll ask for a a thumbs up. The first one is that there are no right or wrong answers.

**Deb:** That and so the invitation there is to share really as openly as you're able to with as much nuance and specificity as you can muster. That way we can really understand how you're thinking about these topics. The second one is that what it says what is said here stays here. I think it's critical, on topics like this that we really respect each other's privacy and confidentiality. And, so anything that happens here today, we'll we'll keep here. And then finally, keep in mind that your experiences and perspectives are likely different from those of others in the room, and so that means we need to listen closely, speak with respect, speak one at a time, and really be curious about those those differences. So if those ground rules feel okay, can I see a thumbs up?

**Deb:** Rocking. Okay. Excellent. Thank you all so much. A reminder that this conversation is being recorded. It'll be used for research purposes only, maintaining your confidentiality and privacy at all times.

**Deb:** If you have any questions before we get started, now is a great time to to ask. Anything on your mind before we jump in?

**Deb:** Okay. Okay. It's totally up to you if at any point you wanna share anything remotely identifying, like the name of your college or anything like that, I won't be asking you about that, so that's totally your call. It's okay to interact with each other, to respond to what somebody else is saying. If you wanna ask a follow-up question of somebody, that's totally a okay too. So with that, let's go ahead and get started. And for this first question, I'm gonna ask that everybody participates just that way we can hear everybody. Let's see. Just gonna click a little button here.

**[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?** (00:02:57 - 00:08:25)

**Deb:** It's simply how do you obtain information about Israel, about the conflict in Gaza and Israel? Do you find yourself actively seeking out information or or passively receiving it? So let's see. Participant 1, may may I start with you? Because you're at the top left part of my screen.

**Participant 1:** Sure.

**Deb:** Thank.

**Participant 1:** Most.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 1:** Of my information kinda just comes from, I guess, word-of-mouth from talking to other people. So I'm not necessarily actively seeking it out myself, but then also, like, scrolling through different social media apps like Instagram or Twitter, is the majority of how I get information regarding basically everything, but specifically also this conflict.

**Deb:** Okay. I'm curious. Are there particular people either who are giving you word-of-mouth information or particular accounts on Instagram, that you find more or less trustworthy?

**Participant 1:** I think, like, hearing stuff from my parents, I trust them a little bit more than just, like, random people I hear on the street type of thing.

**Participant 1:** And then also, I don't think there's I don't follow any specific accounts type of thing on Instagram or Twitter. But when I'm scrolling, sometimes different news pops up or seeing, people, like, reposting infographics about the conflict.

**Deb:** Yeah. Okay. Excellent. Thank you. And, Participant 3, how about for you?

**Participant 3:** Yeah. Very similar thing for me too. There are a lot of students who post on their social media about the conflict, And I do take it kind of with a grain of salt because, I don't really know what to believe much anymore, especially when there's, students a lot of students who might support one side or the other posting things for one side or the other, and you're unsure they might start to contradict themselves.

**Participant 3:** But, I'm someone who has, like, a direct connection to the conflict being from the region. So I hear from family, who are being affected by it, and I take that above anything.

**Deb:** Yeah. This first person reports of their experience over the the.

**Participant 3:** Mhmm.

**Deb:** Person on Insta. Okay.

**Participant 3:** Exactly.

**Deb:** Thank you. And, Participant 4, how about for you?

**Participant 4:** I would have to echo the same ideas. Passively, I I really get my information from my parents and my family, because they're also kinda keeping up with it. But in terms of actively seeking it out, I do also use social media, Instagram, Twitter. People post things a lot. And then I do watch the news, usually or, like, read about news websites, but I don't really find any of that trustworthy. I really only.

**Participant 4:** Take it to kinda get an idea of what's happening, but not as fact.

**Deb:** What are the outlets that you turn to? So whether the when you're when you're watching the news, where do you go? When you say I wanna go read a an article, where do you go?

**Participant 4:** It's hard. I've tried to find ones that aren't as explicitly biased in their reporting. I use Rooters usually, but even then, it's.

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 4:** I take it with a grain of salt.

**Deb:** And how about on the social accounts? Are there any accounts that you particularly like or turn to or trust?

**Participant 4:** None specifically. Most of the stuff I find is through, other people sharing it or it comes up as, like, recommended to me, so none in particular.

**Deb:** Yeah. That makes sense. Okay. Thank you. And, Participant 5, can I ask this? Do you say Participant 5 or Participant 5?

**Participant 5:** It's Participant 5, yep.

**Deb:** Participant 5. Okay. Great. How about for you?

**Participant 5:** I kind of have a different perspective. I try to stay away from, like, social media perspectives about the conflict. Like, if people are posting about it on their Instagram story, I honestly mute because I feel like I wanna have my information from, like, one source or multiple sources that I do trust.

**Participant 5:** I am subscribed to something called the daily skim, which seems reasonably unbiased to me. I get it in my inbox every morning. I I have a lot of my information from there. If I'm interested in, like, a particular topic, I will look it up. And I'm not sure what, like, news sites, I look at for that. I try to find multiple, and, yeah, that's where I find my information.

**Deb:** And so you were saying on Insta, if somebody is sharing hot takes or to, you know, bits or articles that you're you mute choose to mute them.

**Participant 5:** Yeah. I mean, if.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 5:** It's, like like, every day, they're posting a lot about it. I try to kind of keep my Instagram just, like, photos of people, and news in a different area of my life.

**Deb:** Yeah. Yeah. People and puppies. Right?

**Deb:** And Participant 2, how about for you?

**Participant 2:** Yeah. The majority of the information I've received is probably from social media as well, through Instagram largely. I at the beginning, in fact, and after the weeks leading after October seventh, I was checking CNN daily just because it was on my mind a lot. And then the rest of the information I get comes from my friends and family who live in the area. I check-in with them every once in a while, and I get a little updates from them.

**Deb:** Okay, thank you all. So this first, I think, meaty question.

**[Q2] How has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all?** (00:08:25 - 00:18:31)

**Deb:** Is how has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus if at all? What are you noticing? How's it been for you?

**Deb:** And whoever's feeling moved to to share first, please just jump on in.

**Participant 3:** I can go ahead.

**Participant 3:** I am I think so much of it has to do with my identity as, a, like, a Jew and as an Israeli, and also as for like, considering the fact that I am a political science major and a history major, and there's always.

**Participant 3:** There tends to be the group of students in my classes that wanna talk about this conflict.

**Participant 3:** And being at a school that.

**Participant 3:** The student body has very explicitly, made itself known as, pro Palestine, it makes it a little bit.

**Participant 3:** I don't really wanna speak up as much, in fear of just social ostracism or whatever it might be regardless of my opinion on the conflict even if it's not a hundred percent pro Israel, Still just being connected to it through my place of birth is a bit daunting, and intimidating on campus where people are so, like, extremely, pro Palestine.

**Participant 3:** And, yeah, aside from the interruptions that go with protests and stuff like that, that's that's it for me.

**Deb:** I'll just observe that everybody in the room was nodding their head as you were saying that. So thank.

**Participant 3:** I.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 3:** Am. Yep.

**Participant 5:** I have a very situation on my campus. I'm also Jewish and my campus is majority pro Palestine.

**Participant 5:** And I also I I like, that's why I mostly muted Instagram because it's all on one side, and it's not a lot of unbiased information. I'm not sure where the sources are and stuff, but I I'm not, like, one hundred percent on either side, but I do feel scared express expressing my opinion as well just because there's a lot of, like, Jewish hate on campus.

**Participant 5:** And I just feel scared that, like, I will lose friends or something like that if I say what I want.

**Deb:** Participant 5, can you share a little bit about the spaces where that that sense of being scared comes up? So are you talking, like, in classrooms or in the dorm rooms? And also, you mentioned social loss is one of the things you're worried about. I'm wondering if there are other things that you're worried about.

**Participant 5:** Yeah. I would say in classrooms, if we ever get on the topic of the conflict, then I feel scared. And we don't, like, really talk about that much, and I don't I don't think a lot of people share their opinions, but it just makes me feel, like, uncomfortable almost if it is brought up because I'm just scared. Like, I don't know. Someone will be like, oh, she's Jewish. I don't know.

**Participant 5:** But on social media as well I guess when I see things being posted by my like one of my friends about it and I don't necessarily agree, then I would feel too scared to, like, say something as a response.

**Participant 5:** But in terms of, like, other ways that I'm scared, I see I would say it's mainly socially. There hasn't been, like, thank God, like, actual a lot of violence towards Jewish, like, physical violence or anything there, on campus. But it definitely made me feel more scared expressing my identity.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. Building.

**Participant 2:** I.

**Participant 1:** Off that.

**Participant 2:** Sorry.

**Participant 1:** Oh, my bad. You can go,

**Participant 2:** Sorry.

**Participant 1:** Participant 2.

**Participant 2:** You go ahead. You go ahead.

**Deb:** Let's go Participant 1 and then Participant 2. Thank you, guys.

**Participant 1:** Just following up on, Participant 5's point, like, I also haven't endured any, like, physical violence, but I think there's a lot of I don't know if misconceptions are the right word, but, like, my grandparents always call me being like, have you been attacked or anything? Thinking that that's a very, like, widespread and common thing, where I think it's just a couple of individual situations that the media kinda propped up. And now a lot of people think that that's what's going on on every college campus even though that's hasn't been my experience.

**Deb:** Have you noticed any, anything about like, I guess, back to the original question is, has has the conflict affected your campus experience at all?

**Participant 1:** I don't I don't really express my opinion on anything if I'm being honest. Like, I don't express my political views or my views in this, conflict just because I don't think there's much of an upside because no one's gonna, like, rally behind you. They're just gonna get upset if they disagree with you. So I haven't noticed a change, but I think that's more of a personal choice to keep my opinions private, whereas other people who keep their opinions more public might have a different experience.

**Deb:** That makes sense. Thank you. Okay. Participant 2?

**Participant 2:** Yeah. So I've had very similar experiences. My campus is definitely very pro Palestine.

**Participant 2:** And I choose largely to just keep my head down in terms of expressing my opinion, outside of my circle of friends who know what my opinions are. I don't really talk about it, especially in the class context.

**Participant 2:** I don't particularly feel unsafe being Jewish on campus, but there's definitely not room to be moderate about this issue. Either you're pro or against, which has been very frustrating.

**Participant 2:** I spent last summer living in Tel Aviv, and working an internship, and I don't feel comfortable sharing that in public spaces because I don't want criticism or questions about who I support or what I support. I just I don't have the patience for that, and I don't feel safe expressing those opinions. And what Participant 1 said about, family checking in, I feel like my parents are a lot more concerned about me being in danger on campus than I am. It's definitely I I feel welcomed being Jewish on campus. That's never been an issue. But if I were to weigh in on the conflict as my honest opinion, then I definitely would not be as welcomed as I am. And then one other thing that I find interesting, I don't know if you guys your campuses have this yet, but we recently got a social media platform called Fizz, which is this anonymous, posting site. It's kind of like Twitter, but everything posted anonymous. And we got it about a month ago. And ever since then, I've noticed that some people will post more pro Israel things on it because they don't have to worry about being criticized openly for it. And whether or not it's a joke or a serious comment, it's definitely more it feels more open when I log on and I see that. I personally don't post on it because I don't like participating in that, but I do read through the comments from time to time.

**Participant 4:** I would say I've had an overall oh,

**Deb:** Thank.

**Participant 4:** I'm sorry.

**Deb:** You. Oh, no. I was just gonna say thanks to to Participant 2 real quick, but, Participant 4, please jump on in.

**Participant 4:** Overall, I've had a similar experience to a lot of what you guys are saying. My campus is very Jewish. We have, like, a quarter Jewish population or something around there, but it still does feel very pro Palestine. And I think that that is just lack of organization. So, like, back around October, we were having vigils. Like, all the Jewish groups were, organizing together to hold events. But after that point, once it started getting more controversial, I think that that organization kinda left, and there's not really a space to express pro Israel sentiment on my campus at this point. There are, on the other side, a lot of protests for, Palestine constantly. They hold in front of my apartment building. They run laps around it for hours. They meet on campus.

**Participant 4:** There's, like, a Zionist organization that consistently has its meetings vandalized and plastered with pro Palestine posters. So I think it's definitely a hostile environment to express any sort of thrill sentiment, not in a way that you feel physically unsafe, but like a lot of you were saying, definitely social socially ostracized.

**Participant 4:** And in terms of, like, the the treatment of Jewish people, I think that there's just been a lot of antisemitism that's just thinly veiled as anti Zionism. We had a speaker a few months ago that, like, got on a podium and was saying that, you know, Israel's worse than Hitler. And it's just like a lot of, I I would just say, like, insensitive things or things that are meant to elicit a response from Jewish people or dog whistles, things like that.

**Deb:** And I I'm struck by the protest happening right outside of your apartment.

**Deb:** Do do the topics also come up unexpectedly, like, in classrooms, or are are you navigating topics so in your living spaces and in your learning spaces?

**Participant 4:** I would say definitely my classrooms, it's very avoidant. People really try their best not to talk about it because they know that it's a very polarizing issue. So it really hasn't come up in my classes very often.

**Participant 4:** I will say last semester when we had those vigils, my professor was pretty accommodating. She knew that the vigil was the same night, and so she let, some students leave early to attend that. But ever since then, it's not really brought up in the classroom. It's kind of like a taboo.

**Deb:** Okay. That's enter wait say that again it was kind of like a taboo.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Like, people are avoiding it.

**Participant 4:** Absolutely.

**Deb:** K. Thank you. Okay. So this next question and,

**[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?** (00:18:32 - 00:27:31)

**Deb:** Talks about the Jewish communities broadly construed, and a couple of you have already started to touch on this. So I'll just ask the question explicitly, and you can you can build in any way that you like. So 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 seventh? And then why do you think that change has occurred?

**Participant 3:** I can go.

**Participant 3:** I think I noticed immediately after October seventh that, even though I'm not in directly involved in Jewish organizations here on my campus, I'm I feel really close with, like, Jewish communities all over the world, because of the support that they, you know, right when that happened, people are text that I haven't spoken to in years, but I bet, like, in high school or even earlier through Jewish organizations and events that, like, text me. It's like, is your family okay? Are you okay?

**Participant 3:** And I think the Jewish community has done a really good job in, kind of you know, we just talked about people, expressing their opinions on campus and being a bit, like, you know I I would I don't know if scared is the right word, but I can't think of a different word.

**Participant 3:** Because of antisemitic like, the rise in antisemitism. But I think the Jewish communities.

**Participant 3:** Right now have really.

**Participant 3:** The bonds have been strengthened a lot, and, a lot of people have come together and made connections to kind of combat the the hate, you know, with love type thing.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 5:** I honestly think it's kind of divided the Jewish community more than brought them together just because I, at least on my campus, there's like a section of pro Palestinian Jewish people. And then just, honestly, I think if you have no opinion, you're neutral, or you're pro Israel, you're on the other side.

**Participant 5:** And I think it's at least I've seen on, like, social media, it's, like, created just two groups of people. And at least, like, among my friends, it's, like, difficult to connect to the, like, people who are Jewish and super pro Palestinian without seeing the other side at all.

**Deb:** So the sense of division you're seeing on campus as well as on social media, it sounds like?

**Participant 5:** Yeah. I I don't know if I necessarily.

**Participant 5:** Say on campus because,

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 5:** Like, we don't I haven't really had discussions about it.

**Deb:** Okay. Thank you.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I honestly.

**Participant 3:** Yeah. Actually.

**Participant 1:** Haven't my bad. You can go.

**Participant 3:** No. Okay. I'll do it. I just want to add because I I should probably also mention that because there are, like, pro Palestinian Jews that I haven't met on campus but on social media, and, and I know them. And in, like, kind of the sphere of, like, Jewish people who are posing on social media. They are like you know, I hear them kinda shit talking these, like, Jewish students who are pro Palestine, behind their back instead of, like, engaging with them, and, the pro Palestinian Jews being very vocal in their, fuse. I just wanted to say that I I should have mentioned that.

**Deb:** Thank you and Participant 1 what what were you going to add?

**Participant 1:** Yeah. Personally, I haven't really noticed any change, but I think that's also because I kinda steered clear away from the topic. Like, my one friend's girlfriend is from Saudi Arabia, and she has a lot of Palestinian friends. So she's very pro Palestine, and I just kinda try and avoid the topic as much as possible, just to I just don't see the upside in engaging in with anybody on either side just because I think that only bad can come from it. And if I wanna form my opinion, I can talk to, like, people I trust, like, my family. But I don't see a change personally, in my groups or anything of that nature since October seventh.

**Deb:** And so just to dig into that a little bit, the examples you are giving are seem to be about friend groups. And I'm curious if you've noticed change in kinda your sense of relationship with Jewish communities that may or may not include your friend groups.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. No. I don't think.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** There's been any changes.

**Deb:** K. Thank you.

**Participant 4:** I think that in my experience, I've I've always been pretty religious, but I think I've become more culturally Jewish, since October seventh because I think that prior to this, I haven't really considered, like, my connection to Israel very much. But now I feel kind of like a bond almost, so I feel like that's kind of pulling me more culturally Jewish.

**Participant 4:** At the same time, again, like, within the Jewish community as other people have said, there is now, like, a growing divide. Like, you know, on my campus, they just started the Jewish Voices for Peace organization, which is, like, a pro Palestine Jewish organization. And I think that there is a lot of.

**Participant 4:** I'm I'm not sure what word I would say for it, but, pro Israel Jews kinda looked down on pro Palestine Jews and vice versa. And I think that, people kinda put this pressure on Jewish people to come out and declare their views one way or the other so that people know whether, you know, they're good or bad. That makes sense. So I think that the pro Palestine Jews are are definitely a lot more local with their opinions. And, Israel Jews kinda looks like they're just trying to or at least, man, it kinda looks like they're trying to gain favor with other people by doing that.

**Deb:** So two related follow-up questions. There one, you said you're you're feeling more culturally Jewish and that there's a bond there. I'm curious if that has kind of, how that is presenting itself. So if you're what changes you're noticing maybe in your behaviors or your thinking or anything like that. And then the the new group that you mentioned, are you a part of that?

**Participant 4:** So in terms of my cultural Jewishness for the first question, I'm doing my best to go to more of the Jewish organizations, events on campus that aren't just holiday related or religious in nature.

**Participant 4:** And I do have some pretty close Jewish friends that I've been relating to with this. And in terms of your second question, I'm not a part of Jewish Voices for Peace.

**Participant 4:** I think that they've kind of.

**Participant 4:** Tokenized being Jewish as a way to push an agenda, and I I don't really agree with them.

**Deb:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Deb:** Participant 2, how about for you?

**Participant 2:** For me, I guess, I don't feel any more or less connected.

**Participant 2:** I feel like if I wanted to be more connected, I could be, though. When October seventh first happened, the, I'm from Cleveland. The Cleveland Jewish Federation reached out, to a lot of the use that they have in their records, to offer support. My onward group from last year, where they were offering, Zoom calls to catch up and to talk and to provide a safe space for one another.

**Participant 2:** I personally didn't participate just because I it didn't fit into my schedule, between practice and school and everything in between. I didn't have the time. But, I definitely felt supported. I didn't feel like I was alone in it and that if I really needed the support, I could have taken the time to get it.

**Participant 2:** And still to this day, it wasn't just the weeks leading after October seventh. So people, from back home are still talking about it and offering their support. And I I have talked to a few of my friends from the summer about it, and I've I got closer with my family there too over the summer, so I've been talking with them consistently.

**Participant 2:** So, again, I don't feel more or less connected, but I definitely feel like it's there if I need it.

**Deb:** Yeah. That sense of that you could access the part if you wanted to versus having actually access or grabbed onto it. That makes sense. Okay.

**Participant 2:** Yeah.

**Deb:** So this next question is kinda long, and if you would like me to repeat it at any point, just say the word.

**[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?** (00:27:32 - 00:36:48)

**Deb:** 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.

**Deb:** Why do you think they might believe this?

**Participant 4:** I really blame the media.

**Participant 4:** I think that this, kind of portrayal of Israel that they've been running with for months now, I think it relates to a lot of non Jews that they kind of associate Israel with colonization and, oppressive regimes and things like that. And I think that it's not representative of how Israel actually is, but I think that this concept of a genocide is very relatable for a lot of people as, oh, it's unequivocally bad, and you definitely can't defend that.

**Participant 4:** I I just think that there is a lot of biases in what events get reported and what doesn't get reported. And, also, I think the prevalence of, the prominence of, I guess, pro Palestine movements in protests and media and things like that kinda overshadows anybody who's defending the other side. So it kind of pushes itself up as the main idea to agree with. I don't know if that makes sense.

**Deb:** So connect that then for this idea of, like, I would not wanna be friends with somebody.

**Participant 4:** So I think that when people are under the belief that Israel is committing a genocide or that Israel is this evil, oppressive regime, I think that the next step would be, well, it's completely immoral to support that. And if you support that, then I don't think that you have good values. And I don't think that you have, the same morals that I do. So I don't wanna be associated with you.

**Deb:** Yeah. That makes sense. Thank you.

**Participant 2:** I think for me, I think the media often fails to separate the existence of Israeli people from the existence of the Israeli government, because a lot of what I see and what a lot of what I saw when I was there, is very, very, unpopular support of the government, where their weekly protests, they're demonstrates outside my apartment. I went to some of them. I have I know people who are almost arrested at some of the protests or who have friends or family who were actually arrested, arrested. And that it's not the same thing to support if you support the existence of Israel, it doesn't mean that you support Israel's actions.

**Participant 2:** And, also, I think people fail to recognize, how important it is people to have a Jewish state.

**Participant 2:** And for me, I have personal connections where my grandparents fled, Berlin in nineteen thirty nine, and they ended up in Palestine at the time, which then later became Israel. And that's really important to me that they were they they had no home to go back to, and that was they made a home for themselves there. They weren't looking to.

**Participant 2:** Cause a genocide or to kill other people in order to make a home. They just wanted a place to live, and that's what they found.

**Participant 2:** And to me, that's really meaningful. And if I were ever in that position, I would also want a place to go to like that. And I think that's some a narrative that's not very commonly seen and not very commonly talked about, especially in media coverage.

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 1:** Person oh, sorry.

**Deb:** Thank you. No. Participant 1, go ahead.

**Participant 1:** Personally, I don't really wanna, like, I guess, put words into people's mouths because I'm not necessarily capable or qualified to speak to where they get their conclusions from. So I think that should be done on a more case by case basis as to why people have the beliefs that they have. And I think the media might have something to do with it, but I'm not gonna kind of blanketly say that it's the media's fault or it's whatever certain people in positions of power's fault.

**Participant 1:** So, yeah, I'll leave it at that.

**Deb:** Yeah. Have you heard anyone express that view before that they wouldn't wanna be friends with someone who supports the existence of.

**Participant 1:** Not.

**Deb:** Israel as a state?

**Participant 1:** I've heard not necessarily, but I think they would also keep that to themselves and just quietly kind of exit their relationships rather than explicitly say that, which is probably why in an anonymous survey, they're more likely to express that opinion than, say, posting on their Instagram saying, I'll no longer be friends with anyone that supports, or that isn't pro Palestine.

**Deb:** Yeah. Yeah. That public versus private, piece is interesting and also the the silent let the relationship go versus make a big pronouncement is interesting.

**Participant 5:** I think this question kinda has a lot to do with, like, polarization.

**Participant 5:** Because I feel like now people are, like, if you're Jewish, that means you're a Zionist, that means you're, like I mean, I don't I don't necessarily think, like, that equates to, like, conservatism, but I think people think, like, Zionism is equated to conservatism. So then maybe Jewish people are, like, lumped into the same category, which is odd because, like, Jewish people are, like, the most one of the liberal groups in America.

**Participant 5:** But and, like, people equate all of that to, like, badness. So, like, being friends with a person like that, they can't do it because just everyone is just so polarized.

**Deb:** Yeah. And a couple of you are bringing up the the complexity of the language and the lack of distinction or just how everything kinda gets muddled together.

**Deb:** Do you think this is an issue.

**Deb:** This I don't want to be friends with people who believe that is an issue with this topic in particular or any topic where there's a significant difference in worldview?

**Participant 1:** I think it extends beyond just this topic. Like, I know there are definitely people that wouldn't be friends with someone if they had opposite political views from them. I think it's just kinda any polarizing argument.

**Participant 1:** Has seemingly gotten to the point where you can't be friends with someone on the opposite side.

**Participant 1:** And I think the media might have some contributions to that, but there might be other like, maybe the sides are just getting more polarizing on themselves or by themselves because that's a way to kind of gain support and.

**Participant 1:** Work in your own way. Maybe that's a good strategy, and that's why it's also happening. But I think it extends beyond just this topic personally.

**Deb:** What do others think?

**Participant 3:** Yeah. I agree with that. I don't think it's just.

**Participant 3:** I think it's kind of whatever the big thing is in the media, like, the big political event, whether it's, like, an election or this, the conflict.

**Participant 3:** I think it's been a trend now that people tend to take one side or the other with little to no, like, wiggle room in between. And, yeah, and people just may come for each other. And, yeah, I've I've heard of people, you know, like, they don't wanna be friends. Like, I think not wanting to be friends with people with opposite political, like, viewpoint is such a.

**Participant 3:** It's, like, real it's a very real thing.

**Participant 3:** And.

**Participant 3:** Say, yeah, same thing with how it pertains to this conflict.

**Participant 3:** It's not it's not a new thing. I don't think so.

**Participant 4:** I think it's definitely present in other issues. For sure, people I know people who refuse to associate with people on the opposite side of the political spectrum of them. But I do think it's more pronounced with Israel Palestine, and I think that part of the reason is that I think people are typically more outward with their general political views than they are with Israel Palestine. You could typically ascertain who is conservative or liberal or where ish people fall on the political spectrum. But Israel Palestine, I feel like, doesn't necessarily correlate with the typical, you know, conservative liberal, and it's also kind of hard to guess how somebody feels that they're not speaking about it. So I think that when they do find out about it, it's almost like.

**Participant 4:** Like, I guess, shocking or more offensive to people.

**Deb:** And it goes back to what a couple of you were saying at the top about choosing not to express how you're feeling and also that sense of feeling scared of possible loss of social connection if you do.

**Deb:** Okay. So I'm gonna move us on to the next question, which is, how.

**[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?**  (00:36:48 - 00:45:08)

**Deb:** Do your views about Israel or the conflict in Israel and Gaza compare to those of your friends?

**Deb:** How closely aligned are you on your friends' views, and how has the conflict affected your relationships with your friends, if at all?

**Participant 3:** A lot of my friends don't really.

**Participant 3:** At least my friends here at my school.

**Participant 3:** Are either either have the same opinion as me or don't take a stance, or maybe just don't express it outwardly and, like, out of respect.

**Participant 3:** To, I think I think to me and my connection to the conflict.

**Participant 3:** And, yeah, it it being, like, that going on set, I think, is.

**Participant 3:** I don't think it's a bad thing. I don't think it's something that has to be discussed.

**Participant 3:** So sorry. I forgot where I was going. Can you see the question again?

**Deb:** Just how has the conflict affected your relationships with your friends, but also how closely aligned are you? So one of the questions that comes up for me based on what you've shared so far, like, the a friend who might have an opposing belief to yours might be not sharing it out of respect for you. And I'm curious if you've asked about that.

**Deb:** Because it kind of is a a a mirror of what Participant 5 was talking about about not feeling like you would wanna share your perspective.

**Participant 3:** Yeah. No. I haven't, I haven't asked. And, honestly, during this whole time since this conference has begun, I've, like, my discourse about Israel and Palestine general has decreased because, I don't wanna engage in, like, this negativity when on like, honestly, we have so much going on in our lives, most college students, and giving so much more attention to this, like, this the tension that already exists and the conflict that now has begun.

**Participant 3:** Giving attention to this seems like so much of a commitment and but we already have so many.

**Participant 3:** But, yeah, I can I can speak to my friends notice for not sharing, and I never ask because I'd rather just, you know that's happening over there, and I'm here, and I got stuff going on in my life that I need to take care of? So.

**Deb:** Makes sense.

**Participant 5:** I have a similar situation like my friends and I rarely talk about it now at the beginning we did I I think it's because we saw, like, there is, I don't know if your guys' campus has these, but there's, like, missing person posters around, for Israeli people that went missing due to the conflict. And that's what sparked most of the conversations.

**Participant 5:** But despite, like, seeing a lot of pro Palestinian posts on social media, the majority of my friends are kind of confused about the conflict.

**Participant 5:** Or are on, like, both sides or don't know which side to choose, which I kind of relate to because we're just have so much information, and we don't know what's necessarily true or not. But the conversations I have had, they honestly go well. And I think it's it goes well because we're honestly just confused that we can both we can agree with each other in the end or disagree, but it's not we're both kind of like, oh, but I'm not really sure about my opinion.

**Participant 5:** So that's the majority of conversations I've had.

**Deb:** So you could be together in some of the confusion and uncertainty.

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

**Participant 2:** For me, I have similar experience, I guess, where a lot of my friends at school aren't Jewish. A lot of my friends from back home were. And I think because a lot of them aren't Jewish, they don't really have much of a connection to the conflict, so they often turn to me to ask me about my opinions and what I know, which I'm happy to talk about with them, but I also I always tell them I feel bad because what I'm telling them is definitely biased, and I want them to form their own opinions. And I tell them this. They say, like, don't take my word for being the truth. I want you to do your own research and have your own thoughts about it, and I want you to know that, like, I will respect what you think about it. I might not agree with it, but I don't want you to think that I'll think differently about of of you about it because I feel like for a lot of people, that can create tension or unspoken tension, especially with issues as delicate as this.

**Participant 2:** And I had a lot of these conversations in October.

**Participant 2:** Since then, I rarely talk about it with other people on campus or and especially my friends.

**Participant 2:** But I.

**Participant 2:** Am more than happy to talk about it and share my beliefs or opinions or what I know, but I also feel a little bad being the only source of information for some for some people.

**Deb:** And, Participant 2, am I intuiting correctly that you're largely talking about it if somebody approaches you.

**Deb:** To as opposed to you voluntarily saying, let's talk about this thing.

**Participant 2:** Yeah. I almost always it's when someone asked me about it. And I had some people check-in on me after October seventh, so that's what prompted a lot of the conversations.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 4:** I've had a similar experience to a lot of you and that, and most of my friends are either pro Israel or neutral on it. And we don't really talk about it very much anymore. Like, it's not really a big conversation point at this point. But, in terms of, like, my connections with my other friends, I again, it doesn't get brought up very much, but I have lost, some old friends from it because I remember in October, I posted I reposted, like, some informatic on Instagram that was basically just saying I'm always real. And, you know, I received, like, paragraphs and blocks and whatever. And, like, at the time, it was kind of like, wow. I didn't realize people would respond to that, but it honestly hasn't affected me that much beyond that.

**Deb:** Can you share a little bit about what it was like for you in the moment to to get that response?

**Participant 4:** It was surprising. It was, like, a little upsetting, obviously, to have, like, somebody who was an old friend say not nice things to you. But, yeah, at the end of the day, like, I I do understand that this conflict does elicit a lot of strong responses from people. And, like, if she feels that way, then I I don't need her following me or interacting with me. It's fine.

**Deb:** Right. Yeah.

**Participant 1:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Thank.

**Participant 1:** I've.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 1:** Had a similar experience to the rest of the group where I just kind of don't bring it up unless it's asked of me, and it really hasn't been asked of me.

**Participant 1:** That much. But I do kinda see Participant 2's point about people come to you because you're Jewish thinking that you're, like, an aficionado on the subject when I probably know less than most just because I don't take the time to, like, understand this super deep and complicated topic just because I don't necessarily see the value in.

**Participant 1:** Understanding something that doesn't personally affect my life on a daily basis.

**Deb:** Thank you. I'm also struck by how many of you talked about, just over time that that now you're not talking about it as much. That is just it's more in the background. That's interesting. Okay.

**Deb:** Next question.

**Deb:** Best case scenario,

**[Q6] Best case scenario, how should the conflict in Gaza be resolved?**  (00:45:08 - 00:58:06)

**Deb:** How should the conflict in Gaza be resolved?

**Deb:** Big one.

**Participant 3:** Are we talking, like, realistically or just, like, you know, like, perfect world solution? Like, everything goes right that or, like,

**Deb:** Let's.

**Participant 3:** Every.

**Deb:** Start.

**Participant 3:** Time, like.

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 3:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Let's.

**Participant 3:** Got.

**Deb:** Start with your perfect world solution,

**Participant 3:** It.

**Deb:** And then tell me what what how you would have to tailor that for the realistic one.

**Participant 3:** Okay.

**Participant 3:** Sure. Perfect world, then, that'd be really nice.

**Participant 3:** I think just it's like the two this is just kind of like a weird little view that I have. It's actually being, like, Israeli.

**Participant 3:** Is, I think the the territory that is now Israel and Palestine should be a secular state that welcomes.

**Participant 3:** Both, I mean, welcomes everyone, but especially the people who, you know, are involved in the conflict. And, obviously, that's a very big step from, you know, the conflict that we're having. But, if you're talking about withdrawal from the conflict, I think also perfect world that it should be, you know, everyone is.

**Participant 3:** The hostages are returned to Israel.

**Participant 3:** Any innocent civilians on both sides receive aid, not only from.

**Participant 3:** Each of these two nations, but from any other international organizations or any other countries that might wanna come in and help.

**Participant 3:** There is from from what I remember, there was a talk about.

**Participant 3:** Exchange with the hostages, speak to, with the Israeli hostages in Gaza and.

**Participant 3:** Prisoners, in Israel, like, Palestinian prisoners. And I don't think that would be ideal because a lot of these Palestinian prisoners are not good people.

**Participant 3:** So I think that people who you know there should be trials and there's on both sides, and people who have done wrong and harmed others should be punished for that.

**Participant 3:** Like, you know, in proportion of the bad that they spread.

**Participant 3:** But, yeah, just withdrawal and, respect for human rights is kind of like this universal.

**Participant 3:** Principle that both sides can come together on.

**Participant 3:** Yeah. Realistically, I.

**Participant 3:** I don't know. I think it just from, you know, my experience with.

**Participant 3:** These conflicts that happened at my family's, family members who are who have been involved in them and even fought in them, It always just kind of, like there's, like, ebbs and flows kind of.

**Participant 3:** Like, it just kind of these conflicts happen, and then they kind of, you know, slowly, deescalates to the point where people, I think, begin to lose interest, like, not only not in Israel and Palestine, just, like, outside of the world. And it's kind of like, you know, the tensions remain under the surface until it, you know, becomes something else.

**Participant 3:** So I think that might what happened this time.

**Participant 3:** It's just it kinda fades.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I'm not, like, a political scientist or whoever would kind of touch on this thing, but I think, realistically, everything's just gonna kinda go back to how it was before October seventh. Like, I'm sure there's gonna be a lot of bloodshed, but I don't necessarily think meaningful change is gonna happen just because I don't think you can solve.

**Participant 1:** Deep rooted conflicts, like, that quickly no matter how long you occupy. Like, whatever. America was in Afghanistan for seventeen years, and then as soon as they left, it kinda just went exactly back to how it was prior to them being there. So I don't necessarily know what the final thing is gonna be. But in my personal opinion, I think it's just gonna be how it was prior to October seventh, and there will probably be another conflict in due time just because complex problems like these don't really get solved over.

**Participant 1:** Whatever, let's say, a five year war or however long this is gonna end.

**Participant 1:** Up lasting.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 2:** I I don't know if I see an end to the conflict, to be completely honest, a realistic end.

**Participant 2:** And I think, eventually, Israel will pull out from Gaza, and pull the IDF out from Gaza.

**Participant 2:** And I.

**Participant 2:** In my perfect world, Israel would help rebuild some of their infrastructure, ex especially their health care infrastructure. I think that as the dominant.

**Deb:** Inside.

**Participant 2:** Force in the region.

**Deb:** Of inside of Gaza.

**Participant 2:** Inside of Gaza, inside of Gaza, I think as a dominant force in the region, they have a a responsibility to support those people, especially given the complex and lengthy history that they've had between, the two the two peoples.

**Participant 2:** I don't see Israel opening up their border with Gaza, though. I I think about the border that they have with the West Bank, and I can't imagine them having even that border is heavily, restricted and regulated.

**Participant 2:** Relative to other nation nation borders.

**Participant 2:** I would in my perfect world, I think Egypt would step up more, with their border, especially with the Rafa crossing.

**Participant 2:** Because I thinking about the Israelis that I know and hearing public sentiments when I was there, I I don't think Israelis are ready to accept Palestinians on equal terms. There's I I hate saying this, but a lot of the people I met were very racist towards Palestinians, and that is something that that I saw commonly.

**Participant 2:** And I don't think these two groups of people are ready to live together as equals. But.

**Participant 2:** If.

**Participant 2:** If they were to find some mutually agreeable terms to live on, I I also don't come as as going anywhere. And what really frustrates me is when people call for the destruction and the removal of Israel or Israelis. It's it's a nation of eight million people. They're not going anywhere anytime soon, and that's not a realistic solution to this problem. So we have to figure out how to allow for mutual respect and coexistence between the two, and that's something that is easier said than done.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 5:** I think it's hard to remember that this is, like, an actual war. In the history of wars, there's, like, two sides fighting, and often one side wins, the other side loses or is just a conflict that lasts a really, really long time.

**Participant 5:** And so for this, I mean, before the conflict, I thought a two state solution would be ideal. Now I honestly don't know what to believe because I don't know how this will play out, and I think there'll just be, like, conflicts constantly as there has been for multiple.

**Participant 5:** Years. Yeah. But, like, once again, as I was saying, like, this is polarizing. I feel like people will start, like, forgetting about the issue or, like, people already are stop have stopped talking about it.

**Participant 5:** But if a conflict picks up again or something else happens, then, like, the polarization will occur. And if one side wins, however that looks, then.

**Participant 5:** I think, yeah, like all all the, like, discourses on campus and online will start up again.

**Deb:** You mentioned that prior to the conflict, you were thinking, yeah, the two state solution makes.

**Participant 5:** I.

**Deb:** Sense. And can you say a little bit about why you've backed away from that? Kinda.

**Participant 5:** Guess.

**Deb:** What's.

**Participant 5:** I didn't,

**Deb:** Changed for you?

**Participant 5:** Yeah, I guess I didn't know, like, the true, like, like, the deep rooted issues. Like, I thought, like, that would be a possibility, but now that the conflict's begun and I see, like, the just, like, the, like, staunch opinions of both sides, I realized that it's not. There's, like, no way that that can happen.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 4:** I would say that in, like, the perfect world scenario after, you know, the hostages return and the forces pull out of Gaza, I would think that the ideal solution I still support a two state solution, maybe three state. I think that one of the challenges.

**Deb:** Uh-oh.

**Deb:** Participant 4, you just froze for a sec.

**Participant 4:** Sorry. My Wi Fi just turned off. I don't know if you can hear me.

**Deb:** Yeah. Now you're back.

**Participant 4:** Okay.

**Deb:** So you were starting to say the a two state, maybe a three state solution, and then you cut out.

**Participant 4:** I think one of the big challenges is that, Gaza and the West Bank are so far apart, so it's hard to really kinda unite that into one state. But I think that, I think that Palestinians are really seeking a national identity. They can, I guess, go to or say I'm from Palestine, not just now Israel? But I do think I agree with a lot of what other people have been saying where the conflict may never truly end. I think that there's a lot of deep seated biases and hatred on both sides. And I agree that it's not they're not ready for one state where everybody is coexisting happily with no attacks on other side, no, no violence, no hatred. So I do think that a two or three state solution where, you know, everybody's allowed to have their own government, their own space, would be the best solution.

**Deb:** Okay. Well, thank you all. So that was our last question, that I have for you, but I wanted to give you a chance if you have any questions for me or for each other.

**Participant 3:** Yeah. I have a question.

**Participant 3:** Can we is there a way for us to find out what, or how this is gonna be used for research?

**Deb:** Yeah. So we're conducting a total of twelve of these conversations with different student groups over, like, between yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And then, have you taken any psychology research classes?

**Participant 3:** No. That's psychology. No.

**Deb:** Okay. And and I'm sure it happens in other disciplines also, but we'll do what's called qualitative coding where we go through the interviews and look for themes. So as you gathered, this group is comprised of all students who said that they have a Jewish identity. And so some of the groups are all students who said they don't have a Jewish identity. So we'll be looking for how those themes, kind of what different themes people, those groups bubble up around things like how their friendships have been impacted, how their experiences on campus have been impacted.

**Deb:** And this is different from a lot of the research that's out there that's just asking survey questions. So agree, disagree. So we're hoping to get a deeper sense of what y'all are experiencing.

**Participant 3:** Awesome.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 3:** That.

**Deb:** For the question.

**Participant 3:** Sounds pretty cool. Yeah. Yeah.

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Anything on any bit or anything else on your minds, guys?

**Deb:** Okay. So I will say thank you because this is such a deep conversation. I know we could have gone a lot deeper on some of these topics, but, I I guarantee that what you've shared and how you've shared it will absolutely inform our understanding about what this experience has been like for students on college campuses, so a lot of gratitude there. Within the next twenty four hours, you're gonna receive an email from College Pulse that will tell you how to access your incentive. It will also have just a couple, open ended questions. So if anything else is bubbling up for you that you would like to share, please, I invite you to do so. And then if this conversation has bubbled up, any thoughts or or feelings that you would like to discuss with someone, there'll be some resource numbers in there as well. K. So with that, you are free to exit by clicking the little x in the top right hand corner. And I'm gonna stick around for a minute. So if anyone, does have a question for me, you're welcome to stick around as well.

**Deb:** Lovely to meet you all. Have a good day.

**Participant 5:** Bye. Thank.

**Deb:** Bye.

**Participant 5:** You.

**Participant 3:** Thank.

**Participant 2:** Thank you.

**Participant 3:** You.

**Participant 1:** Thank you.

**OK, everyone. That concludes today’s focus group. What questions do you have for me? Thank you so much for your time today. The insights you shared here will really help us understand the views of students on campus. My colleagues and I appreciate your participation. In the next 24 hours, you will receive an email with follow up information, including instructions on how to receive your incentive, a quick followup questionnaire, and contact information if today’s conversation brought up any thoughts or feelings you would like to share with College Pulse. Again, thank you for your participation. You may now exit the call.**  (Not answered)