

A Report of the Research Group
of the Concentration in
Education and Jewish Studies
@ Stanford University

Safe and on the Sidelines

Jewish Students and the Israel-Palestine Conflict on Campus

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Executive Summary

In recent years, concern has grown for the well-being and even the civil rights of Jewish college students. Much of this attention has resulted from a widespread sense that college campuses have become increasingly tolerant of and even fomented antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment. Campuses have been called “hotspots of antisemitism” and have been characterized as “breeding,” “ignoring” and “turning a blind eye to” the problem (Bauer-Wolf 2017; Marcus 2010; Saxe et al. 2016; Shire 2015). The overall impression is one in which Jewish students are under attack by student activists, fearful of voicing their opinions and expressing their Jewishness publicly.

This impression, though supported by survey research and reported widely in the press, does not represent the experiences of Jewish students at the campus level. How do they, in fact, experience everyday life as a Jewish student? Do they feel like they are under attack? How do they understand the putative rise and persistence of antisemitism? How do they relate to student activism in general, and how do they relate specifically to activism concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict? How do their emerging political perspectives inform their evolving commitments to being Jewish, and vice versa? Do they widely feel like their campuses are, as one report put it, “hotspots of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment?” (Saxe et al. 2016)

To address these questions, the research group of the Concentration in Education and Jewish Studies at Stanford University turned to Jewish students on five California campuses thought to harbor high levels of anti-Israel activity. Contrary to widely shared impressions, we found a picture of campus life that is neither threatening nor alarmist. In general, students reported feeling comfortable on their campuses, and, more specifically, comfortable as Jews on their campuses.

Interviewees reported low levels of antisemitism or discomfort. When they did encounter discomfort, they traced it either to the carelessness of student speech or to tensions within campus debates about the Israel-Palestine conflict, which they characterized as strident, inflammatory, and divisive. They held both supporters and critics of Israel responsible for creating this environment. The tone of student activism created a divided campus that left little room for reasoned, productive debate.

Deeper still, our interviewees expressed their frustration at being drawn into campus debates about the Israel-Palestine conflict simply because they were Jewish. The majority of our interviewees parsed differences between being Jewish and supporting Israeli policy, and they objected to the expectation that their identity as Jews meant they held one kind of politics when they, in fact, hold

a range of political opinions. Interviewees described that the force of these expectations left them feeling marginalized in both activist communities and Jewish groups on campus. As a result, they often chose to avoid politics or organized Jewish life entirely.

Based on interviews with 66 undergraduate students at five California universities, we found:

- Students feel safe on campus. None of our interviewees characterized their campus as antisemitic. They acknowledge the presence of antisemitism, but they neither feel threatened nor targeted by it. When students do feel threatened, the feeling of threat derives generally from campus activism related to the tone of debate about Israel-Palestine conflict. Most students we interviewed clearly differentiated between what they understood to be the relatively rare expressions of true antisemitism from what they understood as legitimate expressions of political perspective.
- Students reject the conflation of Jewish and Israel. They chafe at assumption that they, as Jews, necessarily support Israeli policies. They object to the accusation that American Jews are responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, and they express similar discomfort with the expectation that all Jews should be Zionists.
- Students struggle with Israel. Many feel an affinity to Israel, which they carry from their childhoods, but they also readily acknowledge that Israel's politics and policies generally often contradict their own political values.
- Students find the tone of campus political activism in general, and around Israel and Palestine specifically, to be severe, divisive, and alienating. They fear that entering political debate, especially when they feel the social pressures of both Jewish and non-Jewish activist communities, will carry social costs that they are unwilling to bear.
- Students who wish to speak up often opt out, choosing silence and avoidance over direct engagement in a political arena that they find off-putting and unproductive.
- Students avoid conflict by avowing ignorance. When students say, "I don't know," it usually signals a desire to disengage from a discussion in which no easy answers or ready conclusions present themselves. "I don't know" is not an evaluative summary of a student's understanding but an indication of their discomfort with the terms and tone of debate.
- The persistence of internal conflicts, the tenor of campus debate, and the expectations about what others think students should feel and how they should identify often result in student disengagement from both political discourse and from the campus Jewish community.

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Introduction

As we were wrapping up our interview with Sam (sophomore, UC Berkeley), we asked him if there is anything else he wanted to tell us.¹ “No,” he said. Then he paused and continued:

But when you're writing, downplay the fact that while Berkeley is a hotbed for political activity, people aren't walking around getting beat up for being Jewish and beat up for being Palestinian. It is a safe place for everybody, but it just has strong political activist opinions. People are going to voice their opinions. If you're going to be here, you need to learn to be tolerant.

Sam was adamant that his campus is diverse and that it can hold a variety of opinions. He has never experienced antisemitism, and he juxtaposed public impressions of the campus with his experience as a student there. “I heard Berkeley was a really antisemitic school. It's not terrible. I've never been outwardly targeted.... I don't think I'm walking around with a target on my back at UC Berkeley campus. I would hope that people are becoming more respectful and conscious of people's views and [more] tolerant. For the most part, it's pretty normal.”

"People aren't walking around getting beat up for being Jewish and beat up for being Palestinian."

Sam's comments capture many of the ways in which Jewish students on California campuses encounter and understand antisemitism and political activism concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict. Sam, like many of the students we interviewed, did not experience his campus as hostile, though he did find the tone of political activism to be off-putting, largely unproductive, and sometimes offensive. To Sam, campus politics mostly sounded like “people yelling at each other all the time.” His response? “That's what I remove myself from.”

Sam's insights add descriptive depth to the portrait of American Jewish college students that has been circulating in the press and in recent scholarship. Since 2014, there have been at least seven separate studies dedicated to tracking campus political discourse as it pertains to antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment (ADL 2015; AMCHA 2015, 2016, 2017; Kosmin and Keysar 2015; Saxe et al. 2015, 2016). These studies offer quantitative accounts of antisemitism and anti-Israel speech on campuses nationwide, but what they offer in numerical impressions, they obscure in the subtleties of student experience.

This report turns directly to the students themselves to gain greater insight into these issues (see Engel 1995).² How do they experience everyday life as a student? How do they understand the putative persistence of antisemitism? How do they relate to student activism in general, and how do they relate specifically to activism concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict? How do their emerging political perspectives inform their evolving commitments to being Jewish, and vice versa? Do they feel like their campuses are “hotspots of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment?” (Saxe et al. 2016)

How do they relate to student activism in general, and how do they relate specifically to activism concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict? How do their emerging political perspectives inform their evolving commitments to being Jewish, and vice versa? Do they feel like their campuses are “hotspots of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment?” (Saxe et al. 2016)

Drawing on 66 in-depth interviews with students across five California university campuses (Stanford, UC Berkeley, San Francisco State University, UCLA,

and UC Irvine), this report offers a richer portrait of how Jewish students experience, understand, and respond to the political cultures on their campuses. This report adds nuance and subtlety to existing research by amplifying student voices.³

Throughout our interviews, students shared opinions and impressions about a wide array of subjects, both political and social, both on campus and beyond it. They shared their beliefs about religion and culture, about their own upbringings, and about their own sense of Jewishness. They spoke about their experiences on campus, of friends, of classes, of student organizations, and of activism. They offered nuanced and sometimes contradictory accounts of their own alignments of identity, politics, and community. They also revealed, implicitly, what was missing on their campuses that might motivate them to be more engaged as Jewish students and as political actors.

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What We Know about Jewish Students

Research and journalism have painted a picture of American Jewish college students and campuses threatened by the rising tides of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic voices (here is just a sampling of articles published since 2012: ADL 2013, 2015; AMCHA 2015, 2016, 2017; Barton and Huffman 2012; Bauer-Wolf 2017; Berteaux 2016; Cannestra 2016; Gladstone 2016; Gordon 2015; Kosmin and Keysar 2015; Marcus 2010; Medina 2015; Nagourney 2016; Phillips 2017; Rossman-Benjamin 2015; Saxe et al. 2015, 2016; Shire 2015). As the ADL recently reported, "During the 2014-15 academic year, university and college campuses in the U.S. experienced a major increase in anti-Israel programming and Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel" (2015, 3).

Kosmin and Keysar, in their national survey of Jewish students, found "a majority (54%) of Jewish students in the sample reported having been subject to or witnessing anti-Semitism on their campus" (7). In a 2015 survey of Jewish college students, Saxe et al. found that "Nearly three-quarters of respondents report having been exposed at one time during the past year to at least one of six antisemitic statements including the claims that Jews have too much power and that Israelis behave 'like Nazis' toward the Palestinians" (Saxe et al. 1). The AMCHA Initiative's reports on campus politics paint the most blistering portraits of Jewish students under siege. "The number of incidents involving the suppression of Jewish students' freedom of speech

and assembly approximately doubled from 2015 to 2016" (2016, 2).

A closer look at these findings paints a more stable portrait of Jewish life on campus in which a minority of students report feeling hostility. Saxe et al. found that "more than one quarter (27%) of Jewish undergraduates felt that hostility toward Israel was a "fairly" or "very" big problem on their campus" (2016, 7), while only "13% of Jewish undergraduates felt that hostility to Jews was a 'fairly' or 'very' big problem on their campus, and concluded that antisemitic harassment was relatively "uncommon" (2016, 15, 18). Kosmin and Keysar also found that antisemitic incidents, while on the rise, are still "relatively rare, and the vast majority of Jewish students report feeling safe on their campuses" (11).

Part of the reason for these different representations of campus culture comes from the difficulties in defining what counts as political speech and what counts as antisemitism. The AMCHA Initiative's response to this problem was to formulate its own expansive definition of "antisemitic activity" and apply it broadly and unsystematically to an array of sources without appearing to consult either students or representatives from the campuses in question (2016, 2). With greater attention to methods and rigor, other researchers have surveyed students directly, allowing the students to define the terms as they see fit (Kosmin and Keysar 2015;

Saxe et al. 2015). Although this approach allows for subjective definitions, it nevertheless reduces what might be a wide array of experiences beneath a single term. For example, a student might hear another student claim that Israelis behave “like Nazis” and interpret that as antisemitic, while another might hear that claim and understand it as an expression of a political perspective.

Given that researchers have allowed students to define what counts as antisemitism on their campuses, it is important to note that some students are more likely than others to report such incidents on a survey (Kosmin and Keysar, 5; Saxe et al. 2016, 32). Kosmin and Keysar note that AIPAC members were 80% more likely to report antisemitism than non-members, and that Hillel members were “around 50%” more likely than non-members to report antisemitic incidents.⁴ “These indicators, based on the students’ self-reports, illustrate who is more vulnerable on campus or more likely to report anti-Semitism” (6). But which is it? Vulnerability or likelihood to report? Saxe et al. (2015) offered a more measured interpretation. “It is likely that those who are highly connected to Israel become a target of antisemitic or anti-Israel sentiment because they make their support for Israel known. It is also likely that those who are more connected to Israel are more sensitive to criticism of Israel, or more likely to perceive such criticism as antisemitic. Both dynamics are, perhaps, in play” (23).

Researchers are careful to note that criticism of Israel and antisemitism are not synonymous, and found that anti-Israel speech feeds a campus climate that their respondents find hostile. Kosmin and Keysar wrote, “While it is important not to conflate anti-Semitism with every incident of anti-Israel activity, the rise in anti-Israel events on college campuses contributes to what some

students experience as a hostile campus environment” (11). Saxe et al. reached a more modest conclusion. “The extent to which criticism of Israel’s policies has translated into hostility rooted in antisemitism is not known. It is also unclear how the sometimes vitriolic debate about Israel is affecting Jewish students, both in terms of their perception of safety in expressing their Jewish identities and their involvement with the Jewish community and Israel” (2015, 6).

This report complements and builds upon existing research and seeks to add a layer of detail by turning to the voices of the students, themselves. Do students, in fact, connect antisemitism and criticism of Israel? How do they experience everyday life as a student? How do they understand the putative persistence of antisemitism? How do they relate to student activism in general, and how do they relate specifically to activism concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict? How do their emerging political perspectives inform their evolving commitments to being Jewish, and vice versa? Do they feel like their campuses are “hotspots of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment?” (Saxe et al. 2016)

What emerges is not a picture of campuses ablaze with antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment, but campuses and communities divided in such a way that Jewish students often feel excluded from both Jewish communal spaces and activist groups. Our interviewees lamented the fact that campus activism has become so strident, divisive, and rigid, and that it left little room for more nuanced debate. As a result, they would rather avoid politics and activism around the Israel-Palestine conflict than fight for a place in communities that marginalize them on the basis of either their identity or their politics.

How We Designed This Study

To broaden our understanding of undergraduate Jewish student experiences, we conducted 66 in-person interviews on five California campuses between December 2016 and May 2017 (see page 10 for a demographic breakdown of the sample). Interviews typically lasted about 90 minutes and consisted of two parts: a semi-structured script and a series of “think alouds,” in which we asked interviewees to respond to a series of statements from scholarship and journalism about Jewish students, as well as photographs documenting campus activism and prejudicial speech about Jews more generally.⁵

We selected California campuses for our research because the state has been identified repeatedly as being particularly fertile for antisemitism and for having an active presence of student groups critical of Israel and Zionism. The University of California campuses were highlighted as “hotspots of antisemitism” by the Cohen Center, and each of the campuses in our study ranked in the top 20 “worst campuses for Jewish students,” in 2016, as tabulated by the website, *Algemeiner.com* (2016; see also AMCHA Initiative 2015). By focusing on campuses that have been identified as among the most egregious in their treatment of Jewish students, we expected to find extensive descriptions of the kinds of antisemitic and anti-Israel discourse that has been well documented elsewhere.

We sought out Jewish students who were either unengaged or minimally engaged in organized Jewish life on their campuses.

We intentionally sought out Jewish students who were either unengaged or minimally engaged in organized Jewish life on their campuses. Our rationale for selection reflected the understanding that students who fit our profile represent the vast majority of Jewish college students; even the most popular Hillel (typically, the biggest Jewish organization on a campus) will only regularly attract a fraction of a campus’s Jewish student population. We wanted to extend the representative scope of research on college campuses to include Jewish students who might not otherwise appear on organizational email lists, or as regular participants or members of campus organizations.

Out of respect for the vicissitudes of their involvement in extra-curricular activities and their perceptions in general, we allowed them to define their level of involvement and did not apply a test

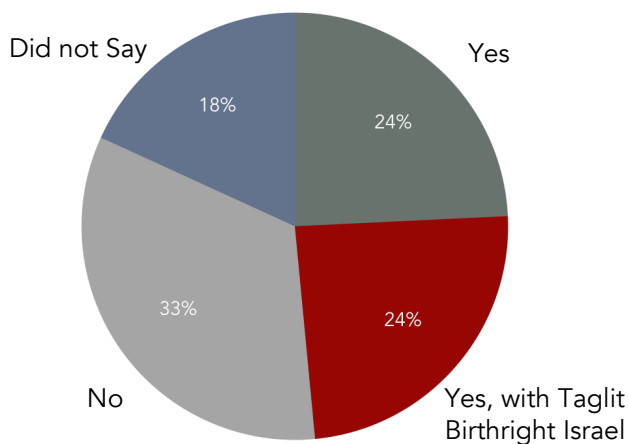
to participants in the research. Still, we screened students with respect to their activities in order to determine whether or not they fit our general criteria so as to minimize those with vastly different definitions of “involvement” than ours. We also turned away a few students who heard about our study and asked to be included, because they did not fit our criteria (we extended invitations to them to speak with us about the project but off the record).⁶

We also limited our interviews to second, third, and fourth year undergraduate students, to focus on those who have had enough time on campus to form their own impressions and develop their own sense of its political climate (we avoided first year students who were still feeling the pressures of the transition to college life). We contacted students through several channels including Jewish studies classes, student email lists, word-of-mouth introductions to friends and acquaintances, and, at one campus, through a selection of the Hillel email list that consisted of students who only attended one or two events over two years. We offered participants a \$50 Amazon gift card as an incentive.

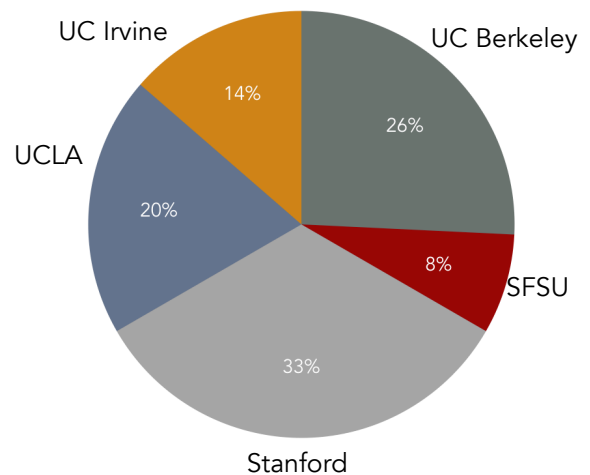
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Demographics of the Sample

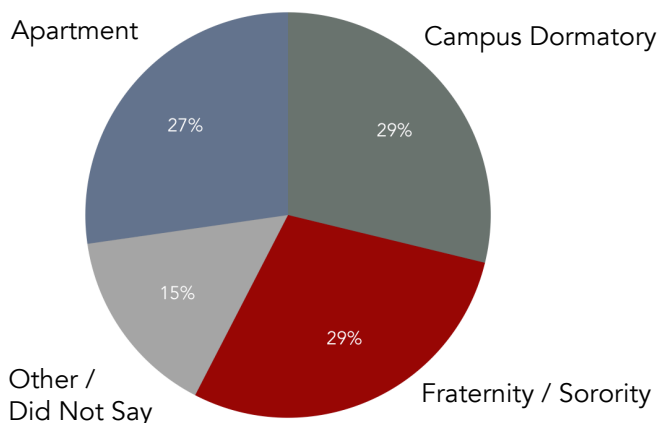
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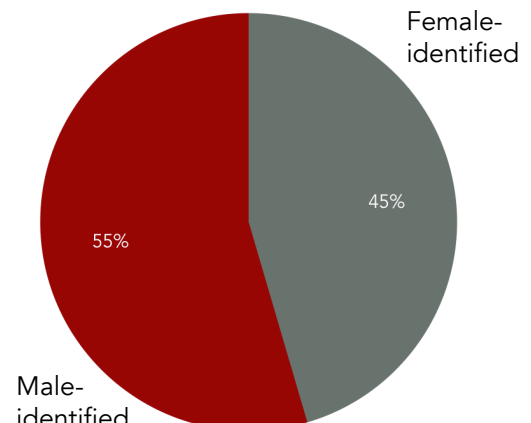
By Campus



By Residence



By Gender Identity



Feeling Safe on Campus

In contrast to the unflattering image of California campuses offered in some recent research reports, the students we interviewed did not at all characterize their campuses as rife with antisemitism. Not a single one of our interviewees described their campus as hostile to Jewish students, nor did they identify antisemitism as a significant problem. Eli (junior, UC Berkeley) observed the pervasiveness of this misperception and contrasted it with his experience.

I really do think there's a misconception that Berkeley is an antisemitic place. I know for certain that all the people that were my parents' age at the synagogue that we went to, all were telling my parents like, "Oh, you're letting him go to Berkeley? That's like, a bad place for Jews." It's really not. I've never been a target of antisemitism. None of my Jewish friends have been a target of antisemitism. I think it's a misconception that a lot of people have.

Adam (senior, Stanford) agreed that his campus could hardly be considered antisemitic.

I'm not concerned about my safety. Yeah. ... I know so many Jewish people ... and I don't know one person who has been physically or even other way, other than emotionally harmed by antisemitism, like antisemitic hate crimes. Not one person. I haven't even heard a story [about it].

When students did encounter antisemitism, they often characterized it in terms of student insensitivities or wayward attempts at humor. Tina (senior, UCLA) described occasions of inconsiderate or offensive language use by non-Jewish students, "like hearing people make jokes that seemed to be resonant of old stereotypes." Or, as Cathy (sophomore, UCLA) recalled, "I heard anti-Semitic jokes and stuff.... Not personally, but just I've heard of it happening." Megan (junior, UC Berkeley) outright dismissed the idea that her campus was threatening to Jews, even while allowing that offensive comments persist. "I've never heard of any stories of anyone being harassed or anything. Like I said, I had never been harassed, it was just like small little comments that people don't even realize are offensive." Rarely did our interviewees conclude that these comments rose to the level of threat or alarm.

"I really do think there's a misconception that Berkeley is an antisemitic place."

Amanda (senior, UC Berkeley) reported seeing swastikas on campus, but her response was to be unintimidated and almost casual about them, as if student callousness was part of everyday life. "I don't go home and cry about it. I'm just like, 'Oh. ...' I've seen maybe three or four in this entire time I was here. Maybe five. Actually, maybe more than

five. I've seen them, once in a while." Amanda, however, did not consider this to be part of a pattern of harassment. "I was never verbally harassed because I was Jewish. Actually, on the contrary, people think it's so cool that I'm Jewish and I love talking about it. Yeah, I've never had anti-Semitism against me."

Ruth (junior, UCLA) agreed, noting that her peers were not only respectful of difference, but engaged by it.

Most people don't really think I'm Jewish because I look very Latina, so a lot of people, like it doesn't come up in conversation, but like everyone's respectful once they find out. It's not like an issue or stuff like that.... They haven't shown anything that made me feel uncomfortable or anything.

When our interviewees encountered offensive speech, they often contextualized it in terms of a kind of unpleasant but ubiquitous presence of student prejudices that cut across race, politics, gender, and sexuality. As Amy (sophomore, UCLA) explained, "I don't think it's any different than what it's like to be a female student at UCLA or what it's like to be a liberal student at UCLA or what it's like to be a student at UCLA."

Max (junior, Stanford) agreed that his peers often speak before they consider the full impact of their words, and in ways that do not always reflect their intellect or sensitivities.

It's just like sometimes there are off-handed comments that people make. I

think that people at Stanford are very smart, very knowledgeable, but sometimes they don't think about the ramifications of all their actions. I think that's true with the BDS movement, but also true with students' individual actions.

Regardless, students agreed that speakers are responsible for their speech, especially when it crossed the line from politics into hate. Aaron (senior, Berkeley) told us, "It is still the responsibility of the antisemitic person to not be antisemitic."

Our interviewees described their campuses as safe and their interactions with other students as respectful. When they encountered antisemitism, they tended to react with surprise, and to attribute it to the careless speech of students, which they felt was applied, unfortunately, to every student population. But this contextualization diminished their tendency to describe their campus climate as antisemitic, intolerant, or hostile.

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"I don't think it's any different than what it's like to be a female student at UCLA or what it's like to be a liberal student at UCLA or what it's like to be a student at UCLA."

Rejecting the Conflation of Jewish and Israel

Many students traced whatever discomfort they felt to the tone of campus activism related to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and they generally did not identify activism as antisemitic. Nevertheless, fierce critiques of Israel left some of our interviewees feeling unsettled or attacked, regardless of their political attitudes. Our interviewees traced some of their discomfort to assumptions that they, as Jews, support Israel and its policies, and they offered careful explications of how they understood the relationship between their Jewishness and their politics.

Some students we interviewed reacted strongly to public criticism of Israel, but most of them stopped short of calling such political speech antisemitic. Lindsey (junior, UCLA) described her discomfort after seeing a cartoon drawing of the Israeli Prime Minister in the local student newspaper. "I was like, 'I thought this school was very liberal' and ... I felt like I was being... what's the word? I was being criticized [for] being in a Jewish community. I felt very uncomfortable seeing that."

Another student described her unease with anti-Israel activists at UC Berkeley. "Those are the moments that I feel

unsafe.... Whatever it is. It feels like an attack on the Jewish community as well, and that is very uncomfortable." Emily (junior, Stanford) recalled the personal nature of her reaction to the student senate discussion of a divestment resolution that took place during her first year on campus.

I think I felt threatened because ... Well, I might say defensive rather than threatened, but I think I felt defensive because of my family. Because of how I was raised, there was this history of a strong personal connection with Israel, even though I've never been [there] and I have very conflicting opinions about Israel's actions that led to the call for divestment, but it was definitely ... I don't know. It was something about my family's expectations and just the climate I grew up in.

"Those are the moments that I feel unsafe.... Whatever it is. It feels like an attack on the Jewish community...."

Other students, like Amanda (senior, Berkeley), reported being made uncomfortable not by the criticism itself, but from being erroneously "blamed for what people perceive as the crimes of the Israeli government," though Joseph (senior, SFSU) noted, "it [blame] has not personally happened to me."

Louis (senior, UC Irvine) rejected claims that expressions of campus politics amounted to antisemitism because he felt like that label diminished his own experiences of antisemitism. "I don't relate too well with other Jews who think that anti-Israel sentiment is the equivalent of antisemitism because as someone who dealt with very real and harsh antisemitism growing up, equating those two to me is kind of very much diminishing kind of my own experience."

A small number of those we interviewed (n=6) expressed their understanding that anti-Israel sentiment was, by definition, antisemitic. Cathy (sophomore, UCLA) said, "If you're anti-Israel, how can you not be antisemitic? It just doesn't make sense to me. Why would you care if there's a Jewish state if you are not anti-Jews? It doesn't make sense." Sandra (senior, UCLA), agreed: "A Zionist believes in the rights of the Jewish people and the rights for Israel to be a country. I feel like if you're against that, it would be antisemitic."

By contrast, the majority of our interviewees objected to the equivalence of the two. Michael (senior, UC Berkeley) explained,

I don't really buy this whole "protesting Israel is antisemitic" thing. Sometimes it is, I think. I mean, I've tried to avoid these conversations in public or with people I don't really know. But there can be an assumption that because I'm part Jewish or went on Birthright, which I guess is fair or plausible, but that I have this position on Israel.

Sharon (sophomore, Stanford) agreed, expressing her discomfort that "Jewishness is conflated with being Israeli" and explaining that "Jewishness can be very separate." Alexandra (senior, Stanford) put it plainly. "The words aren't interchangeable. Jews are not interchangeable with Israel." Joy (senior, UCLA) offered a similar formulation. "I don't really think Jewishness is conflated with Israel. I think people do think that Israel is the Jewish homeland, but ... Jewish is a religion for me."

Jonathan (senior, Stanford) also explained his objection to equating Jewish identity with support for the state of Israel.

American Jews are raised, I was raised... to associate Jewishness with Israel. That said, there's no inherent, core reason why that should be true. Israel is a country. Judaism is a religion. There are ties, and I have family in Israel. But that doesn't mean that the two are somehow necessarily compatible, and it certainly doesn't mean what I think a lot of right-wing politicians say, that if you're Jewish, you have to therefore support Israel's policies, which is a mistaken conflation of two very different ideas. People have been raised to associate them strongly even when people themselves don't associate them strongly, and I don't at all.

Distinguishing between Zionism and Jewishness takes some effort. Andy (sophomore, UC Berkeley) explained how he tries to separate his emotional response from his intellectual understanding.

“Viscerally, when an anti-Zionism conversation starts to happen, inside I connect it to antisemitism, but I try to keep out of that mindset in the conversation.”

Max (junior, Stanford) took a more moderate approach, generalizing the importance of distinguishing between people and politics.

Some people ... equate the policies of the government of Israel exactly to the will of the Jewish people in general. I think that it's important to draw the distinction between what the Israeli government is doing and what the sentiment of all Jewish people are because one is not necessarily representative of the other.

Save the small number of students who equated anti-Zionism with antisemitism, most students rejected the tendency to equate the two. Some felt uncomfortable in response to criticism of Israel but by refusing to define it as antisemitism, they highlighted their understanding of the difference between Israeli politics and Jewish people.

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Struggling With Israel

Our interviewees' attitudes toward Israel were often characterized by a tension between sentimental attachment and critical thought. In many cases, their affective connection to Israel gave way to evolving political and ethical beliefs that inform their understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Their responses revealed a connection to a vision of Israel that they felt to be in conflict with the behaviors of the state in the international arena.

Rachel (sophomore, UC Berkeley) emphasized the tension between the idea of Israel and its implications.

"Aw, [Israel] is like home. After all the times when we were all killed, and shit." That's why I'm so conflicted, because of course, I want to feel like there's a home that's safe, and that we deserve. At the same time, I don't want that home to be at the expense of another group of people.

Aaron (junior, UC Berkeley) traced the roots of his tension to his own Jewish education.

Everything [I heard growing up] is like: plant trees in Israel, or go to Israel, or protect Israel all these ways. It's like, "okay, but are we really getting to the core of the issue, or is this just how our community's going to deal with things?" ... I think I struggle with my place and where I fall on the Israel spectrum, so I think I go back and

forth between trying to defend Israel or defend what they do and then look critically at it and be upset.

Offering a similar reflection, Amy (sophomore, UCLA) plainly noted that she felt "the definition of Zionism that I had growing up in Hebrew school has changed."

Allison (senior, UCLA) described her internal struggle with this change:

Having grown up even partially Jewish, not even associated, never practicing, never really associating with it, but just growing up Jewish, you have this inclination to side with Israel no matter what. And part of me feels like that's wrong because I like to feel that I'm like, "okay, I want to see all sides and I know for a fact that Israel has done some really horrible things. And that a lot of innocent Palestinians have lost their lives and their homes and everything because of the conflict." But I also know that it goes both ways.

Our interviewees felt this tension keenly and identified a variety of strategies to address or engage with it. Emily (junior, Stanford) used her expository writing class to examine her relationship to the Israel-Palestine conflict, and found herself more accepting of her own ambivalence.

I feel like I learned that it was okay to be conflicted about the issue. I think growing up, there was this very strong pro-Israel sentiment that I got from my family. Then, coming to campus, there was this very ... I don't know. I don't want to say anti-Israel. I guess I could say pro-Palestinian sentiment, and I tended to play devil's advocate in whatever situation I was in because I was so conflicted. Someone would say something, and I'd agree with it, but then, the other part of my mind would go, "Well, what about this?"

Even our interviewees who equated anti-Zionism with antisemitism felt conflicted. Cathy (sophomore, UCLA) was one of our most outspoken Zionist-identified students, and she still felt it necessary to temper her support of Israel with an acknowledgement of the political reality. "I do see what a lot of Palestinian supporters and Palestinian students are saying about human rights issues and things like that and their concerns. Obviously, I see their point."

Still other students expressed their anxieties about even admitting their internal struggles, particularly when speaking to their parents and grandparents who raised them to love Israel unconditionally. As Elisheva (senior, Stanford) described,

When I first told my mom [about my involvement in the divestment campaign], she was very upset with me. She grew up in an Orthodox Jewish household, so when I told her about this divestment campaign on campus and how I was supporting it, and I told her about how Black Lives Matter was supporting divestment of Israel, she was upset that I had that belief.... And

that's kind of the belief that I got from a number of Jewish students on campus — that we don't understand and that Israel is a haven and it could never commit the human rights violations that we were talking about, or that if it did, it was only in self-defense, and things like that. So, I had a hard time having conversations with her.

The students we interviewed felt warmly toward Israel, but they also understood that those sentimental attachments were in tension with political realities. They acknowledged that the idea of Israel they were taught as children did not align with their developing sense of political action. In this context, a personal attachment to Israel does not necessarily lead to support for its policies, nor does it make it easier for students to engage in campus political activism around the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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"I struggle with my place and where I fall on the Israel spectrum, so I think I go back and forth between trying to defend Israel or defend what they do and then look critically at it and be upset."

The Social Cost of Campus Politics

Elisheva, like many of our other interviewees, keenly felt the social implications of political engagement. This surfaced both in decisions students made about how to talk politics in interpersonal relationships, and in the ways they viewed the political culture of the campus more broadly. In both contexts, students demurred from outright conflict, usually concluding that fierce political battles were not worth the high social cost they exacted.

She observed that stating that her commitment to Israel might cost her friendships.

When there are students who don't understand the same attachment towards Israel [that I feel], and don't recognize that, and are more engaging in the conversation from an attacking line. I felt like sophomore year I was at risk of losing communities based on my beliefs.

Joy (sophomore, UCLA) concluded that the tendency to avoid conflict nudged her peers to gravitate toward like-minded people. "I think people do try to avoid politics and [talk about it] more in safe environments with people you sort of

know will be similar thinkers." Michael (senior, UC Berkeley) was more philosophical about the social aspects of campus politics. "If you risk losing friends from the other side, then they're no friends of yours," he said before adding, "it's wise to avoid those sorts of conversations unless you really want to take a side."

At the campus level, students almost uniformly expressed a distaste for the tone of political activism in general. Megan, (junior, Berkeley) characterized campus activists as "just really aggressive and people are always going to fight for what they believe in. That's just the type of environment it is here." Amit (sophomore, Stanford) said, "A lot of it is not really discourse. It's a lot of people putting out their ideas and other people liking it or agreeing or supporting. It's not really a conversation." Gail (senior, UCLA) added, "I think it's too easy to call each side an asshole and an idiot. It's too easy, and I don't think that there's a lot of opportunities for those voices to hear each other in a safe place."

James (senior, UCLA) felt similarly.

I don't think that the goal is, "Let's come together and try to produce change." I

"I don't think that there's a lot of opportunities for those voices to hear each other in a safe place."

think the goal is, "You're either with us, or you're against us. And if you're against us, then we're against you. And we're just going to try to mobilize our community against yours." Rather than, "Let's find common ground and focus on the real things that effect all of us." You know, student debt, things of that nature. Instead it's, "Let's focus on these big national political issues" that probably no change will come about in and it's just very divisive.

Aaron (junior, Stanford) understood the toll that these dynamics have taken on students and student activists themselves. "There's a social cost for not agreeing completely with certain movements, and there was a lot of that two years ago and there's been lots of work in activist communities to sort of tone back on that, because that was hard for a lot of students."

With respect to Israel and Palestine specifically, interviewees found political discourse dominated by the loudest and most strident voices, leaving little room for what they felt were more measured opinions. Jordan (junior, UC Irvine) described both protests and campus debates as "pretty heated," and Aaron (junior, Berkeley) described campus activists as "very radical ... I see that with the pro-Palestine student groups. I see that with the pro-

Israel groups." Alexandra (senior, Stanford) put a finer point on it.

I felt like the narratives were one-sided. Most people on campus don't know anything and are confused and are trying to figure out where they stand on these issues [connected to the Israel-Palestine Conflict], so to have two sets of people yelling at them is the least helpful thing.

A smaller number of students observed that their campuses were marked by division, but not acrimony. Bradley (sophomore, UC Irvine) offered his measured assessment of the campus, saying, "At UCI people are generally pretty inclusive. Sometimes the activism is a little too one-sided but that's not the same thing as hate speech. I hadn't really noticed any of that at UCI." Amy (sophomore, UCLA) offered a similar impression of her campus. "I haven't seen the UCLA community be super aggressive in their political activism." Eli (junior, Berkeley) summed up the general attitude that campus political protests are "sort of ineffective and they just make people frustrated."

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Speaking Up or Opting Out

Turned off by the tone of campus debate and by assumptions about their politics made on the basis of their identity as Jews, our interviewees often chose to avoid talking politics with people with whom they did not have a personal relationship. They did not wish to be drawn into the hostile environment of campus debate, and their political beliefs generally did not move them to defend or celebrate Israel in public. As a result, they often remained silent, more certain of their beliefs than they were about where express them.

Students shared their discomfort with informal rules governing student speech. Todd (sophomore, Stanford), who described himself as holding fairly conservative political opinions, criticized the informal norms about political speech on campus: "There's definitely kind of a sentiment that you should stay within what Stanford students consider acceptable in terms of what you're saying." Violating these norms by expressing his support for Israel, he felt, could have negative repercussions for him.

Kai (junior, Stanford) suggested that he chose to avoid talking about Israel with anyone he was not close to, "because I don't know how they're going to react or respond to it." Elizabeth (senior, UCLA) agreed. "It's scary because I think there is such a heat against Israel that I don't want anyone to then perceive that with me. It's easier to just stay out of it."

David (senior, UCLA) felt a similar pressure from within the Jewish community both on and beyond his campus. "If I join them [students active in BDS or pro-Palestine activity], it's kind of the assumption that I hate Israel. It even feels like kind of betraying my family and my friends, and even just other Jewish people because there's such a strong connection between Israel and Judaism." For Dan, the presumption that Jews are automatically loyal to Israel has the effect of making him feel that he cannot support pro-Palestinian causes without distancing himself from the Jewish community (and his family).

Daniel (senior, UC Berkeley) also described his choice to keep quiet about political matters for fear that he might be criticized.

It is hard for me to voice an opinion because I just feel like I'll be shot down. Or people will throw all these things at me and I won't know how to respond, and that I could be seen as biased. I don't know. Honestly, I wish I was more involved in the Jewish community. I guess I just wish that the community was a little bit more welcoming because I think it's extremely important to be Jewish and be proud of being Jewish.

By contrast, Danielle (junior, Stanford) described her politically left-leaning Jewish upbringing as encouraging “questioning authority and debating.” She found nowhere to discuss her own conflicted feelings about the Israel-Palestine conflict, and described “a sense of powerlessness and a feeling like I want to stand up and say, ‘no that’s not accurate.’ But...I couldn’t do that really.” Absent a space that can hold questions and a diversity of opinions, Danielle “kind of shut down, I think, and that’s scary...that I’m holding on to this thing that I think is true.”

Other Jewish students also avoid spaces on campus where they know that they are likely to encounter uncomfortable confrontations. Campus thoroughfares are often lined with tables where student activists try to rally support and reach out. For Jewish students at UC Berkeley, where Sproul Plaza plays that role, the heated tone of political discourse about Israel and Palestine has created a situation where students would sooner avoid it than subject themselves to the discomfort of acrimonious political speech. Sam (sophomore, UC Berkeley) reported, “if I know there’s a protest on Sproul, maybe I won’t walk that way. Maybe I will try to take my mind off it. I think there’s a lot more to life than political protest, so I don’t try to get fully consumed in it.”

Juliet (sophomore, UCI) responded to this issue in a similar way on her campus.

If I walk down Ring Road and I see a big protest, and it’s just like, I’m just trying to

get to my class. I don’t want to feel reminded of our differences. I just want to go learn something new in class. I know colleges are [a] big epicenter for protest like these ones, but it just really isn’t something I want to participate in necessarily, even if this is what I side with for sure, like the support of Israel. It just isn’t something I feel like I need to do.

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“If I join them, it’s kind of the assumption that I hate Israel. It even feels like kind of betraying my family and my friends, and even just other Jewish people because there’s such a strong connection between Israel and Judaism.”

Avoiding Conflict by Avowing Ignorance

The volatility and divisiveness of student political discourse on campuses has led many of our interviewees to claim that they “don’t know” enough about the Israel-Palestine conflict to render an opinion. In some cases, saying “I don’t know” reflected an interviewee’s lack of understanding of the issues. In most cases, however, interviewees used “I don’t know” as a strategy for disengaging from discussions they found uncomfortable or irreconcilable.

Saying “I don’t know” did not mean that students did not hold opinions. Often, “I don’t know” followed statements that indicated an interviewee’s opinion on a political matter. Ruth (junior, UCLA) told us “Then for the anti-Zionists not equal to antisemites.... I don't know how to feel about that either. I haven't really gotten into Zionism that much.” Then, she added, “there should be some type of agreement or peace made. I feel like both sides are very angry. I don't know too much about it, but I feel like both sides are very angry.”

Amy (sophomore, UCLA) noted that her “pro-Israel all the way” attitude conflicted with her pacifism before abruptly bringing her comments to a close. “I don't want to say anything about it because I don't think I know enough, but I get confused on

the whole Israel-Palestine conflict.”

Alan (senior, SFSU) shared that his lack of knowledge would not stop him from arguing with someone who claimed that “Israelis act like Nazis.... I just dismiss it because they don’t know shit. If I was to start talking to them about it, maybe

I don't know enough to back what I’m saying up with facts. But it would ... I know in my spirit what's right and wrong and it would definitely escalate to a very negative thing. Like I would probably fight someone over it.”

Even knowledgeable and politically engaged students said that they did

not know enough to offer opinions on a variety of student organizations or political issues. Amit (sophomore, Stanford) has studied the history of the Israel-Palestine conflict in academic settings and has traveled to Israel twice, yet she told us, “I feel like it’s completely something I have no authority to speak about. I have no idea.” Elizabeth (senior, UCLA) is also well versed in the political conundrums of the conflict and feels personally connected to Israel through a sibling who lives there. Despite her personal connection to Israel and knowledge of current affairs, she also told us that she cannot “confidently debate anything without having good knowledge of it.”

“I’ve done so much research, yet I still feel like I know nothing.”

Cathy (sophomore, UCLA) said that she tries to keep informed, but does not speak about her opinions publicly.

I am really interested in politics and I try to keep up with the latest issues and stay aware of things, but in terms of expressing it outwardly, I'm not very active.... I don't really like to impose my views on other people and I don't campaign or anything.

Holly (sophomore, UC Berkeley) offered a very sensitive account of her own attempts to understand the issues which, nevertheless, left her feeling that there was still much she did not know.

I understand that there's a lot of nuance, I understand war is evil.... And also I understand that there are probably a lot of things I don't know. I don't know everyone's story and I'm sure there have been many injustices. But I also respect that, or I understand that Israel might need protection in some ways. I've heard so much, listened to so much. So it's really hard to strike a balance.... I've done so much research, yet I still feel like I know nothing. And I think that's difficult, especially here, because a lot of what I've researched has made me feel more pro-Israel, like this is justified in some ways. Yet there's so much anti-[Israel] sentiment, so I feel like there must be some legitimate reason as to why it's not okay.

When we asked her why, after doing so much research, she still felt like she did not know enough,

she replied, "I don't know. I don't know. I'm not good at history. I'm not good at timelines." This too, was not reflective of her academic capabilities, but of her desire to decline to pass judgment and move the conversation along.

Tina (senior, UCLA) offered perhaps the most cogent reflection on the role of knowledge in her willingness to engage in debate around the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Sometimes I do get approached about Israel-Palestine stuff and they try to summon all Jewish students on campus to help on whichever side and obviously it's pro-Israel. I try to stay out of that because I'm like, 'I don't know enough about it.' It's so polarizing that for me it's not something I want to get involved in.

Students are not intimidated into silence, nor are they uninformed. In the context of divisive and unpleasant campus politics and the tensions our interviewees experience between how they feel about Israel and how they understand it as a political actor, "I don't know" did not reflect a lack of understanding of the issues. Nor did not betray an absence of political opinion. Rather, it signaled their discomfort with the conditions of political engagement and the terms of debate they felt had been set without them.

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Safe and on the Sidelines

Our interviewees' discomfort with the terms and tone of debate has powerful implications for Jewish students who feel caught between their Jewish identities and their politics. Interviewees felt alienated among activists critical of Israel because of their connection to its ideals, and they also reported feeling marginalized in Jewish communities where they were assumed to be supporters of Israel. The result is that students we

interviewed did not feel entirely at home in either social sphere – of Zionists or of sharp critics of Israel – owing to the expectations of both.

"That's kind of a turn off for me. Even if I want to go to a Shabbat dinner and stuff, I feel like it still has that..."

Danielle (junior, Stanford) explained her encounter with the limits of campus politics. "I am mostly in support of Black Lives Matter, except for when they get too tied up in the Middle East dilemma, and [they] pick a side there in the name of intersectionality that I don't agree with. Because that makes me feel attacked as a Jewish person." Alexandra (senior, Stanford) shared a similar experience.

Israel-Palestine became a very central part

of a lot of activist communities on campus in a way that became very openly hostile and very uncomfortable to be around. There was a Black Lives Matter protest. They're there and it's great and then they're pulling out a Palestinian flag. I'm like, "Wait, these are not ... This is not what I signed up for. This is not what I'm comfortable with."

Amy (sophomore, UCLA) felt a similar pressure from within her campus' Jewish community, which she attributed to its implicit politics.

I group Bruins for Israel [a pro-Israel student organization] and Hillel [together] because I feel like a lot of the people on the board are also really big in the Hillel community. That's kind of a turn off for me. Even if I want to go to a Shabbat dinner and stuff, I feel like it still has that political climate, which I'm not a fan of.

Louis (senior, UC Irvine) also noted the dangers of political insularity in campus Jewish communities. In response to an image of members of a certain Jewish fraternity (identifiable by the letters on their shirts) involved in what appeared to be a pro-Israel event, he observed,

The [fraternity chapters] that I have known tend to be very much in their own bubble.

That's my critique of this picture.... When you wave the flag and you have these pro-Israel rallies, I commend them for being what seems like a peaceful protest. What I would hope — and I don't know the story behind this rally — I would hope that they are open to dialog with other people and that this is not just a giant bubble of pro-Zionist sentiment.

Adam (senior, Stanford), who identifies strongly as a Syrian Jew, explained that he, too, finds Jewish life to be too monocultural and too Ashkenazic, and he worried what this image signaled about the Jewish community to the broader campus.

I get fed up with it, especially because on a college campus, Hillel is synonymous with just Jewish. Right? ... But if you're not Jewish, you think Hillel is the bearer of all Judaism. Right? Because that's the only association you have. Really, it's just a part of the picture. That actually goes into a lot of the questions ... about Israel and stuff.

With explicit reference to campus politics, Elizabeth (senior, Stanford) recalled her response to Jewish student efforts to defeat an Israel divestment bill during her first year. She resented the assumption by Jewish student leaders that they spoke for all Jewish students.

"I actually didn't go to Hillel after that, because I kind of felt like I sort of been identified as the other side. And that's probably unfair because I doubt if I walked in that I would face hostility.... But I felt weird."

Another thing that made me uncomfortable about that [episode] was that opposition was stated like, "the Jewish opinion was this." But actually a few individuals [were] speaking on behalf of all Jewish students.... That was what I found really objectionable.

In more measured tones, Elisheva (senior, Stanford) expressed her frustration that her campus did not even have the language to describe Jews like her.

I think there's a misunderstanding that with a lot of students on campus...that all Jewish students were pro-Israel and all people who were pro-Israel were Jewish, and so a lot of the discourse when talking about the divestment movement was using terms like 'the Jewish students on campus' and the 'Jewish students on campus feel this' and 'Jewish people,' rather than saying 'People supporting Israel' I'm not the Israeli government, or Jewish people on campus are not the Israeli government, and I think that also fed into the tension that was on campus.

For others, like Ellen (junior, Stanford), the conflict between her Jewish commitments and her political ones led to frustration and, eventually, disengagement:

I wouldn't say I'm anti-Israeli. I support and love the people of Israel. I do not support the government and policy and I think that the government and policy has a role is severely oppressing the Palestinians. I feel like there's not a whole lot of room to be very critical of Israel, of Israeli policies in communities. Anti-Zionism usually becomes antisemitism or people think that's what it is and it's hard not to be accused, "Oh, you're really hating yourself." It's like, "No. I'm not hating us. I'm hating what we're doing, what policy is doing right now." It just becomes a very loaded issue wherever you go and I try not to bring it up but it makes me angry when people do bring it up. I do feel like it makes it a lot harder for me to participate in Jewish life.

Saul (junior, Stanford) took a step back to describe his reaction to the alignment of communities around debate over the Israel divestment bill in the student senate, and how the terms and tone of debate left him unwilling to lend his support anywhere.

Of course you have SJP, Students for Justice in Palestine, but then [you have] the LGBT group and the queer group and the Asian group and the Latinx group and the black group. Literally every cultural group on one side, and then technically

"It just becomes a very loaded issue wherever you go and I try not to bring it up but it makes me angry when people do bring it up. I do feel like it makes it a lot harder for me to participate in Jewish life."

independent. You have J Street little group in the middle that no one hears their voice, and then you have the right wing ultra-Zionist group just spouting the same bullshit rhetoric on the other side. That's who people hear, right? They hear SJP. They see every single minority group, and then they see this group of pro-Israel students who ... I don't know. I didn't feel welcome on either side at all. Since then I've just realized how all the activists are all ... I don't know. I don't like it. I don't feel like I can support one cause, so then I feel like they would expect me to support all their causes.

More philosophically, Daniel (senior, UC Berkeley) laid out his impressions of the consequences of speaking up politically, which left him with few options for political expression.

I think that there are some Jewish people who have a conflict within themselves that they want to self-criticize, or not self... but criticize Israel and stuff like that, and be fair.... They don't want to displease the Zionists and they also don't want to displease the liberals and come off as one-sided.

Holding views that conflicted with what had been put forward as the consensus Jewish student position changed some students' relationship to the Jewish community on campus. Elisheva (senior, Stanford) put it as clearly as anyone. "I actually didn't go to Hillel after that, because I kind of felt like I sort of been identified as the other side. And that's probably unfair because I doubt if I walked in that I would face hostility.... But I felt weird."

Our interviewees who held strong political beliefs found themselves marginalized by both their campus Jewish communities and by their activist peers. The unique pressures generated by campus debate about the Israel-Palestine conflict left many of our interviewees feeling like they had no community with which to find common cause, and where one could express both criticism of Israel and retain one's Jewish commitments. The expectations on both sides leave many students without anywhere to go.

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Conclusions and Implications

Contrary to alarmist reports that describe colleges and universities as “hotspots of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment,” we found that students do not experience their campuses in this way. Instead, they reported feeling comfortable on their campuses and comfortable being Jewish among their peers and classmates. They tended to dismiss claims that their campuses were either antisemitic or unsafe, and they traced almost all of the discomfort they experienced as Jews on campus to activism around the Israel-Palestine conflict.

In other words, our interviewees experienced the tone of campus debate and the expectations about how Jewish students ought to identify as unnecessarily divisive and rife with false equivalences between their self-perception and their political beliefs. They resented assumptions that they should support Israel, and they rejected pressures that they could or should dismiss it entirely. Their array of strategies for avoiding conflict do not reveal a lack of understanding or passion, but they point to the greater challenge of having few places on campus in which to explore or express their politics.

Speaking up, either in support of Israel among students who were critical of Israel or as a critic of Israel among Jewish students seemed, to many, to be too heavy a burden. This was not for a lack of knowledge. We interviewed many students who regularly read the news or majored in International Relations, or elected to write about these issues in

other classes. For those we interviewed, “I don’t know” usually did not reflect their understanding of the situation, nor did it mean that they did not hold an opinion. Instead, it signaled their level of discomfort with making opinions known to their peers — the same opinions they readily shared with us.

Exaggerated claims about the tone of campus activism and misrepresentations of student experience do far more harm than good by heightening tensions and reinforcing divisions. Building on extant research and turning to student voices, we found a more nuanced account of student experience that points to implications for campus politics that previous studies failed to detect.

We did not ask our interviewees what they wished for their campuses, but their comments gesture toward a few implications for Jewish students.

1. Our interviewees clearly expressed that their campuses are not characterized by antisemitism, or at least, Jews are not targeted any worse than any other campus minority population. Continuing to misrepresent college campuses as hostile to Jewish students adds to the unpleasant tone and deepens campus divisions, thus reproducing the environment that our interviewees identified as least appealing.

2. Within campus Jewish communities, students felt stifled or excluded by expectations that they support the actions of Israel. This expectation resulted in a number of our interviewees feeling alienated from Jewish student organizations that they felt were too exclusive in their politics. Jewish students and their communities would likely benefit from greater support for organizations that foster a diversity of student opinions and that open up opportunities for students to express the full range of their political commitments.
 3. Students found few places for debate about the Israel-Palestine conflict that were characterized by curiosity and mutual respect. To our interviewees, debate often deteriorated into “yelling” instead of fostering “productive” engagement. For those interested in remedying this situation, providing more support to a single side will likely only exacerbate the divisiveness. Instead, students felt that tensions might be eased by trying to create opportunities on campus for more productive modes of political debate. For those interested in investing in student co-curricular educational opportunities, consider supporting university-level efforts to provide students with the tools and spaces necessary for political engagement, debate, and discussion that is not always marked by division.
 4. With access to great libraries, accomplished faculty, informed peers, and the internet, they know where to find information if they want it. For those concerned about student access to information and their ability to process it, consider supporting academic research and teaching so that those responsible for classroom-centered education can provide spaces for students to explore and generate new knowledge in classroom settings that are generally less sensitive to the pressures of campus politics.
 5. Finally, and this bears repeating: Students are students. Their lives largely revolve around their campuses. Their decisions are informed by their relationships with peers and their understanding of the social side of politics. Meanwhile, their politics are developing alongside their intellect. Respect the co-curricular ways in which students learn and support the creation of opportunities to do so that fit the character of student life and students needs on their campuses.
- Hardly targets of hate, most students we spoke with are doing what students do: they are gathering information, making friends, formulating ideals, negotiating conflicts, and developing a sense of themselves and their place in the world. Notably, they are doing so during a particularly tumultuous time in history. Given all of that, our interviewees were often clear about where they stood, what they felt, and what they believed. The pressures of campus debate around the Israel-Palestine conflict and the assumptions about who Jewish students are and what they believe provide ample opportunities to test their resilience, their creativity, and their commitments, as they try to make sense of the world they have inherited and the world they wish to make.

Notes

¹ The research for this report was approved and supervised by the Stanford University Institutional Review Board (IRB 39267).

² "Sam" is a pseudonym, as is every other student name that appears in this report. Their campuses are identified accurately, as is their standing during the 2016-2017 academic year. For transcribing, we did not alter their words at all, though we decided to omit verbal tics ("like," "kind of," "um," etc.) and partially formed sentences that we felt would distract from the sentiment the student was trying to express. Where we added words, we noted them in brackets, and where we removed words of any kind, we noted them with ellipses.

³ As were completing our data analysis, students at San Francisco State University filed suit against the Board of Trustees of the California State University system "claiming they perpetuated anti-Semitism and left Jewish students vulnerable because of their religion, in violation of federal civil rights statutes." As our research took place before the suit was filed, and because we were only able to

interview four San Francisco State students who did not respond to subsequent attempts to speak with them, our report does not touch on the pending case. After the case became public, we tried to follow up with the students we interviewed, but they did not return our repeated attempts to speak with them.

⁴ It is worth mentioning that campus Hillels do not have "members," per se, so this is probably an indication of a student's self-identified level of participation in Hillel activities.

⁵ Both parts of the research protocol are available online at <https://stanford.box.com/v/SafeandonthesidelinesProtocol>.

⁶ We also interviewed a handful of graduate students who are not included in the report. Looking at the experiences of Jewish graduate students would require a separate study with a different kind of design.

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