Client Project

(Apr 4, 2024 - 9:00am)

**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.**  (00:00:01 - 00:05:57)

**Deb:** Great. Thank you so much. So hello everyone. Welcome. Thank you so much for being here today. This focus group is being hosted by College Pulse, which you may know is a research firm that specializes in understanding college students' opinions and experiences across the US. And my name is doctor Deb Mashek. I'm your moderator today, which just means I'll be asking the questions, facilitating discussion, and keeping us on time to make sure that you are out of here by the the top of the hour. The purpose of the conversation today is to learn more deeply about how students are thinking about and experiencing the conflict in Gaza and Israel. And this group is being or the research study is being conducted in collaboration with researchers who are particularly interested in education. So that gives you a kind of a sense of why we're doing this. Due to time constraints I may need to move us along in some of our you know, if a conversation's really going, I might transition us, but I don't want you to have to worry about that. So just know that you are welcome to share as deeply as you want, to engage each other, to share with as much nuance and specificity as you can muster. That way we can really get a sense of how you're thinking and feeling about these issues.

**Deb:** Because, you know, whenever you bring total strangers together, I feel like a couple guide guidelines are helpful. So I'm gonna propose three. And then after I propose these, you'll all have a chance to say, thumbs up, thumbs down about whether this is is working for you.

**Deb:** And I'm seeing that we still only have four people here.

**Deb:** Gabby, can you give me an update on the fifth person? I would love for them to be here for the the guidelines.

**Deb:** Just that way you guys don't have to listen to me say them again when the fifth person arrives. Let me see if I can get.

**Deb:** Participant 4.

**Deb:** Just gonna text her.

**Deb:** Let's see.

**Deb:** Oh, it looks like.

**Deb:** The other person's connection has dropped.

**Deb:** Okay. Well, I'm gonna go ahead and share with you all what my guidelines are and see see if we can go ahead and get started in a light way there.

**Deb:** The first is obviously that there are no right or wrong answers, which is just to, again, invite you to express as fully as you're willing to do, how you're thinking and feeling about these issues. The second one is that what is said here stays here so it's critical that we all honor each other's privacy and confidentiality, again, as a way of inviting as much openness as possible. And then finally, keep in mind, your experiences and perspectives are quite likely different than other people's in the room. And to me, this is a really good thing so that we can help understand different perspectives. And so the request there is to speak one at a time, be respectful, and and be curious about some of those differences. If that all sounds good, can I get a thumbs up?

**Deb:** Okay. Excellent. Thank you all. So a reminder that this conversation is being recorded, and what you say could be used for research or will be used for research purposes, but research purposes only and always while honoring your your confidentiality. So if there are any questions before I get started, I'm happy to entertain them.

**Deb:** Anything on your mind?

**Deb:** Okay. Okay. It looks like we might end up being a small group, in which case, I just wanna because we'll have the the space, feel free to engage each other. So if somebody says something you're curious to learn more about or you wanna build off of it, go for it. Also, I won't be mentioning what school you go to, but if you choose to share that or anything else about yourself, that's totally up to you.

**Deb:** So.

**Deb:** With that, let me just check-in on the backroom to see how conversations are going, if we know anything there.

**Deb:** They are working on it.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Deb:** If I can just to the college pulse person who might be in the room, if I can get some, guidance on if you'd like me to proceed with four or wait for a fifth.

**Deb:** Oh, there's a fifth person arriving.

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

**Deb:** Hey, Participant 4. How are you?

**Participant 4:** Here. Hi, guys. I'm good. How are you?

**Deb:** Good. Hey. So just to quickly catch you up on what we've done, it was, all preamble convert or point talking points so far. The most important pieces are about, confidentiality and and honoring that for each other, knowing that there are no right or wrong answers, so to invite you to share as fully as you're able to, respecting each other's privacy and also being curious about, differences and respecting those differences. Does that feel good to you? Just so you know everybody else gave a thumbs up so you know what you're stepping into.

**Participant 4:** Yep.

**Deb:** Okay. Excellent. So let's go ahead and get started, and I'm gonna ask each of you to chime in on this question, which is.

**[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? [Mary: Drop prompts into chat]** (00:05:57 - 00:13:38)

**Deb:** How do you obtain information about Israel and the conflict in Israel and Gaza? So I'm curious in particular, are you actively seeking it information out or kind of passively receiving it? How would you describe your your information experience? And, Participant 1, because you're in my top left of the screen, do you mind going first?

**Participant 1:** Yeah. Sure.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 1:** I think it's definitely a mix of both. I consider myself someone who tries to follow the news, like, all the time on all topics. So I think my main sources are usually, like, The New York Times, Associated Press, or The Wall Street Journal. And I feel like I read those regularly, like, on social media, so I'll see posts about the conflict there. And then kind of less intentionally, if I'm just kinda scrolling on, like, Instagram stories, I'll see people I know posting their own, like, graphics or information and stuff, and I'll see things like that. But that's usually information I take a little less seriously.

**Deb:** Okay. I was gonna ask if you found, so let's think about the the Insta feed. Are there particular feeds that you do find trustworthy or they might be thought leaders or influencers that that when they're posting, you're paying a little bit more attention? Or how would you describe that?

**Participant 1:** If it's not, like, a major, like, news organization that I was, like, aware of and following before, like, a lot of media started talking about this topic. I don't really trust it. Like, I might, like, use the headline and look up to see if an organization I know more about is like, reporting the same thing. But, yeah, I think I just kind of click through them most of the time if it's not something I've heard of.

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

**Participant 2:** So I don't really use social media to look at news, like, in general, or I haven't been on it in a while. I'm not really active on any accounts.

**Participant 2:** But, also, I I generally watch the news more than reading it. So, usually, like, on Sky News Australia, I found that I like that. They give a lot of, like, different analysis. They'll have different, speakers come, get different, views on that. So I like kinda seeing the breaking down of how people are viewing the war. Also, I watch, like, Fox, I twenty four news, and sometimes.

**Participant 2:** The Associated Press. I try to get, like, a nice array from, you know, random things once in a while, like CBS, CBN. So I try to, you know, see all of it and then kind of put together, like, any specific events seeing how it's all coming together.

**Deb:** Great. And then on the social, I know you said you're not really on social. Were you on social before and you've stopped being on social, or have it has it just never been a thing for you?

**Participant 2:** Yeah. Over the years, I just stopped being on social media. I actually stopped it with the twenty twenty election because I was like, this is, like, kinda, like, a fraud. So, so I stopped then because it just was getting, like, a little toxic. But then also, like, times like this, you know, there's really nothing good that comes out of it. It's just people, you know, fighting and who are angry. It's not productive. It's I find that it's not really even educational.

**Participant 2:** You know, there's no, like, sourcing or anything. So I feel like it's just better to stay off of it.

**Deb:** Okay. Thank you. And, Participant 3, what's your information experience like?

**Participant 3:** I'd say it's a little bit more passive than than active.

**Participant 3:** A lot of it comes from because I have, like, these widgets set up on my home screen that are from news apps, primarily the Apple News, app that they have on their own.

**Participant 3:** Whenever I end up seeing an article, relative to this or something else, current events wise, I'll end up clicking it, reading about it. And from there, I might end up looking into something more specific about what the article mentioned to look for, like, corroboration in the facts or, maybe just more detail.

**Participant 3:** But, yeah, social media wise, I tend to kind of avoid that because the most the majority of, information on there, if it's not from a major news provider or even if it is, is often very polarized. And I'm not looking for someone's opinion. I'm looking for, like, just what happened. I would like to make my own opinion on the matter.

**Deb:** And I'm hearing that you actively set up the widgets, but those are really almost like a gateway for the.

**Participant 3:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Information to come in, and then you choose from there what to engage with. Does.

**Participant 3:** Yeah.

**Deb:** That feel right? Okay. Great. Thank you. And, Participant 5, how about you?

**Participant 5:** I would say three different places. First off, I follow the IDF on Instagram. That's the Israeli Defense Forces because they kinda show, like, as it's happening, what's happening, like, on the ground.

**Participant 5:** Additionally, I also, like, get it from, like, a variety of different news sources, like, Fox News and, like, on the other hand, CNN. Like, I also have one of those little news widgets on my phone that kind of, like, summarizes everything. And then third, I would say just on campus because, like, we have a Jewish group on campus, and we also have a Palestinian group on campus, which is interesting sometimes.

**Participant 5:** But, from those as well, I also hear, like, different perspectives as far as what's going.

**Deb:** So with the two student groups on campus, do they are you.

**Participant 5:** On.

**Deb:** Following both of them, whether it's on an email distribution list or kinda getting news and input from both groups?

**Participant 5:** I would say it's more in person. I'm part of the Jewish group on campus. And then the Palestinian group, they kind of, like, host their own events, like awareness events, or they'll do talks. And the Jewish group also does, like, their own events and stuff on campus. It's more so in person than online, I would say.

**Deb:** Yeah. Yeah. And then you mentioned the IDF feed on Insta. I'm curious if there are other feeds that you kinda value or prioritize or especially trust.

**Participant 5:** Other than, like, news, I would say not really.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

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

**Participant 4:** So I've been like, I a lot a lot of my information that I received in the beginning was mostly passive. I would see it through Instagram, people's stories, and, like, like, just, like, people that I follow, accounts that I follow on Instagram would post about it. And then, like, recently, once I started, like, looking at the news myself, like, I would be educating myself more on the matter and seeing, like, okay. Look. What's going on? Getting updates. So yeah.

**Deb:** What does that look like now that you're educating yourself more? Kinda how how do you go about doing that?

**Participant 4:** Well, it's I'm not specifically looking to look at, like like, what is going on in Israel. I'm just looking at the news in general. So, for example, I'll go on, like, CNN or, like, the New York Times, and I'll see, like, what's going on in the day. And I'll and something will come up, like, every day about Israel and Gaza and what's going on there. So it'll be, like, some sort of article, and then I'll look at the article, look more into it, and see something because it's always, like, something new, something different that's going on.

**Deb:** Yeah. So so the being informed impulse has been about the world in general.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** And then when you're looking at headlines, you notice that a lot of them are about Israel. Okay.

**Participant 4:** Yeah. Is it okay if I go to the bathroom real quick?

**Deb:** Sure. You know what? Let me read this first question, and I'll I'll come to you last, but you can start thinking about it while you you take a bio.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Break.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Okay. How has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all?

**[Q2] How has the conflict in Israel and Gaza affected your experience on campus, if at all?** (00:13:43 - 00:25:43)

**Deb:** Just whoever feels moved to to share first is welcome to jump in.

**Participant 5:** I would say I've witnessed, like, firsthand a lot of, like, tension between certain groups of students. I've also seen, like, a lot of fighting between, like, Muslim and Jewish students.

**Participant 5:** Also, some of us are, well, some of us can't really hide it because, like, some of my friends, they wear, like, Yamas and stuff, so it's very obvious that they're Jewish. But some of us are a lot more precautious now knowing that there are students who are, like, kind of hostile, about that whole thing.

**Participant 5:** I've also heard a lot more conversations about it just, like, around campus in general. Sometimes those are pleasant, sometimes they're not. But, yeah, that's what I've noticed.

**Deb:** Yeah. I'm curious if you could go in a little bit to you said you've noticed tensions. What what tensions there are when you say certain groups, maybe give some specificity there. And then I'm also curious for you, this idea of being cautious, kind of what that looks like.

**Deb:** If it if you are being cautious or maybe you are observing somebody else. So if you could give me some specifics.

**Participant 5:** Well, for one, one of the Jewish girls I know on campus, she, wears a veil, and she's just some of my Jewish friends are just very, like, obviously Jewish in the way that they dress and stuff. And I know they've told me that they've been, like, targeted by certain students who've had, like, nasty things to say about them or Judaism in general. So that's been a little bit uncomfortable, and I noticed some of them are maybe not as social as they would have been if, like, it wasn't so much tension going around.

**Participant 5:** Also just kind of, like, caution as far as, like, which conversations to get into because there is, like, a lot of discussion on campus about, like, the whole thing. So I don't know if that's, like, specific enough. But, yeah, that's what I've noticed.

**Deb:** Yeah. Yeah. And.

**Deb:** So and I'll observe that some of those things look like things that maybe you're observing in others. I'm curious if anything has felt particularly relevant to you, like, what you've noticed or experienced.

**Participant 5:** Well, just a couple days ago, I was sitting at lunch with a group of students, and the whole thing with, Palestine and Israel came up. And they asked me, like, what my personal opinion was about it. And it was a little tense because, like, some people ask questions in an open way, but you can tell kinda by the way they ask the question that they're expecting a specific answer, if that makes any sense. So that was, like, a little, like, tense.

**Participant 5:** But, yeah, stuff like that, I would say, because you never really know how somebody's gonna respond to it.

**Deb:** Great. Right.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 1:** I'll definitely agree with, like, some tensions on groups on campus. My campus, I think, compared to some others that I'm seeing a lot of headlines about is a lot less active.

**Participant 1:** I think last semester, there's definitely some more stuff going on immediately after October seventh where there was, like, protests from different groups, like, pretty much every week that I think were I had some friends who were struggling with that. One of my friends who's Jewish said, like, she would skip class on days that, the Palestinian justice group on campus was holding large organized protests because she got, like, physically anxious with it, and that was a approved medical accommodation for one of our classes together. I personally wasn't really impacted on an emotional level from the protest on either side, so it wasn't really affecting me. I just kind of noticed it as I was, like, walking to classes. But I definitely agree with people wanting to talk about it more. I feel like political discussions at my school are not super common. It's just like a large state school, so it's I feel like liberal arts schools and kind of smaller private campuses have a lot more of that discourse. But people who I don't think were really aware of what was happening before definitely started to wanna talk about it more, and I feel like people were asking more questions to people that they thought might know the answers.

**Deb:** Did you notice anything in your classes? So are these the opportunities for discussion happening in class or just on campus in general? Or how would you characterize that?

**Participant 1:** Some of my friends that are, like, in more international fair classes have those discussions. I my classes for my majors just don't relate to that, so we weren't really having any facilitated, like, by a professor or anything.

**Deb:** Okay. Thank you.

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

**Participant 2:** So my campus is kind of interesting.

**Participant 2:** There's not a lot of Jewish students at all. There's probably, like, I've tried counting less less than ten, especially, like, people who aren't active.

**Participant 2:** We we had a Jewish, student group. We had a Hillel, but it kinda fell apart. We didn't have enough people to make a board. So but, generally, on my campus, there is a large Palestinian community, and a large Muslim community. And so there's really there isn't a dialogue. There's just a a narrative that's been for years where it's like Israel is the enemy, and there's just continuous events. Since, like, October seventh, there's been, like, over twenty events just by, you know, one, like, larger law school, organization. And, you know, there there's no there there's no dialogue. It it's just like, you know, no Israel, no Israel, no Israel. So as a Jewish student, you know, you're like, well, this is kind of like the atmosphere that's being built. This is what every student's seeing. This is what their inbox is. So as, like, a Jewish student, you're like, well, this is how everybody's, like, perceiving this war, then obviously, they're they're gonna, you know, be, like, resistance against it. They're not gonna, you know, think anything other than it's it's like a bad you you know what I'm saying? They're they're not gonna think of another side if this is all that they're they're seeing and what the school is pushing forward. But one of the benefits really of just having no student, like, Jewish student group is that you can kind of, like, blend into some degree.

**Participant 2:** So, really, what I've been doing, what I know a couple of other Jewish students have been doing is you just, like, lay low. Lay low, don't say anything because it's it's you don't have numbers. Like, it it's like ten against, like, a thousand. That's what it that's what well, that's, like, what it feels like. So most of it's just been laying low, trying to avoid conversations. Sometimes it comes up in a classroom, and I sometimes have just, like, I'd rather stay silent than get into it with people because, you know, there's you know, it it's not the kind of environment where people are interested in dialogue. It's more of, like, trying to convince everyone to get on the bandwagon.

**Deb:** So how's that been for you?

**Deb:** Like, what's what's the experience of that like?

**Participant 2:** It's uncomfortable. I mean, it it's been like this all my years that I was in college so far. So, it's a little bit wracking. I I do avoid the main part of campus, because that's really, like, where a lot of, like, you know, the social justice kind of, protests happen. I'm in the business school, which is a few blocks away, and you don't really see that sort of thing.

**Participant 2:** So I really, like, avoid it at all costs because I don't have to go there. But, yeah, you definitely feel like you're watching your back. When I was in that part of the campus, I.

**Participant 2:** Was very nervous walking from the from the main campus, the parking garages, especially when I was involved with the Hillel and people, you know, saw me. They saw what we were standing up for. We were trying to, you know, do, events, that sort of thing, occasional events. And, you know, people did, like, you know, yell at us, come and harass us. There was problems with that. So really then, it was like, oh, well, they see my face swimming around campus. It was a little nerve wracking.

**Participant 2:** So it doesn't feel great, but.

**Deb:** Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. And, Participant 3, how about you?

**Participant 3:** So on my campus I mean, my school's relatively larger.

**Participant 3:** So there's a lot of or there was a lot of back and forth, especially right after, like, news headlines.

**Participant 3:** It seemed to have died down a lot now, but, there's still, like I mean, there's a big Jewish community, and there's also a big Palestinian community. So it's consistent back and forth in that way, I think. But other than, localized protests, like, in public areas or, maybe, like, I guess, like, protesting at, like, school elections or something like that. Nothing's necessarily gotten really violent. Tensions are high or at least were higher at some point, but, it it's not as, like, severe as in other places, I'd say.

**Deb:** And it sounds like your personal experience of it has been maybe bumping into some protest. Anything.

**Participant 3:** Yeah. I'd say I've kept myself out of it myself,

**Deb:** Else?

**Participant 3:** But I've witnessed it, both online and in person.

**Participant 3:** And, yeah. I mean, from from that experience, I haven't necessarily seen how one from either side could be, like, at least from my campus, significantly impacted in a harmful way. Like, yeah, they may disagree with you, but it's not, like, to the point where violence might happen or something like that.

**Deb:** Yeah. Thank you. K. Participant 4.

**Participant 4:** With us, we have both, like, a very big Israeli student population and a Palestinian student population. So there have been a lot of protests from both sides.

**Participant 4:** We have this, like, referendum for the school where, like, students, like, can vote whether the school should divest from their investment in Israeli universities and both Israeli student groups and Palestinian student groups or, like, students that support either side were, like, tabling and telling stopping students and telling them vote yes, vote no, and, like, providing, like, some sort of, like, incentive, like food, drinks.

**Participant 4:** And so it's very much, like, very amplified on my campus. Like, every like, it's very like, even if you're not on social media but you are present on campus you very much will know what's going on because like, there's protests. Like, especially in the beginning, there were protests, like, almost, like, every other day from one like, from both groups. So their voices are very, like, higher just because we have, like, such a diverse student body here. And we also have a lot of resources that the Jewish community has here, the Israeli community has on campus. And there's also a lot of students that are Palestinian Muslim and support Palestine. So there's definitely a lot of, like, discussion and a lot of exposure to the topic on campus.

**Deb:** Yes. I'm hearing, protests, but also ongoing engagement, and it sounds like pretty very active for different groups,

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** And the idea that there are resources available to be active.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Okay. Great. Okay. This next question is a long one. So if you want me to reread it, just say the word.

**[Q3] 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?** (00:25:45 - 00:43:22)

**Deb:** Data from our research suggests that nearly a third of non Jewish students say they would not wanna be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. Why do you think they might believe this?

**Participant 5:** I would say because of the current.

**Participant 2:** No.

**Participant 5:** Media narrative is really negative as far as Israel is concerned, so so they probably just don't wanna be associated with it at all.

**Deb:** So connect the dots for me. So how would the media connect to who I wanna be friends with?

**Participant 5:** Because, like, if the media is showcasing a certain group of people very negatively and a person, like, largely adheres to that specific used media, they're gonna, like, go along with those negative stereotypes and, like, perspectives. And I think that would cross over to, like, the type of people they're around.

**Deb:** And who they'd feel comfortable with, it sounds.

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Like.

**Deb:** I'm curious, Participant 5. Do you think that's something specific about this topic, about Israel, Gaza, or is that kind of social distancing? Do you think it would kick up anytime there's a big worldview difference?

**Participant 5:** I think it's like that in general, honestly, especially in this country. Because when I was in Europe, a lot of people either didn't bring up politics or, like, it wasn't, like, a defining factor in whether or not they would talk to somebody. But here, I would say people are very much, like, tribal when it comes to their political beliefs. So yeah.

**Deb:** Yeah. So you've seen it with other topics, but it's different from other cultures.

**Participant 5:** I would.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 5:** Say so.

**Deb:** And, Participant 2, I saw you raising your hand too. So do you want to jump in here?

**Deb:** Uh-oh. We're losing I can't hear you.

**Participant 4:** I mean, I can go if that's okay.

**Deb:** Okay. Let's give Participant 2 a chance to try this.

**Participant 4:** Alright.

**Deb:** Can you say something, Participant 2?

**Deb:** Participant 2, can you hear us?

**Deb:** Okay.

**Deb:** Somewhere, there's, like, a refresh button, I believe. Let's see if we can find that. Or you know what? I'm gonna ask Participant 4 to tell me her perspective, and then if you can, click the help button. If you're able are you able to hear me, Participant 2?

**Deb:** Okay. So go ahead and click the help button and see if we can get some tech support for you. And, Participant 4, I'd love to hear your thoughts on this.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Stat.

**Participant 4:** I think that this is really because this has just been amp I really like, in my experience, I feel like this has been amplified because of what's going on right now in Israel and Gaza because I personally know people.

**Participant 4:** Who are not friends with people who support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state or just the existence of Israel itself. Because, like, from my knowledge, Palestine has existed for longer than Israel has, and they have like, Palestine is not the one who has a captive over Israel. It's the other way it's the other way around. And this war has amplified the feelings of people not wanting to be friends or support that because you obviously aren't educating yourself on the history. You're aligning yourself with like, for example, if some most of the times I've seen this with people who are Jewish and Israeli Jewish and side with Israel versus just siding with, like, siding with Palestine versus, like, I'm what I'm trying to say is this, like, kind of people who don't wanna be friends with the other side are, like, Palestinians or Muslims who support Palestine and Israeli Jewish people or people that support the existence of Israel as a Jewish state or just Israel as a whole. That's where that, like, that notion of not wanting to be friends exists because it's like you're just siding with that state just because of your religious affiliation to it or the way you choose not because you're actually trying to be knowledgeable on what's going on, how many people and how the people are suffering in Palestine and Gaza. So that's why I feel that that type of difference exists. And it only exists, I feel like, because of the war. Because I know people personally that were friends before the war and they were Israeli and will support Palestine or support, like, or or Muslim or whatever and support Palestine and their friends. But, however, I know people now after the war started that are no longer on speaking terms, are no longer friends because of their views.

**Deb:** And so I heard a couple of things there. One, that you you personally know some people who hold hold this view that they would not wanna be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state. And it also sounds like you know some relationships that have been severed.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Because of that, because someone has believed that. And say again.

**Deb:** Why, if somebody holds a different belief, what somebody wouldn't wanna be a friend with them. So.

**Participant 4:** Because.

**Deb:** Is it the belief itself or something else?

**Participant 4:** It it is the belief itself because I mean, it's the belief itself in addition to the war that's going on. This wasn't exist like, this wasn't present to my knowledge at least before the war started. Like, people who supported the existence of Israel and who supported the existence of Palestine were friends, and now they are not. And that's simply because.

**Participant 4:** When you're supporting from my knowledge, supporting the existence.

**Participant 4:** Gaza. You support all of these deaths that are that are happening right now. And that is why these people are no longer friends. And that's why they they can't be friends because those views are so radically different supporting death versus supporting the existence of a state that is continuing to oppress another state. And for that that, like, difference in reasoning in addition to what is going on right now so seeing what's going on right now and you still choosing to support Israel as a Jewish state is the reason why people are no longer trying to be friends. Or, like, people choose not to be friends with people who support Israel, the existence of Israel as a Jewish.

**Deb:** Okay. So almost like if you believe a, then you must also believe b and.

**Participant 4:** State.

**Deb:** C and that.

**Participant 4:** Yeah.

**Deb:** There's a a chain there. Okay. Participant 2, welcome back. How's your.

**Participant 2:** Yes.

**Deb:** Audio.

**Participant 2:** You hear.

**Deb:** Doing?

**Participant 2:** Me?

**Deb:** Yep.

**Participant 2:** Can.

**Deb:** That.

**Participant 2:** You.

**Deb:** Sounds.

**Participant 2:** Hear me?

**Deb:** Great. Yeah. So.

**Participant 2:** Is.

**Deb:** Do.

**Participant 2:** The.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 2:** Question?

**Deb:** Of course. So we have a a piece of data from surveys that says that 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 and I I want to figure out why that might be and I'm wondering if you have.

**Participant 2:** Yeah. So, so I was saying before is that I don't think.

**Deb:** Some.

**Participant 2:** A lot.

**Deb:** Thoughts.

**Participant 2:** Of people are capable of dialogue. Some of it's on both sides, but I think a lot of it is on, the anti Israel side because people really haven't been so educated about the history. And when push comes to shove and you're presented with facts, you're not able to spit back the information. People don't know how old Israel is, why it has the name Palestine. People don't realize that it was named that by the Romans when they expelled the Jews from there after two thousand years of being there. They don't realize that Jews never left fully, that there was always a Jewish community. They don't understand that what, you know, the whole fight is at the temple mount is that there was once a temple there, and it was a Jewish temple. There was two of them. So I think there's a little bit of that gap that people just don't wanna even, you know, get into. We've I've learned, you know, there's that thirty percent of people who don't know anything about the war, and it's a little bit of a fight of who can get that thirty percent. Are we gonna convince them to be pro Israel, or are we gonna convince them to be pro Palestine? And it's much easier to have conversations with people who know nothing versus having conversations with people who are educated or really interested in becoming educated about the facts. So I think, that that's a contributing factor to it.

**Participant 2:** Yeah. I think people are, like, angry. I I I agree. People look at the death and they're like, oh, you know, there's death here, but I don't know if they you know, people are willing to do with a critical analysis of also what's happening. They just see that there's death and, like, well, one side is, you know, killing more than the other. So, you know, it must it must be worse. And, you know, because one side is you know, it looks like the victim, we also have to take their, you know, word, you know, at face value. You know, I I don't necessarily agree that people were friends before October seventh. I mean, on my campus, I gotta tell you, that wasn't true at all. We when I was having a Hillel, people were harassing us, telling us that we weren't real Jews beforehand. You know, they were calling us Kazarian, which is, you know, ridiculous.

**Participant 2:** But, yeah, the day of October seventh, I I mean, like, I I haven't really shared this story with anyone. It was it was Simchat Torah, which is one of our holidays, and it's two days long. And I am an Orthodox Jew, so I'm not on my phone. And I was at my friend's apartment. We were spending holiday and where we were, there wasn't a lot of Jewish people that everyone, like, went away. So we didn't get the news. A lot of people got the news, but we didn't because there wasn't anyone around. Nobody heard. Like, some people, like, non Jewish friends told them. We knew nothing. I turned on my phone that Sunday night, Sunday night or Saturday night, and immediately, I get four hundred Israelis killed in a in a festival. And an hour beforehand, I was talking to my friends and saying that I've spoken to Palestinians on my campus and not all of them support Hamas and that there are people there who are, you know, the people who are stuck in the middle of this. Then immediately two minutes after I find out this information, I get sent a picture from the SJP on my campus saying, bring your Palestinian flags and resistance with Palestine. Israel did not launch a single rocket, not a single thing, back into Gaza before they were already, like, celebrating what happened. But they were already claiming this is a victory. Nothing happened. There was no counter strike. This had nothing to do with that. It has to have with there's no dialogue. There's not gonna be a like, there was a ceasefire before anything was was fired, you know. There was there was immediately calling for a ceasefire before the first before the first bullet. So I don't think this has anything really to do with dialogue. I think people are not really interested in talking. Same thing with all the ceasefire deals. People they're they're not interested in ceasefire. You know? There's there's been dialogue back and forth all the time. You know? People say, like, you know, jeez, we don't like to fight. We like to talk it out, you know. We we, you know, through our history, we don't we don't kill each other. We like talking. And I feel like that's been tried time and time again, and there's other sides that are not interested into that. So that's my thought on dialogue.

**Deb:** Thank you for sharing your story in particular, especially that you hadn't shared that before. That feels important. And if I were to summarize what you're saying, it sounds like for you, this I don't wanna be friends thing is coming out of a a lack of information, but also a lack of interest in dialogue. Does that feel like a fair encapsulation? Okay.

**Deb:** Thank you. And how about Participant 1 and Participant 3? What comes up for you on this stat?

**Participant 1:** I can you repeat, like, the, like, the exact.

**Deb:** Yeah.

**Participant 1:** Step?

**Deb:** Of course. Yeah. So one third of non Jewish students say they would not wanna be friends with someone who supports the existence of Israel as a Jewish state.

**Participant 1:** Okay. I think that that, like, interpretation, like, that statement, I think people definitely would be voting on on that poll differently after October seventh than they would previously, like, to some extent, like, lack of knowledge. But I consider myself someone who was pretty informed on a non Jewish student who considers herself very informed on the topic. I was in Israel in August. My school had a trip, through, for non Jewish students to visit Israel and parts of the West Bank and learn more about the conflict that's happening, from a non biased perspective and kind of just be like, meet people on the ground there. So I think when it happened, a lot of people were kind of, like, asking me questions as someone who wasn't Jewish and didn't have, like, a strong, like, social media presence advocating for any sign necessarily, but I do feel pretty well informed on it, and I do have my own opinions when people ask. But I think that the supporting the existence of the state of Israel, in my head, at least, that question is different from supporting all the actions of the Israeli Defense Forces right now and the Israeli military and government because I personally think that a state of Israel should exist, but I don't really align with what a lot of the Israeli government's doing right now, and I am not in support of any of that personally.

**Participant 1:** But I think that people always just tend to stick with what they know and their beliefs. People always tend to be friends with people who have similar beliefs. Like, obviously, this topic is one that we're discussing, but I think, like, when Black Lives Matter is happening, I remember people on, like, one March on, like, June twenty twenty, people would, like, unfollow people if they weren't posting the right things and stuff like that. So I think it's just always gonna be something that in this political climate, people like to kind of align themselves with people that feel similarly to them. Sometimes it's feels like it's a necessity out of safety, and other times, it is a little bit closed minded, I think, to not wanna have discussions.

**Deb:** Yeah. So the two big things that are bubbling up for me there are this kind of mixing.

**Deb:** A belief worth with, like, the actions of another entity. And then the second thing.

**Deb:** Is that there are different motivations. The either self like, protecting yourself or, insulating from perspectives.

**Deb:** Two two poles.

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

**Participant 3:** I do kinda feel like, what do you know how inflated or not inflated, how recent this statistic is?

**Deb:** This is after they collected the these data after October seventh.

**Participant 3:** Okay.

**Deb:** But it's a a few months old at this time point, but not not it's not like a distant stat.

**Participant 3:** I would say that it's a little it's probably higher than it would normally be just because of either misinformation or misunderstanding of information.

**Participant 3:** And or also just really, like, taking, sides without looking at it yourself because, I mean, regardless of if you disagree with someone, I don't believe that at least, like, from a position of being here in the United States that it would lead to that much of a disconnect between two groups of people.

**Participant 3:** But, yeah, I I feel like relative to what it would be prior to.

**Participant 3:** Those events, it would it's somewhat inflated in that way.

**Deb:** Can you go in a little bit deeper on this idea of, taking sides without looking at it yourself and kind of the effect that might have on friendships for you?

**Participant 3:** Basically, like, if.

**Participant 3:** I mean, a lot of even larger news organizations are somewhat opinionated because, I mean, there's someone running that news organization who has their own opinions and can dictate what they wanna push, what they don't, or what someone above them is even thinking. Right? So a lot of people may just take their word or take the word of their favorite news organization, or social media post or something along those lines and just disregard the need to actually read up on something yourself, just because I feel like it creates.

**Participant 3:** It creates, like, I don't know how to explain it, but just.

**Participant 3:** Uninformed activism isn't really activism. And if that ends up happening, then it just makes the problem worse.

**Deb:** Thank you. And that's a good encapsulation there at the end. Like, yeah, that makes.

**Deb:** That's.

**Participant 3:** Thank.

**Deb:** Interesting.

**Participant 3:** You.

**Deb:** Okay. So next question is about.

**[Q4] 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?**  (00:43:24 - 00:54:58)

**Deb:** You and your friend group. So how do your views about Israel or the conflict compare to those of your friends, and how closely aligned are your and your friends' views. And I think kind of embedded in there is also curiosity about how has this conflict affected your relationships, your friendships.

**Deb:** Participant 4.

**Participant 4:** I can start. I mean, this is kinda related to what Participant 1 was saying before that people aren't like, tend to be friends with those who have similar views with as them. And I'm not really friends with anyone who's who has at least said that they support is like, Israel's actions, and all of my friends support Palestine. And they're, like, they're on the side of Palestine. And I haven't, like and I also have similar views to them, so we haven't really had any clash there. And I feel like a lot of people who that do support Israel's actions or the Israeli state, are very vocal about it and are more on the severe end of it rather than subtle. Because you can be subtle in your support or, like, kind of, like, really high up there. And a lot of the people who support Palestine are very much, like, solely Palestine and like, they're very vocal about it. Whereas, and it's the same for the Israeli side as well, obviously. So I haven't really interacted. I personally don't know, like, anyone in my personal friend group that does support Israel or their actions. So for me, it's like I'm kind of surrounded by people with the same views as myself.

**Deb:** Yeah. I think two follow-up questions there for me. When you were talking about almost, like, the intensity of support, so you used the word severity. Were you saying that both, pro Palestinian and pro Israel are equally intense? Are you experiencing one as kind of more intense or severe as another? And my second question is I'm I'm curious if you have any Jewish friend or Jewish friends in your group.

**Participant 4:** I don't.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** And in terms of, like, the intensity, I feel like.

**Participant 4:** Both I've like, I'm purse like, I wouldn't consider myself, like, intensely, like, vocal about my opinion regarding the matter, or, like, I don't post on social media about it or anything like that. But I do have an opinion on the matter. But I feel that and I think this is just because I don't have any Jewish friends or Israeli friends or anyone who supports the state of Israel that I feel that the Israeli side is more vocal about it and more like severe in their opinions if you will. On like Israel like Israel's actions. However I feel that like pro Palestinian people are also more vocal and severe in a way that they're making sure they're getting their voices heard because I feel like especially on my campus.

**Participant 4:** The Palestinian voices are kind of the oppressed ones. So they really are doing the most to make sure that their voices are getting heard and that they really are working to do the most that they can to make sure that my school, like, is not involved with any anything that's, like, aiding Israel or anything that shows support for Israel.

**Deb:** Okay.

**Participant 4:** So in a sense, both are equally as severe and intense, if you will.

**Deb:** Okay. Thank you.

**Deb:** How about others? What are you noticing in your friend groups?

**Participant 1:** I definitely consider myself to have, like, a pretty diverse friend group in school. I definitely have more Jewish friends from home just based on the area of, like, where I grew up versus my university, but I do have Jewish friends at school too. And I think for us, tiptoe around differences and opinions, and I don't see myself or anyone I don't think any of my close friends would cut me off from my beliefs, and I don't really have any interest in doing that for this topic at least. But, like, I think that people like, when it first happened, there was kind of discussions of what people's thoughts were. You kind of I feel like my friends are at an understanding where we're not really gonna change each other's opinions based on, like, any kind of, like, aggressive discussion. So I don't know. I have some friends that, like, things like when I'm going to Starbucks in the morning, they're like, I'm not gonna go in. And I was like, okay. And I think they kind of know that I'm still going to get my coffee because that's just what I was doing that day. But then, like, I don't know. I think, like, it was definitely a point of tension or, like, a big topic, like, the first few weeks. But then later on, as things started to go on, you you know what people are posting on social media. You kind of know that. And if it's something that I don't agree with, then and I feel like it's a little misinformed. At some point, it gets draining to kinda keep trying to, like, but did you look into this? Whatever. I just kind of let some of my friendships be a little less, like, involved in that aspect.

**Deb:** Yeah. Yeah. That's an interesting example of where after you notice the the posting, for instance, that maybe you just don't activate that friendship as much. So it changes maybe the the tone of it.

**Participant 1:** I think I still consider myself good friends with them. I think I just kind of I don't I think I'm okay to have some people in my circle that I'm not a thousand percent on alignment with this topic at least with, like because I think my friends that I disagree with have more personal ties to whatever mindset they have, and I don't really think I'm gonna get between them and, like, stories that have been told to them by their grandparents.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 2:** I guess well, so I would say that most of pretty much every everyone that, I'm friends with or, like, family members, do support Israel. I would say where we differ in opinion is what.

**Participant 2:** Israel's responsibility is in defending.

**Participant 2:** The Gazan, civilians.

**Participant 2:** Like, so personally, I I, you know, I I think that it it it should be a big priority of of Israel to, you know, avoid civilians. I don't think that everyone there does support Hamas and that they, you know, should to the best of their abilities try to be, you know, avoiding it at, you know, all costs. Versus, you know, I know I have, like, other friends and I have other family members who are like, but, you know, there there is a large percentage of the population who does support Hamas. And not saying that there should be intentional targeting, but to say, like, hey. Why are we putting our necks on the line and, you know, risking our soldiers' life to do more chart, like, pinpointing attacks at the at the risk for people who are, you know, still still support Hamas. So I would say that that's, like, the, the kind of difference between all of my groups is really just that's, like, the main thing is how what's Israel's responsibility, for civilians.

**Deb:** Yeah. So general agreement on aside, but then variability on on that particular piece of the the issue.

**Deb:** Thank you. Participant 5 or Participant 3?

**Participant 5:** I would say that I'm a very, like, well known person on my campus because I'm in SGA and I'm also an RA. So I know a little bit of everybody, I would say.

**Participant 5:** As far as, like, my friend group in particular, I would say it's a spectrum. I know some people who are very, like, pro Palestine, and I also know some people who are pro Israel. The people who are more, on the Palestine side, I would say, they usually just don't bring it up if they're in a neutral or, like, Israeli based group and vice versa just because we already know, like, what everybody's opinions on it is. So, like, just to avoid the argument.

**Participant 5:** But, as far as, like, vocality, I would say that the Jewish students I know and the pro Israel students I know are usually a lot more laid back, and they're not as argumentative as, like, the students I know who are pro Palestine. I would say they're pro Palestine students are a lot more in your face about it, which is more power to them. But, I would say they're definitely a lot more argumentative and a little a lot more forceful when it comes to their, like, opinions on things. Like, I feel like whenever they bring it up, they're kinda trying to sell me something in a way versus, like, discuss something, if that makes any sense. But my friend group is a mix of everything. And, like, whenever we do have something that's, like, disagreed upon, we just, like, don't really talk about it.

**Deb:** Okay. Have you had any, kinda impacts on your relationships? Either they get closer or they get divided or anything like that.

**Participant 5:** There's certain people who I avoid having certain political discussions with because of how vocal they are on social media with certain topics I don't entirely agree with. And so because I already know where that person's coming from and they're very, like, set in that belief, then I just don't bother. So I might not talk to them about certain things that I have an opinion about. So I guess it would be more the friendship would be more distant in that regard because of, like, I'm not having those conversations with them that I might have with a friend who's neutral or, like, not as, like, argumentative, if that makes any sense.

**Deb:** Right. So your yeah. How you engage your friends has differed a little bit. And, Participant 3, how about for you?

**Participant 3:** I'd say my friend group is also pretty diverse.

**Participant 3:** I do have, quite a few, like, close Jewish friends.

**Participant 3:** And the majority of people in my friend group, they aren't really accustomed to just taking the, opinion of, like, a news outlet or something. So we've all really done kind of research in the background to get a better idea beforehand.

**Participant 3:** And there are different views, but also just kind of a general understanding that, I mean, like, we we aren't part of the conflict directly. And so if we're going to debate about it, it's not supposed to become a conflict between us.

**Participant 3:** And then also, like, just being able to have an intellectual enough conversation means that even if you do disagree, like, it shouldn't it shouldn't become something that would cut you off or make you act differently or something along those lines.

**Participant 3:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Deb:** So our last question is a big one given we have, like, four minutes left, but I'm gonna ask it anyway. And whoever,

**[Q5] Best case scenario, how should the conflict in Israel and Gaza be resolved?**  (00:54:59 - 01:01:12)

**Deb:** Has some thoughts on it to share, please come on in. Best case scenario, how should the conflict in Israel and Gaza be resolved?

**Participant 2:** I mean, I don't think there's an easy answer to it. I think in, like, fantasy lands, you know, the Palestinian people would see that there is no way forward with the current governments that they instead of trying to destroy Israel, would overthrow their own government and move towards a path of peace, which I know is not an easy thing. But that the people in power are not gonna help them. It's not gonna help their children. It's not gonna help their grandchildren. There is no future at this current state. If we don't do something now, we're gonna have this war again in ten years and in twenty years. It has to just be a regime change. People are, like, angry with the government in Israel, but it's, you know so, you know, that changes. But when you have a government, like, what they're having in the West Bank, what they're having in Gaza, that there is no you know, there's not even a possibility of judicial reform just because of, like, how it is.

**Participant 2:** So I I really think it's about, Palestinian people coming to the conclusion that what we're doing is not working, and, we need to try a different try a different, way of doing it.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 5:** Think it would be good to kinda figure out where everybody's at. Like, I know most of the Palestinians are in, like, a certain region, and I think it would be good to, like, redefine borders according to that. So, for example, if there's, like, a group of Palestinians in one area and they've been there for generations to section that area off as part of Palestine and the is the places where, like, Israelis have mostly been for generations section that off it, like, as Israel and then do it that way, I think, would make sense.

**Deb:** Thank you.

**Participant 1:** I agree with Participant 5 on that sense. I think, whether people think it's a realistic opportunity is kind of a different question, but I think, I personally am a supporter of, like, a two state solution. I think that that needs to be very clearly outlined, and I don't really see any group being happy without that kind of existence of Palestine as a govern as a worldwide acknowledged country of its own versus, like and I think the borders need to be kind of stricter because I feel like I don't know. I feel like in high school, the time we always saw the map of Israel in kind of, like, nineteen sixty versus nineteen seventy, nineteen eighty and just kind of bleeding into it. So I think, like, actual well defined borders without, like, kind of, like, trickling of any group. Like, I don't think that I think separate and, like, where people can move freely without checkpoints and stuff like that is definitely gonna be the best ideal scenario.

**Deb:** Thank you. And Participant 4 Participant 3?

**Participant 3:** Talking about, like, kind of stricter boundaries or at least more fixed boundaries, I think that's a pretty good idea just because I mean, there's always going to be, like, I guess, fixed views on the point. And so you wanna be able to at least.

**Participant 3:** Be give those people who don't want to even have a discussion on either side, like, the ability to just be in their own local spot.

**Participant 3:** And I feel like that would mitigate conflict. And, like Participant 1 said, being able to go without checkpoints, If you do that, then people who are either open to dialogue or, just more liberal on their ideas about it.

**Participant 3:** Can move freely or just not be cumbered by, like, a division.

**Deb:** Thank you. And Participant 4, do you want to share a perspective on this one?

**Participant 4:** Yeah. I agree, like, what everyone has been saying so far and with Participant 3, how he was talking about, like, stricter boundaries. And I agree with that, but I also feel like the US needs to maintain some sort of neutrality and not make Israel a military superpower because that's also one of the reasons why so many pea they're able to kill so many people in Palestine just because they have all these military weapons, this funding, and this support from the US. And having some sort of neutrality and some sort of discussion of, like, trying to keep the peace at the very least between the two is one way in which it can be resolved. Because the US is such a big superpower, and it's one of the reasons why none of the neighboring states like Syria, Lebanon, or anyone will try to help Palestine because if they if they fight against Israel, Israel has more than enough resources to be able to combat all of those countries and still win.

**Deb:** Okay. Okay. Thank you. Well, I see we are at the top of the hour. So I wanna thank you from the bottom of my heart for sharing what you've shared and how you shared it with such care. And I guarantee that this session is absolutely going to inform our understanding of how students think about and experience, this this issue. So thank you. Within the next twenty four hours, you're going to receive an email from College Pulse that will tell you how to activate your incentive. It's gonna ask you if any other thoughts have bubbled up that you would like to share, and then also provide some resource numbers if something has bubbled up for you that you would like to discuss, with somebody. So a thought or feeling or anything like that. So with that, we are we are done. I'm happy to hang around for a minute if anyone has any questions for me. But other than that, you're welcome to hit end exit, and have a fantastic rest of your Thursday.

**Participant 5:** Thank you. You too.

**Participant 2:** Thank.

**Participant 3:** Thank.

**Participant 1:** Thank.

**Participant 3:** You.

**Participant 2:** You.

**Deb:** Thank.

**Participant 3:** Have.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 1:** You.

**Participant 3:** A good day.

**Deb:** Bye bye.

**Participant 2:** It's the exit.

**Deb:** Oh, I can I can exit.

**Participant 5:** That's.

**Deb:** You.

**Participant 5:** What I'm.

**Deb:** Too?

**Participant 5:** Looking for.

**Deb:** Or do you okay. Do you both wanna leave?

**Participant 5:** Yeah.

**Participant 2:** Yeah.

**Deb:** Okay. Thank you so much. Have a.

**Participant 5:** Thank.

**Deb:** Good one.

**Participant 5:** 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)