Client Project

(Apr 5, 2024 - 11:00am)

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

**Deb:** Thank you for taking a a chunk of your Friday afternoon to to have today's conversation. This focus group is facilitated by College Pulse, which you may know is a research firm specializing in understanding the opinions and the experiences of college students in the US. And my name is doctor Deb Mashek. I'm our moderator today. So my job is to ask questions, move the discussion around, and also keep us on time. The purpose of today's conversation is to learn about how y'all are thinking about the conflict in Gaza and Israel. And it's this this piece of the study is being conducted by College Pulse in collaboration with researchers interested in education. And we're gonna take sixty minutes here, and I might need to move us along at some point to get through all the questions, but I'll worry about that. So the invitation there to you is just to to share whatever is coming up for you with as much depth and nuance and sincerity as as you can muster.

(00:01:04 - 00:01:25)

**Deb:** I am gonna propose a couple, kinda guide guidelines for today's conversation. So I'm gonna go through three of them, and then if they feel good, I'll ask for a thumbs up. So the first one is that there are no right or wrong answers to any of these questions. So, again, you know, go in with specificity. Tell me what you're really thinking and feeling.

(00:01:26 - 00:01:58)

**Deb:** Number two, what is said here stays here, that it's really important we honor each other's confidentiality and privacy as a way of making that space where people can share fully. And then number three, keep in mind that your perspectives and experiences likely are different from those of others who are in the room. And so I invite us to to lean in with curiosity about those differences, to be respectful, and to, take take turns speaking. So one person at a time. So if that sounds good, can I get a thumbs up?

(00:01:59 - 00:02:27)

**Deb:** Fantastic. Okay. Thank you all so much. So a reminder that the conversation's being recorded, and I wanna assure you that this recording is used for research purposes only and in a way that totally honors your confidentiality and privacy. But if at any time you're feeling uncomfortable and you no longer wanna be recorded, you can either turn your camera off or you can exit the room. And so that's totally your call. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

(00:02:29 - 00:02:30)

**Deb:** Okay. Excellent.

(00:02:31 - 00:02:40)

**Deb:** I should say that I won't be disclosing the name of your schools or anything like that, but you're welcome to share that if that feels like something you wanna bring into the space.

(00:02:41 - 00:02:54)

**Deb:** And, also, that if you, you know, feel free to interact with each other or build off of something somebody said or ask a follow-up question of somebody just that way it's a a true discussion that I'm all all good with that. Okay?

(00:02:55 - 00:03:06)

**Deb:** Let's see. So this first question and, Participant 1, I'm gonna ask you to answer it first solely because you're at the top left corner of my screen. So, how do you obtain information.

**[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?** (00:03:06 - 00:13:29)

**Deb:** About Israel and the conflict in Israel and Gaza? I'm particularly interested in to what extent do you actively seek out information versus passively receive it.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. So can you hear me?

**Deb:** Yes. Thank you.

**Participant 1:** Okay. Yeah.

**Participant 1:** So I'd say I mean, the first two things that come to mind, which I think is kind of the case for a lot of people, you know, around our age is TikTok and Twitter or and or x, whatever you wanna call it now. But, I mean, I use Twitter every day. It's probably my most used app. So that has really become maybe my number one news source.

**Participant 1:** You know, when if I am seeking out news about things, I'm probably going to Twitter first, to seek out articles and, you know, I'll generally look on, you know, different pages of different news, you know, journalism sources.

**Participant 1:** And then TikTok and, like, YouTube also. I feel like that's where to answer the the second part of your question, that's more where, not necessarily seeking out information, but it's just popping up. Because, obviously, if you're scrolling, things things are just kinda coming up on your screen, and you can't truly control what you're seeing.

**Participant 1:** So beyond that, I would say I don't seek out other information often. I think definitely in relation to everything that's been going on in Gaza on days where there's been big events, things that have happened, I've definitely, you know, gone out on my own to seek out more information where then I'm just using Google to kinda go through and find out more on on news articles and that sort of thing. But when it comes to outside of Twitter and, TikTok, it it's not I I don't I don't seek out much, I would say.

**Deb:** Okay. So I'm curious on Twitter, on TikTok, and I guess on YouTube also if there are particular accounts or creators that you find more trustworthy than others.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. Definitely. I mean, personally, for me, I think I take everything with a grain of salt.

**Participant 1:** I think so. One on Twitter that I feel I get a lot of information from is the Washington Post.

**Participant 1:** On TikTok, the one that comes up a lot for me, which is a lot more right leaning is the Daily Wire, where I'm seeing a lot of that content. You know, CNN, a lot is coming from there as well.

**Participant 1:** So I'd say it's a pretty wide range of sources, and.

**Participant 1:** I I don't wanna say I don't trust any of them, but I just I don't know. I like to try to do my to form my own opinion, I guess, is what I'm trying to say, and take in sources from a couple different cup you know, maybe some more left leaning, more right leaning, and go from there.

**Participant 1:** And just try to really get down to what facts are, not just kind of what taking everything on the service level.

**Deb:** Great. Okay. Thank you. And, Participant 2, how about you?

**Participant 2:** Can you hear me?

**Deb:** Yes. Thank you.

**Participant 2:** So for me, like Participant 1 said, I usually get my information from TikTok, Twitter, like, all the social media platforms that I can think of. Do I think all of it is true? No.

**Participant 2:** I feel like depending on, like, the left and right handed, like, sides, they're gonna have, like, different point of views of, like, different articles and, like, agreeing or disagreeing on different, like, point of views on what they believe in. Like Participant 1 actually pointed out on my for you page, for example, on, TikTok, I've seen the Daily Wire. I've seen.

**Participant 2:** Mostly that and, like, US news, and they were just perpetrate different, like, viewpoints. Do I believe everything I see on there? No. I feel like I have my own opinion, like, around that to have my own view on what's right or wrong. I feel like for me, for, like, where I get my information, I have family, going off, in different countries.

**Participant 2:** And then I have just, like, the basic news. So, like, CNN, BBC. I like looking at that and depicting, like, what's right and wrong within that platform.

**Deb:** Okay. So that, when you go to form your own opinions, which sources would you say are most influential for you?

**Participant 2:** I mostly have CNN as my most influential just because, like, there's different viewpoints. It's not, like, on one-sided view. It's more, like, overall, like, they would interview both sides and stuff like that, and I get to see what's going on in both parties. So Israel Gaza.

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

**Participant 3:** Can you hear me?

**Deb:** I can. Thank you.

**Participant 3:** Okay. I would say majority of my news is from, like, newspapers. So, like, online, like, Economist, New York Times, The Journal, stuff along those lines.

**Participant 3:** I would say in terms of actively versus passively seeking out information, I don't can't say I necessarily, like, dawg my way to read stuff on this conflict, but, like, definitely, I read stuff, like, in, like, the morning brew and it just, like, pops up, like, oh, here's the latest headline. Same thing with, like, you know, The Economist does, like, a daily newsletter. Like, when it just pops up, I'll read it. But I, again, don't really actively go out to look for it, but I definitely it's in the news, so I read about it.

**Deb:** Okay. Yeah. So when it comes across the radar, then you'll.

**Participant 3:** Yeah. Exactly.

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

**Participant 4:** Yeah. Can you hear me?

**Deb:** Yeah. You sound great. Thank you.

**Participant 4:** I don't have really any social media accounts, and I would say that the main way I consume news is through.

**Participant 4:** Morning Newsletter.

**Participant 4:** So every morning, I get in my inbox their email that has, like, an opening.

**Participant 4:** Cover of a descript like, description of a certain topic, whatever covering that day, which is sometimes the one, sometimes other things. And then there will kinda be, like, different sections and frequently there's, like, the section on is the home war. It'll have a few headlines there. And so I would say I read that every day and then I, I wouldn't say I click into articles every day, but at least a few times a week, I click into an article.

**Participant 4:** To kind of read more about it.

**Participant 4:** And, otherwise, I very occasionally get articles. For example, most of my family members might send an article to me, but, I'm in, a kind of reading group type class on the conflict this semester. So I sometimes also kind of, get information from my peers.

**Participant 4:** And that we try to have it based, like, in, for example, a new source or an article. But I also think when I read articles, I read them through the lens of, like, what I am learning alongside my peers.

**Deb:** Okay. And the you said it was a class where the reading group is structured as part of the class, and you.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Guys share articles? Okay.

**Participant 4:** Well, it's a.

**Participant 4:** It's a one credit class where we meet every other week, and we discuss chapters of a book called enemies and neighbors, Arabs and Jews in Palestine.

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

**Participant 4:** And Israel.

**Participant 5:** So.

**Participant 4:** Nineteen seventeen.

**Participant 5:** For me,

**Participant 4:** To twenty.

**Participant 5:** I'd.

**Participant 4:** Seventeen.

**Participant 5:** Say I find that most.

**Participant 4:** And so I think those are the peers that.

**Participant 4:** But I think in it it's intentional in the class that the things that you say are grounded in a source, whether it be the book or, like, a news article from a reputable source.

**Deb:** Great. Okay. And we're gonna talk about, in a minute a little bit more about your campus experiences too. So, Participant 5, how about for you on the information consumption?

**Participant 5:** Off of Twitter and Instagram. I don't really use TikTok that much. But usually when I'm scrolling on Instagram, sometimes they'll have, like, really graphic stuff come up. Like, I don't really have any filters on for that. So I don't like going to Instagram for my news just because it's mostly.

**Participant 5:** So I'd say probably my favorite for finding news would be through Twitter because it links to articles directly. It's, like, easy to click through.

**Participant 5:** As far as, like, sources that I usually gravitate towards, it's usually like the BBC because I like that's not American. So it feels like British people might have a different, like, viewpoint on it versus America. We have a lot of, like, APAC funding, that kind of stuff. So I think it's interesting to see sources from different countries, not necessarily American.

**Participant 5:** But also, like, the New York Times, they have the section with, like, news headlines for the day. If there's something big happening, usually, they'll be updated there very clearly. You know, it'll give you big headline. You kinda know what's going on. So, yeah, I'd say that's primarily.

**Deb:** And.

**Participant 5:** Where.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 5:** I got.

**Deb:** Mentioned.

**Participant 5:** My.

**Deb:** BBC.

**Deb:** Oh, sorry. I jumped in. You mentioned BBC and New York Times. Are those.

**Deb:** When you see their feeds coming through Twitter, you're responding, or are those something you're seeking out separate from Twitter?

**Participant 5:** New York Times is through the app. Like, I have the subscription.

**Deb:** Uh-oh.

**Participant 5:** Through my school. Is it not working?

**Deb:** I I think there's just a little delay, so I thought I couldn't hear you, but then I could hear you. So I'll just be more patient.

**Participant 5:** Okay. Sorry. My connection is probably pretty bad. But, yeah, New York Times, I seek out on the app specifically, but BBC is normally the kind of thing where I'm kind of scrolling through Twitter, and it'll just be from somebody I follow or just recommended for me.

**Deb:** Okay. Great. Thank you.

**Deb:** So starting to touch on.

**[Q2] How has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all?** (00:13:29 - 00:29:26)

**Deb:** Participant 4, something you were bringing up, how has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all? So Participant 4 started to bring up an example of a classroom based.

**Deb:** Experience, but I'm sure there are lots of others. So so fill me in. How's your experience been touched by this?

**Deb:** And whoever wants to jump in is welcome too.

**Participant 1:** I can jump in just because to keep it in order.

**Participant 1:** So, yeah, I.

**Participant 1:** So I guess I don't mind sharing where I go to school. I go to I go to UMass Amherst. So I'm in Massachusetts. And, you know, I feel like last semester, there was a lot in the news across the country of a lot of different campuses, a lot of protests. You know, there was some that were more peaceful than others. There's some where some there was some problems that came up. And UMass was definitely in the news for for similar things like that.

**Participant 1:** And, really yeah. Last semester, basically, there was a lot of protests on campus. They were pretty large, protesting protesting Israel's actions.

**Participant 1:** In Palestine. And.

**Participant 1:** I would say.

**Participant 1:** The I mean, really, the the main impact it had was I don't know. Last semester, I definitely felt, like, a little uncomfortable being on campus around those protests, walking past them and just kind of feeling, you know, just a little uneasy about what was going on. To kinda combat that, I ended up meeting.

**Participant 1:** I I work in an on campus job here, and in the, it's in our career center. And in our career center, I ended up meeting weekly a few times with one of our, career coaches who is is Jewish and is a big part of the, Jewish community here on campus. And he would kinda host office hours with students to kinda talk about what we were feeling and talk about potential solutions and ways to outreach to the rest of the community.

**Participant 1:** So that was really the extent of how kinda how it affected me on on campus, I would say.

**Deb:** Yeah. You used two words, uneasy and uncomfortable. I'm wondering if you can go into those a little bit more.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I mean, I wouldn't you know, by no means was I.

**Participant 1:** Intentionally threatened in any way. Nobody came up to me. Nobody.

**Participant 1:** But I just felt that, I guess, you know, I don't think that everybody that may lean more to the side of Palestine.

**Participant 1:** Has any sort of negative feelings toward Jewish people or any form of antisemitism, but I think that that is very present, in in a lot of cases. So and especially with what was going on. I believe there in in this there's a small school in New York where there was there was some somewhat violent protests. So with just all that stuff going on, it definitely felt a little uncomfortable not knowing kinda what what this particular crowd might be feeling or what might come of this protest.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. So, that it was just a general sort of uneasiness, sort of a little bit feeling like, you know, like I didn't belong as much as I would normally feel.

**Deb:** You did belong on the campus?

**Participant 1:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I'd when those protests were going on, that that was the only time I've been here, and I've been like.

**Participant 1:** You know, I feel like some of these people may not want me here. They may just have negative feelings toward me in general. And, you know, I can't speak to whether that's true or not, but that's just kinda how it made me feel. So I I I felt that way,

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 1:** During during those protests, definitely.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Deb:** How about others?

**Participant 3:** Yeah. I can sort of echo those feelings of Participant 1. I would definitely say, like, again, not directed at me, but,

**Participant 1:** Okay.

**Participant 3:** Like, just antisemitism in general. This is by far the most I've ever faced in my life or, like, you know, as a community we've faced, I would say on my campus.

**Participant 3:** Like, I know, like, even just this past month, our, like, had, like, a swastika drawn on the outside. It was like swastika equals.

**Participant 3:** Earlier this year, a hockey player got caught drawing swastikas in our it was our Chabad house. Like, it was it's been really bad. And, like, even stuff, like, our central student government recently had an election, and a party called divest now. Or I I go to the University of Michigan. We invest in or, like, we're invested in Israel as part of our, like, fund.

**Participant 3:** And this is a huge, part of the student body that's advocating very strongly to divest from Israel just because of the ongoing conflict. Our board has essentially said, like, we're not divesting. We don't really care about politics. Whatever. So they've just said no. Essentially, then, central student government platform came out as divest now. We're gonna shut down all student central student government activities until, the university divests. So they, like, won the presidency. They won, like, basically, the entire, like, suite of central student government roles. And it was just kind of, I guess, shocking to me because it's like, oh, people, like, are actually backing this point of view really just, you know, because before it's like you see groups and, like, I understand, like, the right to, protest, the right to share your point of view, and all that stuff. But then it's like, oh, there's a, you know, majority I mean, for those that voted, the majority of the population said, like, hey. Like, we we don't support Israel, we don't support, like, you know, the Jewish state, I guess. So it's been an interesting dynamic and especially very, very active these past few weeks and just, like, developments, I guess, in our local community.

**Deb:** What does that felt like for you? So you used the word shocking, but I'm curious, like,

**Participant 3:** Yeah.

**Deb:** What's the experience of it?

**Participant 3:** Honestly, I'm not too too involved in, like, the Jewish community on campus.

**Participant 3:** So I would say just, like, you know, knowing my home, knowing, like, my religion. Like, it's been sort of, I guess, hurtful in a sense. Really just, again, like, the unwelcoming idea of, like, being like, oh, maybe, like, I'm not wanted here. Like, it's just been a very interesting dynamic of sort of thinking we were past that point in society, but I'm being like, no. We never really are.

**Participant 3:** I think that's been my main takeaway is, like, I really do, like, have to be careful where I go. I have you know, you sort of have to be conscious of things I didn't really think I had to be conscious of anymore in this day and age.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 1:** One quick thing that, Participant 3 reminded me of, just about the Hillel, is we've had, like, two pretty much, we've had one or two cop cars stationed outside our Hillel since the protest last semester, which I'm not really involved with the Hillel, but it's just I drive by there all the time, and it's something I've noticed. And I'm sure the students that live there are still probably feeling pretty uneasy, and they are they still have a police detail there, I I believe,

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** Twenty four seven.

**Deb:** Okay. That's a good.

**Participant 2:** I.

**Deb:** Example of omnipresence. Yeah. How about Participant 2, Participant 4, Participant 5?

**Participant 2:** I was actually gonna jump in.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 2:** So I go to Brooklyn College, and, the neighborhood is predominantly Jewish. And we also have a Hillel bill building. And lately, I've been seeing less people come in. I feel like it's the safety. They're not seen as, like, wanted. I go occasionally just for, like, small events, and I noticed, like, the group the groups have become smaller. They start to advocate.

**Participant 2:** Protests, we have, for the past couple weeks, like, stand, walkout, and protest, and I've seen a lot of, Palestine protests going on.

**Participant 2:** And I believe the beginning of the fall semester, we had a protest between both Israel and Palestine. A lot of them are pro Palestine, like, I've noticed. There was a small gathering of pro Israel, and, there isn't much of a, like, I guess, debate over it. And for me personally, I felt unsafe there just because, like, I didn't.

**Deb:** At the.

**Participant 2:** Know.

**Deb:** Protest.

**Participant 2:** Yeah. Because a lot of the protests are harmful. Like, people get attacked. And for, like, my safety and others around me, I felt unsafe about it. And, yeah. So I also I'm I don't mind sharing, but I'm Jewish. So, a lot of people would ask, oh, what's your religion? And sometimes lately, I would I don't wanna share what my religion is because I'm always afraid that I'm gonna get attacked because of everything that's going on. And I've seen that lately, because of, like, the protest that's going around in the school and outside the area where I go, where everything's, like, shaken up and everything like that.

**Deb:** And I'm curious that sense of feeling unsafe. The attacks that you know about, have those happened on your campus?

**Participant 2:** Some of them, like, outside of campus. We have, like, the public safety, of course, but, like, outside of the gates or a a block away from campus, I've seen attacks. And, I don't mind sharing this, but I also got permission, from a family friend to kinda share about this, but he I believe a year ago or two years ago, he got attacked because he was wearing an IDF, sweater. And he got attacked, punched in the face, robbed because he was wearing that sweatshirt. And, like, the guy was like, the guy who attacked him, he attacked him because, oh, you're Jewish.

**Participant 2:** You you shouldn't be here and stuff like that. And, of course, he's a family friend of mine. So when I heard about that, I was like, what's going on in this world? I thought that we're supposed to be connected, not we're supposed to be at war with each other or against what we believe in. We should be kinda connected. Even if we disagree on two different parts, we shouldn't be taking it out on others.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 2:** And stuff like that.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Deb:** Participant 4 or Participant 5?

**Participant 4:** Yeah. I can, I can jump in? I I wanted to ask a clarifying question of if you were talking about this semester of the whole year.

**Deb:** Yeah. Thank you. I would say just since October seventh. Like, what's the what's the impact been on your campus experience?

**Participant 4:** Yeah. So, I was abroad last semester. I was in Santiago, Chile, when October seventh happened. And.

**Participant 4:** And so.

**Participant 4:** When, like, when when this event like, when this first happened, I heard about it on the news, and, you know, I would hear things on the Chilean news, but was not on campus.

**Participant 4:** And I, one thing that happened at the I I knew that there were a lot of tensions on campus, talking to friends and talking.

**Participant 4:** And kind of.

**Participant 4:** Receiving emails about various things because I was still on my school's email list.

**Participant 4:** And.

**Participant 4:** I think one of the first things that happened last semester that I remember very prominently was that I received an email in my inbox. I go to Emory University, and our president sent an email saying there was a protest on campus, and it was terrible, and we condemned this. But was unspecific about what specifically had, like, what had happened.

**Participant 4:** And I was.

**Participant 4:** He kind of alleged that there had been, you know, anti Semitic statements, which concerned me as a Jewish student, but nothing was specified. And then, when I went and asked.

**Participant 4:** Like, tried to get more information, I would say that a lot of people on campus felt that he mischaracterized those events.

**Participant 4:** And so I felt, like, at first, I was nervous because I was like, what's happening on campus? And then I felt like the president had used his, like, position of authority to kind of put a certain narrative. And I know that both students and staff were, like, pretty upset about this, but I it was very good that I, like, heard it from abroad.

**Participant 4:** So, anyway, I'm back on campus this semester, and I think that from my knowledge, I think that tensions have dissipated and lessened, from what they were last semester, from what other people have told me. There are still protests. There will be both, like, kind of protests and counter protests, and.

**Participant 4:** I feel, like, fine about them. It's like I know that's something that's happening. I'll see the post is cool. There's, like, Emery is, like, sixteen percent Jewish. There's a lot of Jewish students on campus.

**Participant 4:** And I would say that.

**Participant 4:** I have put myself in, like, classes like this one or, like, a discussion group to try to learn more about what's happening, and I put myself in environments that are kind of at least trying to be intentionally generative about, like, thinking through what's happening and recognizing different perspectives. And they're more about, like, learning environments of trying to learn more about the conflict and its origins.

**Participant 4:** And so, yeah, I think that I've just really trying to kind of been more of an observer on my campus and trying to, like, see what's happening and see how other people are feeling. And.

**Participant 4:** I know.

**Participant 4:** And I think I have I don't know. Friends with just pretty varied experiences. I know that a lot of my friends who have protested in favor of Palestine have felt like they needed to wear masks at protests out of fear of, like, being photographed and having their photographs disseminated.

**Participant 4:** And I was never really that engaged with Hillel, and I don't really and I'm still not and I, I don't engage with Hillel because I don't agree with its views on Israel.

**Participant 4:** But there is some programming or I'm still trying to connect with the Jewish community.

**Participant 4:** And so, yeah, I'm trying to navigate that.

**Deb:** Okay. I'm gonna use that as a segue to ask about the Jewish communities. But, Participant 5, if you wanna talk about the campus experience at any point, feel free to to add there too.

**Deb:** So think for a moment about your relationship with the Jewish communities.

**[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?** (00:29:27 - 00:43:23)

**Deb:** 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? And, Participant 5, I'm gonna start with you this time if you're okay with that.

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

**Participant 5:** So I would say since October seventh, I've become more diligent about attending Shabbat dinner. Like, in general, we have I go to Brandeis, so we have the highest percentage of Jews, like, on a campus that isn't a Yeshiva school. So there's, like, a lot of Jews here. It's more than fifty percent of our school even though we're, like, a secular school. So Chabad is, like, a big party basically every week. There's a few hundred people every week, and I didn't used to go. I, like, didn't prioritize it. But now the other, like, fifty percent of our population is pretty so we have, like, a lot of tension on campus.

**Participant 5:** It's it's pretty intense here, I would say. We had, like, six students arrested last semester for protesting after October seventh. Like, they were tackled on the great lawn. Like, it was all videoed, all of that. Just a mess kind of. And I wanted to show my support to the Jewish community by going to dinner every week and, like, making sure to support the Chabad house and all of that. So I would say.

**Participant 5:** I have started participating more in Jewish life because I feel like I need to support the people around me because there should've been so much tension on campus. There's really no way to have a civil conversation. There's been tons of talks sponsored by the school. They've changed their policies on hate speech as well. There's been, like, attempts to fix it. But as far as I can tell, there is no, like, reconciliation to be had here. There is a lot of arguing kind of all the time on campus, like, even with teachers and stuff.

**Participant 5:** I.

**Deb:** Say.

**Participant 5:** Don't.

**Deb:** More.

**Participant 5:** Know.

**Deb:** About that with teachers. Like, how are your faculty involved?

**Participant 5:** We have our, like, new what's it called? Near Eastern Jewish studies. We have a department that deals mostly in Israel studies, but also Middle Eastern studies. And I don't think there's been tenure taken away yet, but some professors' Twitter accounts were, like, found by students, and they were very pro Palestine. And the university is very much pro Israel. So there's been, like, statements made about professors, like, from the head of our school just, like, condemning their speech outside of school. So.

**Participant 5:** I don't know. I haven't heard anything like that happening before, like a president of a school directly addressing professors that work at the institution that they head and, like, condemning what they say.

**Participant 5:** It's just very odd. I don't know. I feel like it's their personal lives. It's their Twitter account. Not that they were necessarily not saying it in class as well. I wasn't in their classes. But.

**Deb:** Yeah. And I I heard you say that your participation your increased participation in Shabbat dinners and whatnot is coming from a desire.

**Deb:** To to support.

**Deb:** The the Jewish students. Have you noticed other kinda changes in your sense of connection with the Jewish communities?

**Participant 5:** I guess so. I joined the fellowship this semester. So we talk about the Israel Palestine conflict. It's sponsored through Hillel. Every other student was Jewish and everyone was pro Israel, so I wouldn't say I got some very, I don't know, there wasn't really a perspective I hadn't heard in there before. But I would say that other people also participate more. Specifically, since October seventh, we didn't even used to have two COLL Israel, like, fellowships, but now there's two offered this semester.

**Participant 5:** Like, that kind of thing. Just the university's Hillel has been very, very active in making sure that there are, like, opportunities for Jewish students.

**Participant 5:** So I'd say everybody else has kind of had the same thoughts as me,

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 5:** And Shabbats are very busy now.

**Deb:** Okay. I'm curious if somebody else in the room has a kind of a different experience there.

**Participant 3:** I would say my, sorry.

**Deb:** We'll do.

**Participant 3:** Not videoing.

**Participant 4:** Go.

**Deb:** That's okay.

**Participant 4:** Ahead, Participant 3.

**Deb:** We we could do Participant 3, then I'll come back to Participant 4. Thank you both.

**Participant 3:** Okay. I was gonna say I was just my experience has been relatively the same. I have never really been too active in my, like, on campus, Jewish organizations or Jewish community, and I'm still not too active.

**Participant 3:** You know, I would say I went to a Shiva, like, you know, right after it, after October seventh. But, like, besides that, I really haven't increased my engagement at all. And I think I think I had noticed this before. Like, I don't necessarily agree with, like, Halal's viewpoint and some of, like, the different organizations on campus' viewpoints on the conflict, which I think might be one of the reasons that I don't really engage too much in, the Jewish activities on campus.

**Participant 3:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Have.

**Participant 3:** I think.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 3:** That's.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 3:** Yep.

**Deb:** Have you noticed any changes in your religious practice?

**Participant 3:** Not really. I mean, I still am proud to be Jewish, and I still practice the holidays and stuff like that, but it's remained consistent. Not more, not less, I would say.

**Deb:** Okay Thank you. And, Participant 4, what would you like to add here?

**Participant 4:** Yeah. I would say that before October seventh, I was definitely, like, having questions about my own Judaism. Not that I was questioning, like, I am Jewish. I will say Jewish. But kind of questioning my relationship to Judaism and what that meant. And I would say that after October seventh, I felt more alienated.

**Participant 4:** From my Judaism because.

**Participant 4:** My understanding of Judaism and, like, what it means to me is not reflected in, like, supporting Israel, let's say.

**Participant 4:** And.

**Participant 4:** I felt kind of, like, unsure with where that put me.

**Participant 4:** And.

**Participant 4:** My nuclear and extended family, both sides are Jewish and, Yeah. I think I don't know. Some people are having more questions, some people are not.

**Participant 4:** And.

**Participant 4:** I.

**Participant 4:** There's an there's a program in my Hilo Hilo called Torah queries. That's like reading the Torah through a queer lens.

**Participant 4:** And so I was still attending those thinking about, you know, reconciling, like, my queerness and my Judaism.

**Participant 4:** But.

**Participant 4:** I think that I have, like, heard from friends that, like, there are other Jews who have similar opinions to me, but I think there's not necessarily, like, a space for us to come together.

**Participant 4:** Yeah. And.

**Deb:** So you used the word alienated, and I'm wondering if you can go.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** And you started to bring up maybe what some of the views are that have felt particularly alienating. And I'm wondering if you can go into that a little bit more if you're comfortable doing so.

**Participant 4:** Yeah. I just think, like, tying.

**Participant 4:** Judaism.

**Participant 4:** To a support of Israel.

**Participant 4:** Is challenging for me when at the moment, I can't say that I support Israel because I think it's perpetuating a humanitarian crisis and, like, killing thirty thousand people. And.

**Participant 4:** I feel like that goes really against.

**Participant 4:** All of, like, my beliefs of, like, even just, like, valuing human life.

**Participant 4:** And.

**Participant 4:** I think that, like, the more I've engaged this semester with, like, different views, I kind of feel like I've become more familiar. I I've, like, intentionally put myself in spaces where there are differing views. Like, this class has people that are, like, pretty pro Israel and pretty pro Palestine. So I, like and there's also, a discussion group that was convened by two professors, one Muslim and one, Jewish professor. And, like, half the students are Jewish and half the students are Muslim.

**Participant 4:** Yeah. But I guess I do feel like maybe more people than what the simplified division, like, makes it seem like kind of have the questions about.

**Participant 4:** Different things.

**Deb:** Yeah. Thank you for going into that.

**Deb:** How about for others?

**Participant 1:** Yeah. So I can jump in. So just to clarify, we still just kinda talking about the original question of, like, how, how it, the conflict has changed our relationship with the Jewish community on.

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 1:** Campus?

**Deb:** Kinda what to well, yeah. And not necessarily on campus. So it.

**Participant 1:** Okay.

**Deb:** Can be.

**Participant 1:** Or in.

**Deb:** Communities.

**Participant 1:** General.

**Deb:** Broadly.

**Participant 1:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Construed, and then if you've noticed changes for yourself.

**Participant 1:** Yeah.

**Deb:** To what you attribute them.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I just wanted to make sure we hadn't kinda segued there.

**Deb:** Yeah. No. Thank you.

**Participant 1:** But, yeah, I can definitely speak to that a little bit.

**Participant 1:** So I would say, first, to kinda talk about.

**Participant 1:** On campus.

**Participant 1:** As I mentioned before, I'm not super or I haven't been super involved with, the Hillel or.

**Participant 1:** Some of the other Jewish organizations on campus. The the main one that I have been involved in is an organization called Jewish Leaders in Business, where I've met a lot of my Jewish friends here on on campus, and that's been a really rewarding experience for me.

**Participant 1:** So it definitely hasn't changed my behavior in regarding regarding that, that club. So, like, I still go to those meetings and all that stuff.

**Participant 1:** I'd say the one behavior it did change was another thing that I kinda mentioned already, which is where I started meeting with a professor that I had a good relationship with, where he was kinda holding office hours to just kinda have conversations with Jewish students. And I was just, you know, kinda look to that as a place to get some feelings out, but also, hopefully, kinda have productive conversations and find some sort of solutions to help Jewish students on campus.

**Participant 1:** Outside of those things, I would say it's definitely caused a lot of a lot of emotions in my family. And I think that my family in general is a lot more and my Jewish friends, are kind of a lot more in tune with what's going on.

**Participant 1:** I would say in both of the in within my family and my friends, people have certainly been reaching out a little more. Especially after October seventh, people were reaching out to, you know, just check-in on others, see how they were doing mentally. You know? I think everybody.

**Participant 1:** Or for the most part has some sort of connection that goes back to people that are in Israel or, you know, have come from there.

**Participant 1:** So just really checking in on how everybody's feeling and, yeah, what what's kinda going through people's heads. I I I think there's definitely been an increase in that.

**Deb:** Okay. And so you were talking about specific behaviors. I'm curious to if you've noticed a change in kind of your own sense of connection.

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I I wouldn't say there's been much of a change. I think kinda like other people have mentioned, I think there's definitely been some, kind of self reflection about what Judaism means to me and how that pertains to the relationship to Israel. I would say there's definitely been a little bit of that. But as for my feelings about being Jewish and, you know, just, yeah, my my religion and my culture, I I wouldn't say there's been any, any change there.

**Deb:** Great. Thank you. Participant 2.

**Participant 2:** I feel like, I I forgot who mentioned it, but it's like we have a lot of organizations here, like Jewish organizations, and I just feel like it's been going down. Like, not a lot of people are, participating in it.

**Participant 2:** Like what Participant 1 mentioned, like, a lot of people have been communicating more with, like, their family. I have family that are in Israel. They were able to escape, and, like, get to a safe spot. And, like, we're able to kinda connect back with them. It's like, we gotta make sure that everyone is safe. We don't want any harm to people.

**Participant 2:** And I feel like at the end of the day, like, we have the two different views, but we can't just, like, view someone differently based on what they believe in.

**Deb:** Yeah. Thank you.

**Deb:** So I'm gonna skip around a little bit. I'm gonna jump to the last question to make sure we have time for it, and then there's some other things we can loop back up to. Best case scenario, how should the conflict and Gaza be resolved?

**[Q6] Best case scenario, how should the conflict in Gaza be resolved?**  (00:43:39 - 00:53:21)

**Deb:** A big question for a Friday. Right?

**Participant 1:** I was kinda wondering if this was gonna get asked coming into it, and I'm like, my all I could think was, you know, that's a really tough question to answer.

**Participant 1:** And, I mean, I think the obvious an I don't know. I I personally feel like the obvious answer for me is that.

**Participant 1:** The the two groups would be able to coexist in.

**Participant 1:** And, I guess, really, what that comes down to is what that looks like from, is it an Israeli state, or is it a Palestinian state? Is there two separated states?

**Participant 1:** But, I guess, an agreement between both sides where.

**Participant 1:** The two the two groups coexisting is possible. I I guess that's really all I can say from from my perspective is is the best possible scenario, and there's there would be a lot of work to get to that place. And I don't think I can really speak to what any of that would look like.

**Deb:** The coexist is a.

**Deb:** A strong theme there.

**Participant 1:** Yeah.

**Participant 2:** I feel like, like like what Participant 1 also said, like, coexisting with each other regardless if you like, I like, I've alluded to multiple times in here is, like, if you believe in a certain like, if you believe in Israel, if they're right or wrong, or if you believe in Gaza, if they're right or wrong, like, at the at at the end of the day, it's mass genocide. Lots of people are dying. And no matter if whoever at the end of the day is right or wrong, why can't we just coexist?

**Participant 2:** We go on with our lives. We should, I feel like, respect whatever we believe in, and, like, we can live in one certain, like, territory. But, like, we should not, like and then that they divide Israel and Palestine because at the, there's good and bad people in both.

**Participant 2:** But, like, we have to live day by day, and we can't just say, oh, this is, like, a state of Israel. Only Israelis and Jews can live there. Or in Gaza, there's only only, those people live there. Right? Like, why can't we live in one area where we can coexist and live day by day without arguing or causing mass genocide?

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 3:** I mean, I would agree with everything that's been said. I would say coexisting is the goal. I don't think it's possible, to be honest, based on the systematic oppression of, yeah, Palestinian people over quite a number of years at this point and also just, like, the treatment throughout the war of, Palestinian individuals. Like, there isn't I I I want to root for coexisting. I just don't think it's actually going to be possible considering these are human beings that have been through very horrible things on both sides.

**Participant 3:** You know? So rooting for coexisting. And I think if you go to a coexistent state, there's still gonna be oppression. There's still gonna be, you know, where it's not ideal for either side, and I don't know what the solution is.

**Deb:** So skeptical of the the coexisting notion.

**Deb:** Participant 5, I gather from some of what you shared a little bit earlier that you have some some thoughts on this too.

**Participant 5:** Yeah. I would say, generally, the goal would be coexistence in a perfect world, but Israel's aim is to create an ethnostate with just Jews living there. So I don't think there's a universe in which Israelis who, like, believe in Israel, in the state of Israel and everything would allow Muslim or Palestinian people to be absorbed, to have equal statehood, all of that. That just isn't Israel's goal, which I think is why a two state solution is the only thing that could work because Israel is founded on the promise of being an ethno state, of being an apartheid state, of having this, like, separate community just for Jews. So I don't think a one state solution would be possible because people who are really pro Israel, they the entire foundation of the founding of it would not allow for there to be only one state that would also accept Muslim people. So I think the most realistic, maybe, solution would be a two state solution where the people of Gaza and the people of the West Bank are allowed to keep their territories, but Israel would have to stay out of it, and Hamas would have to stop attacking Israel. So I don't really know if that would ever happen. But I think that's the only solution because Israel has to be an ethno state to, like, please its government, to please the very religious Jewish people who, like, believe in the promise of the holy land. I don't think there is a one state solution. Even though that would be the best is for everybody to have access to Jerusalem and all of that, I don't think it's realistic with.

**Participant 5:** The state of Israel, and the entire conceit of it, I don't think would allow for that.

**Deb:** And so what you're saying isn't just about current Israeli government or.

**Deb:** One particular faction of Jewish people. It it sounds.

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Maybe.

**Participant 5:** It's.

**Deb:** Bigger than that.

**Participant 5:** It's Zionism. Zionism is to believe in the Jewish homeland. And and not that I believe this, but I think it would be, like, tarnishing the state of Israel as a Jewish state if they allowed full Palestinian statehood to be, like, absorbed into Israel or anything like that. I just think it would break the promises that Zionism makes people who believe in it.

**Participant 5:** So I believe that Jews should have access to their homeland. You know? I don't think it's realistic if people say all the land should be returned to Palestinians and Israeli settlers should be kicked out. Kicked out back to where? That's, like, also not realistic.

**Participant 5:** No one's going anywhere, I think, is what I'm trying to say.

**Deb:** K.

**Participant 5:** Both groups are very, very tied to the land, and both of them may not have another home to return to. Palestinian people have lived there for hundreds of years, but, you know, there's Holocaust survivors who are displaced from actively antisemitic countries that are still antisemitic that have never known anything else. So I think everyone's staying there. It's just figuring out a solution where everyone can be safe and healthy and have religious freedom and full peoplehood, whatever that means. But I just don't think it can exist in one state with the promise of Zionism. Palestinians cannot be absorbed and given full statehood.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Deb:** And, Participant 4, what's here for you?

**Participant 4:** Like, I guess, to me, it's just, like yeah. It feels like such an impossible question, and I do kinda feel like you you can't feel like, oh, I agree with everything that everyone has said. But, like, I think there's traces of, like, truth. So, like, I I do agree with everything that everyone has said. Like, I guess, like, what has been.

**Participant 4:** The case in the past, let's say, in the past, like, twenty years, let's say, even, like, before October seventh, like, clearly wasn't, like, livable. Like, it wasn't it wasn't.

**Participant 4:** Working.

**Participant 4:** And, like, I agree with what Participant 5 said. Like, people all deserve, like, access to, like, to to to be able to live in in this place.

**Participant 4:** And.

**Participant 4:** Not be suffering from health crisis, to have access to education, to have access to health care, to have access to, like, basic resources needed to survive, but also, like, kind of the ability to thrive and, like, to to live with your family. And.

**Participant 4:** I don't know. People be like, deserve to be able to live without, like, the fear of death and, like, deserve to, like, live not as refugees and, like, not suffering a humanitarian crisis.

**Participant 4:** And so, like, I agree with what Participant 3 said that, like, there's there's this concern of, like, Palestinians have been.

**Participant 4:** Oppressed for, like, quite a long time. And I think, like, let's say, like, a return to what the status was pre October seventh, I, like, doesn't seem viable.

**Participant 4:** But, like, I don't, yeah, like, I don't know how.

**Participant 4:** Yeah. I, like, I don't know what, like, the move forward would would be.

**Deb:** Yeah. The the complexity and, thickness of it is very salient.

**Deb:** So let's spend just a couple minutes on one more question, which is, how do your views about Israel or the conflict in Israel and Gaza compare to those of 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?**  (00:53:21 - 01:00:30)

**Deb:** So how closely aligned are your and your friends' views? And I think embedded in there too is just.

**Deb:** How has the conflict.

**Deb:** Affected your relationships, Your friendships in particular?

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I can start.

**Participant 1:** I would say, in general, I I mean, I've had conversations with it about it with all my friends to some extent, I would say.

**Participant 1:** I guess there's some varying opinions. I would say the majority of my friends are.

**Participant 1:** Probably a little more aligned, with with what my views are. And.

**Participant 1:** But, you know, I've had conversations with other friends that disagree to some extent, and I wouldn't say it's affected our relationships at all.

**Participant 1:** You know, I'm definitely not somebody that shies away from talking about politics, but I think that within my friend groups, it had it's never been something that's caused problems. I think we all respect each other's opinions, and like to talk about that kind of stuff.

**Participant 1:** So I wouldn't say it's affected any of my relationships. And, yeah, I the the opinions are definitely varying to some extent, but I would say, I've definitely received support for my viewpoints from my friend group. Yeah.

**Deb:** Okay. So some variability, but also comfort in that or in the.

**Deb:** Very the variability to explore and support each other.

**Participant 1:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Okay. How about for others?

**Participant 2:** I think for me, it varies because I have friends that, are pro Israel, and there are some that are pro Palestine. And, like, through social media, I can see, like, their views and what they post and everything.

**Participant 2:** Does that affect my relationship with them? Not to an extent. Like, I'm gonna support whatever they believe in. If it if it's pro Israel, pro, pro Palestine, at the end of the day, that's what they believe in. I can't be under control of what they view and what they think of.

**Participant 2:** And, like, I have my own view, but does that mean that, my friends have to believe in that? No.

**Participant 2:** I'm not a political person, but, like, when it comes to this situation, I kinda try and advocate for what I believe in.

**Participant 2:** But, like, with my friends, we typically don't talk about it just because so it's, a sensitive topic to all of us. We don't wanna kinda, like, talk about it and then spell, like, a, argument or stuff like that. Because I have friends that are very hypocritical, and we'll start an argument if they're strong believed in something. But.

**Participant 2:** It it's just at the end of the day, we value each other's opinions, whether it be right or wrong, stuff like that.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Deb:** Who.

**Participant 5:** I mean,

**Deb:** Else?

**Participant 5:** I can say that most of my Jewish friends like, it's very stratified. Most of my Jewish friends are very pro Israel and, like, they should annex the West Bank and Gaza and take over all of the lands and have what's theirs, that kind of very deterministic Zionist view. But all of my non Jewish friends on campus believe in Palestinian independence, liberation, and the state of Palestine in total to be, like, returned to Palestinians and for the Israel, like, government to be dissolved. So it's really hard to have conversations with all of my friends because there is almost nobody that believes in, like, a two state solution or even, like, a one state solution. That's really just not as popular. They're either very, very pro independence, just full dissolution of Israel, or so Zionist that it's kind of violent. And it's hard to talk to them about their views.

**Participant 5:** Because there's just so much aggression.

**Participant 5:** In the Zionist people. But then the pro Palestine people don't believe in the state of Israel, period, And that there was no reason to be giving this land to Jewish people who didn't, like, deserve it because it was somebody else's first. So I don't talk to my friends about Israel at all. There is no one that I'm comfortable sitting down and talking about Israel or Palestine because we're just going to argue. These are it's such different viewpoints that we're coming from that there's no convincing the other, at least not that I'm able to. I don't have the right words. I don't think it's not even that I'm not persuasive enough. It's just that we have such fundamentally different views of what's happening in the Middle East and what's should be happening there. That it's really hard to have a conversation where you're coming from such different places and not having the tact or the maturity to really have a discussion about it, and we'll just end up arguing if we bring it up. So for the most part, I don't talk to people in real life about Israel. We're it's just antagonistic. We're not gonna get anywhere.

**Deb:** Thank you. Thank you. Okay. So I promised I would end on time, and it's three o'clock. So just so much gratitude for all five of you for what you shared and how you shared it today. And I I promise that this interview, this discussion is absolutely going to inform these researchers' understanding of how students are thinking and feeling about, the conflict. So thanks for that. As a heads up, in about somewhere within the next twenty four hours or so, you're gonna receive an email from College Pulse. It'll tell you how to access your incentive. There'll be, some open ended items that if you have any additional thoughts that maybe you didn't get a share today or something somebody else said that you would like to share a reaction to, please, we would welcome hearing that. And then there'll also be a resource. If you would like to have, you know, today's conversation brought up, any thoughts or feelings you would like to to process and delve deeper into. So that that'll be in that email too. I'm gonna stick around for a few minutes. So if you have any questions for me or would like to share something you haven't had a chance to share, please know you're welcome to do that. Other than that, we are all done. So thank you guys. It was really lovely to meet you all.

**Participant 2:** Thank you so much.

**Participant 3:** Thank.

**Participant 4:** Thank.

**Participant 3:** You.

**Participant 4:** You.

**Participant 1:** Thank you.

**Participant 5:** Thank you.

**Participant 4:** How do I leave?

**Participant 1:** Yeah. I can't figure out how to leave.

**Deb:** Oh, in the top right corner, there should be, like, an end exit button.

**Participant 1:** Oh,

**Deb:** But if both of you wanna leave, I can I can exit all of us too?

**Participant 1:** Sure. That that works.

**Participant 4:** Oh, thank you.

**Deb:** Participant 4, are you ready for that too? Okay. Have a good weekend.

**Participant 1:** Alright. Thank you. Have a.

**Participant 4:** Okay.

**Participant 1:** Good.

**Participant 4:** You.

**Participant 1:** One.

**Participant 4:** Too.

**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.** (Not answered)

**[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?** (Not answered)

**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)