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Identity Construction on Student Organizations' Social Networks: Hillel's Social Media Activity on Jewish Campuses in the US

הבניית זהות ברשתות החברתיות בקרב ארגוני סטודנטים : המדיה החברתית הדיגיטלית בארגון הלל בארה״ב

PhD Dissertation Proposal

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Abstract:

In recent decades, the penetration of social networks has perturbed the representation of identities, especially among minority groups in societies of prominent cultural diversity. As social media continues to embed itself into the fabric of everyday life, it brings a dominant digital culture that promotes values of connectivity, openness, and fluid identity construction. This culture often contrasts sharply with the aims of religious and ethnic communities who seek to maintain distinct social boundaries that preserve traditional values, practices, and modes of belonging. This proves especially acute among young adults, who are in the midst of crystallizing their identity.

In response, minority organizations catering to young adults are increasingly engaged in efforts to promote identities aligned with their ideological or religious creed. Accordingly, this research examines *how student organizations construct, affirm, and mediate identity through online social media*. To address this query, the proposed research case studies the social media activity of Hillel Jewish student centers in the US. The study seeks to document and unveil the motivations, strategies and targeted audience interpretations of social media outlets, with special attention to visual media (Instagram). The study's design will be threefold and investigate: (1) Hillel webmaster's creeds (e.g. religious, professional, national) and worldviews, and the ways these ideals shape their media activity in their identity work; (2) Identity narratives which are constituted and transmitted through the visual discourse of Hillel's social media in the US; (3) The ways in which Jewish identity is interpreted and negotiated by users of Hillel's social media.

Respectively, to achieve these aims, the study will incorporate 25 in-depth interviews with Hillel webmasters along with corresponding think-aloud featuring select images; semiotic analysis of over a thousand Hillel Instagram images; 25 in-depth interviews with Hillel students, also accompanied by a corresponding think-aloud which displays select images. Through this methodology, the study aims to elucidate upon the complexities of American Jewish identity and its contemporary expression, especially in the aftermath of the October 7 attack. Moreover, it seeks to shed light on media socialization and youth identity work in the digital age, with particular attention to student's online culture and the efforts of contemporary student organizations to shape identity through informal culture and soft forms of digitized education.

Research Rationale

Since the advent of the internet, individuals and social collectives, including political, religious, and ethnic movements, have been leveraging online platforms to advocate their beliefs, delineate social boundaries, and reach a new target audience (De Moya & Bravo, 2016; Gremler & Weidmann, 2024). This is particularly evident in the American mosaic, which emphasizes voluntary individual choice of affiliation while its civil society showcases stakeholders who aim to foster specific identities. Movements such as the *Nation of Islam*, the Chicano Movement (*El Movimiento*), and *La Raza Unida* operate within their respective communities while also honing their online presence.

The American identity has been constituted through a double-edged sword: fostering a universalistic ethos (nationalism, liberalism), while simultaneously acknowledging particularistic distinctions (ethnic, religious) (cf. Eisenstadt, 2004). This duality is evident in institutions and often reflected in their online presence: governmental universalism (e.g., state office websites) versus NGO specialization (e.g., online sites for the associations for cultural heritage, advocacy of civil rights for ethnic groups). However, the top-down approach of external bodies (e.g., parochial education, heritage schools) pose a challenge for socializing youngsters, whose online experience often involves a quest for authenticity and autonomy in identity building (Kahane, 1997). Hence, it is posited that a softer approach, delivered through the mediation of online communication, can offer a portal of socialization to deliver multiple ideological, religious and modern values, which forge their identities.

Indeed, online communication has become a fundamental part of youth culture (Mesch & Talmud, 2020). The internet has emerged as a space where adolescents explore and construct their identities, allowing them to examine aspects of themselves that they might not address in offline settings (Calvert, 2002). The widespread use of online social networks, coupled with

the relative freedom from parental oversight that the internet provides, creates essential conditions for adolescents to build their identities, form social connections, and explore the boundaries between their private and public selves (Peter & Fluckiger, 2009). Scholars contend that as youth began to independently shape their digital environments, often in collaboration with peers, the socialization processes within peer groups and through media became closely intertwined (Greenfield & Yan, 2006). This has led to the formation of identities that are developed and solidified in informal settings, both in online social networks and in key environments for youth socialization.

Arguably culminating in late adolescence and young adulthood, the college years represent a transitional phase from youth to adulthood, offering opportunities for intellectual, social, and personal experimentation (Sales & Saxe, 2006). This transition to college life brings about significant changes, including new expectations and rules that influence the formation of an individual's identity (Yares, 2006). Hence, at this stage, students are in the process of exploring and developing their personal identities, values and future trajectories (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). The academic environment provides them with prospects to broaden their social networks, explore different fields of study, and participate in voluntary organizations of their choosing, all without parental supervision (Yares, 2006). This period of academic studies delays students' entry into the workforce, extending their youthhood and offering a setting for the development of independent youth cultures that are a mix of maturity and childhood (Adler, 1974; Kahane & Rapoport, 2007; Tsuda, 1993). This life stage and its experience is crucial for identity formation, as the decisions students make during this period impact not only their careers but also their religious, ethnic, and political identities (Sales & Saxe, 2006).

In light of the above, this study aims to examine the ways in which student organizations construct identity by way of online social media. Specifically, its umbrella question asks *How student organizations construct, affirm, and mediate identity through online social media.*

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To address this query, the proposed research case studies the social media activity of Hillel Jewish student centers in the US. It is posited that American Jewish identity is continuously impacted by social media, however its impact during a time of conflict and crisis is accelerated. Thus, the terror attack of October 7 and the turbulent strife that followed on American campuses offer a distinct opportunity to investigate informal online identity socialization under heightened circumstances.

Investigating identity work, the study seeks to document and unveil the corpus of meanings embedded in social network posts. Within social networks, special attention will be given to visual aspects, identity work enacted by social media webmasters and the interpretive gaze of Jewish students who incorporate religious and national schemes into their personal epistemology. Expanding on these themes, the study proposes the following subqueries: (1) What are the creeds (e.g. religious, professional, national) and worldviews of webmasters, and how do these ideals shape online workers' media activity in their identity work? (2) How are identity narratives constituted and transmitted through the visual discourse of Jewish student organizations' social media in the US? (3) How is Jewish identity interpreted and negotiated by users of student organizations' social media?

Literature Review

This research aims to explore how student organizations cultivate identity on social media platforms. Specifically, it seeks to uncover and document the meanings embedded in the content shared through online outlets, focusing on the visual elements. By doing so, the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenology of student organization activities within the online social media landscape.

To this end, the study will focus on four leading research axes. First, the term "Identity" lies at the heart of the research question. Considering the extensive legacy groundwork on identity

within the social sciences, the following literature review begins by outlining the legacy of research on identity construction and the framework for this study. The second axis discusses the influence of new media on the constitution of identity and how it is mediatized. Third, for students, higher education poses a liminal stage that allows them to explore personal, political, and religious beliefs in an identity marketplace. Accordingly, students are targeted by various movements and organizations and seen as susceptible to identity outreach. The fourth axis focuses on American Jewry and Hillel organization as a selected case study. This section provides the background of Jewish-American identity and what is seen as a *hyphenated self.*

Constructing Identity: A Research Legacy

Identity refers to the way an individual perceives themselves and the unique traits that set them apart from others (Schwartz & Watson, 2005). In Erikson's pioneering theory (1968), he views identity as the process of discovering the "self" and defining the role the individual will play in adulthood, after answering questions about their origins, who they are, and what they aspire to become (Erikson, 1968). To address these questions and navigate identity formation, an individual must develop a future orientation and commit to values, religious beliefs, career goals, and a personal worldview (Muuss, 1968).

Other scholars have defined identity as the means by which a person positions themselves within social relationships (Gross & Stone, 1964), while some suggest it provides the individual with meaning within society (Klapp, 1969). Broadly speaking, identity encompasses everything an individual says about themselves, including their status, personality, and past; any reflection on the question "Who am I?" can be seen as an aspect of identity (De Levita, 2019).

The term "identity" is used not only for analytical purposes, but also plays a crucial role in self-definition, encompassing aspects such as gender, race, nationality, and social class (Brubaker

& Cooper, 2000). Identity, therefore, acts as a distinguishing marker between individuals (Biddle, 1979). Additionally, given that different social contexts can evoke various responses and behaviors, some scholars suggest that people develop and manage multiple identities based on their needs (Goffman, 1959; Spindler, 1976). Consequently, "identity" can also describe how a person presents themselves to a particular audience (Altheide, 2000). Thus, identity is not necessarily uniform, fixed, or stable, it can be fluid and adaptable, particularly in a postmodern world where we encounter and manage a wide range of self-representations (Shankar, Elliott & Fitchett, 2009).

Historically, in more stable societies, identity was largely assigned rather than chosen or developed (Howard, 2000). Today however, the concept of identity encompasses the essential need for self-understanding, alongside the often-rapid changes in social contexts, shifts in the groups and networks people belong to, as well as changes in the societal structures and practices that underpin those networks (Howard, 2000).

The notion of "identity" has been employed in multiple ways and can be classified by four paradigmatic approaches: **bio-psychological**; **role-identity theory**; **post-structuralist**; and **symbolic interactionism**. The **bio-psychological approach** affords an essentialist gaze that views identity as an outcome of physical growth, mostly discussed in puberty, and psychological maturation (Erikson, 1968; Kahane, 1997). Hence, this approach sees identity as the product of a constant interaction between biological and psychological factors. It therefore describes youth as the life stage in which identity is crystallized through a disparity between biological development and psychological maturity (Erikson, 1968). Developing within this stage, identity is seen as emerging amongst strains and anxieties that are an unavoidable stage of development during the youth phase. According to Erikson (1968), this youth crisis can result in either the establishment of a stable personality/identity or the emergence of pathology.

Although grounded in the essentialist notion that the self is devoid of social influence, some theorists, including Erikson, suggest that identity is further shaped through the influence of family, peers, and social interactions.

Role-identity accentuates the impact of socially prescribed positions and scripts on individual behavior and self-perception (Biddle, 1979; Stryker & Statham, 1985). This perspective offers a framework for understanding how society influences human behavior, highlighting the significance of social context in interpreting individual actions (Biddle, 1979). From this perspective, social roles are defined as a set of behavioral expectations tied to holding a specific position, status, or category within a broader social system (Thoits, 1983). Accordingly, the self consists of multiple identities, each rooted in the specific roles a person holds (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000). Hence, people create multiple identities based on the different social roles they play (e.g., parent, employee, friend). These various identities enable individuals to answer the question, "Who am I?" by the definition of the role they enact (Desrochers, Andreassi & Thompson, 2004). These identities shape behavior by setting expectations and norms linked to each role. The significance or prominence of these identities is organized in a hierarchy (Stryker, 1968), influencing the weight individuals devote to each role.

Poststructuralism represents an umbrella approach that challenges dominant assumptions about the origins and nature of identity (Norton & Morgan, 2012). Poststructuralism underlines that identities are not inherent and essential to the self, but rather constructed through social processes, discourse, and power relations (Cahill, Coffey & Beadle, 2024). Accordingly, these scholars either deny the existence of selfhood or offer a liquid view of identity that is constantly reshaped and avoids a cohesive self-narration (Foucault, 2011; Tseëlon, 1992). This view tends to reduce subjectivity and meaning to discourse (Dunn, 1997), hence the self is shaped and

governed by social forces like language, science or religion (Campbell & Bleiker, 2024). Overall, this perspective challenges traditional notions of fixed identities, advocating for a more dynamic understanding shaped by social interactions and cultural narratives.

Reflecting on these approaches, the bio-psychological and role-identity paradigms highlight external and predetermined forces that shape identity. Post-structuralists reify the driving forces of society, such as language, culture, and science, or denounce them as compatible with an inconsistent and ever-changing self. In contrast, I contend that **symbolic interactionism** offers an approach that is more fitting for understanding identity formation over online tracts as it negotiates human agency with social structure to identify contingent identity narratives.

Symbolic interaction theory is a dominant perspective in sociology that offers a theoretical foundation for the study of identity (Howard, 2000). It is a key theory examining how humans generate, interpret and understand meanings through social interactions. While structural and psychological approaches concentrate on the macro-sociological realm, addressing social structures, institutions, and society as a whole, symbolic interactionism takes a micro-sociological perspective, focusing on small-scale, face-to-face interpersonal interactions (Quist-Adade, 2019). The theory proposes that an individual's sense of "self" is made up of numerous identities that are continuously modified through the events and contingencies of social interactions. Some interpretations of this viewpoint suggest that these identities exist apart from the central self, while others characterize the self as an "encompassing identity" that incorporates various situational identities (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934).

This theory first developed by Mead (1934), emphasizes the role of symbols and language in shaping identity through social interaction (Howard, 2000; Quist-Adade, 2019). Blumer (1937), further coined the term *symbolic interactionism* (Powell, 2013), and emphasized that

contrary to psychological and sociological theories that ignore the process by which individuals construct meanings, the individual has a self and relates to the self. Thus, individuals negotiate with their own "self" to organize meanings in light of their contingent situation. Furthermore, the importance of meaning and the social construction of reality should not be ignored or dictated by external forces alone (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021).

At its core, symbolic interactionism emphasizes that individuals assign symbolic meanings to objects, behaviors, themselves, and others, and they create and communicate these meanings through their interactions (Howard, 2000). Hence, the "self" develops through the process of taking the perspective of others. Goffman (1959) calls it *Impression Management,* which allows individuals to present a "self" that they think will be accepted by others (Bruder, 1998; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021). A self that is derived from an interactive triangle between an individual, others and society at large (Serpe & Stryker, 2011). Accordingly, people transfer meanings via symbols during social interactions and the reaction is based on the interpretation of those symbols by its receivers.

Meanings and symbols give human social activity and social interaction their unique features (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021). Goffman's work (1959), describes social interactions as theatre. The participants perform on a metaphorical stage that allows them to replace their "self" as actors replace characters. This dramaturgical approach helps explain how identity management is enacted. Thus, this approach lends itself to identity construction in context.

Identity construction involves negotiating meanings derived from experiences within social communities (Wenger, 1998). Identity forms when an individual's self-perception conflicts with the social identity in their environment (Field, 1994). This process of identity formation is both a self-reflective act and a social interaction that occurs simultaneously (Eberl & Luhrmann, 2007). Consequently, identity is not solely shaped by the individual but results from

a negotiation between one's self-concept and how others perceive it (Oyseman & Packer, 1996; Schlenker, 1984). As a result, identity formation can be particularly challenging for adolescents and youngsters, in contrast with adults with more well established identities who have a clearer sense of belonging that aligns with their personal development (Muuss, 1968).

Symbolic interactionism's principles extend to online identity construction, where digital platforms serve as new stages for *impression management*. Goffman's dramaturgical approach can be applied here, with individuals curating context-specific identities through avatars, profiles on social media, usernames, and further content. As users engage in digital interactions, they negotiate their sense of self through social cues and feedback, refining their online personas and demonstrating this identity modality to others. Thus, the core process of identity construction remains relevant in understanding how individuals form identities through online tracts.

Mediatized Identity: New Media and the Constitution of Identity

In recent years, the widespread adoption of social networks has disrupted how identities are forged and represented. In classic sociological and anthropological discussions, identities are often forged through social bonds deeply rooted in racial or national identities, supported by common ancestry, culture, language, and historical experiences (Kahane, 1982; Weber, 2013). These bonds are seen as emotionally significant and central to an individual's sense of belonging, particularly among minority groups in societies characterized by substantial cultural diversity. In contrast, modern societies and certainly online identities are often characterized as fluid, constructed, and malleable. This includes profiles on Instagram, Gamers' avatar uses, and more, where users are free to experiment with their identities playfully (Danet, 2001).

Giddens (1992) argues that modern identity is endangered by conditions of risk, including the breakdown of reliable knowledge systems, increasing impersonalization, and

commodification. In his perspective, Individuals and institutions continually reassess and adjust their practices in response to new information. Furthermore, social interactions are removed from local contexts and reconfigured across vast and indefinite time and space. Although his work did not specifically address online identity, online interactions increasingly separate social relationships from their local contexts. Digital identities become part of the self's reflexive process, constantly shaped and reshaped. The rapid expansion of social networks further challenges identities by deepening the fragmentation of the self, potentially leading to social anomie as individuals are confronted with an overwhelming array of choices. In this way, online identities play a crucial role in the self's ongoing reflexive process, continually evolving and transforming.

Scholars debate the creation of a new "self" over the internet. While some, highlight its independence as an "online self" (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Boellstroff, 2015), others underscore online identity as an extension of the offline (Bulingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). Following the latter vein, Bullingham and Vasconcelos's (2013) contend that rather than adopting completely new identities, online users frequently replicate their offline selves in the online environment by sharing personal information or designing avatars that reflect their real-life appearance (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; John, 2016).

In her pioneering work, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit*, Sherry Turkle emphasizes the ubiquitous character of internet use which has impacted every facet of our lives, including communication, economics, politics, and art (Turkle, 2005). Turkle further underscores the internet's impact on self-perception and interpersonal relationships. For adolescents, the internet has become a crucial environment for exploring and developing their identities. Online interactions provide opportunities to explore aspects of themselves that they may not be comfortable examining in person (Calvert, 2002). In a similar vein to Goffman's

and Giddens's perspective, Turkle (2005) asserts that the digital world has evolved into a social space for self-expression and identity exploration, allowing individuals to form connections with those they have never met and to adopt multiple identities.

Individuals maintain a range of connections, allowing them to adapt their identity expressions to different audiences (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). The digital environment encourages users to modify their identities based on the context, resulting in a more fragmented but personalized self-concept (Tseng & Li, 2007), which leads to a fluid identity. An identity that is subject to constant negotiation. Furthermore, in a world of online networks, individuals are no longer restricted to traditional close-knit groups. Instead, they engage with multiple social networks. This shift allows for greater autonomy in self-presentation and interaction, as individuals curate their online personas (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). This concept of *networked individualism*, as described by Rainie and Wellman (2012), highlights the evolving nature of identity construction and emphasizes how individuals create online identities through digital interactions.

While Rainie and Wellman highlight the individuals' agency in establishing a personalized community, this agency can be seen as significant in molding identities and reshaping primordial boundaries. For various publics, including religious bounded or even Gen Z youngsters, social media can foster parochial networks, which navigate communal identities beyond traditional offline communities (Einstein, 2024; Teusner, 2012).

Among young adults, online social networks have become a central activity (Fernández-de-Castro et al., 2023; Levine & Dean, 2012; Mesch & Talmud, 2020; Palfrey & Gasser, 2010; Tapscott, 1998). Given today's youth's avid engagement with social media, educational organizations, from formal schools to informal civil society institutions, actively operate online to emphasize identities that align with their primordial, ideological, or religious beliefs. These

identities correspond to who young adults believe they are or aspire to be, as shaped through online identity performance (Chakim, 2022; Golan & Don, 2022). In this way, educational institutions leverage new media's expanding role in affording tracts of free choice and informal learning (Kross et al., 2021; Marler & Hargittai, 2023).

Higher Education: The In-Between Stage

Ongoing tensions between particularism and universalism challenge identity representation. This tension is notably pronounced for students as they disengage from the nuclear family and primordial surroundings to pursue academic learning and campus life. Scholars underscore the American college experience as stimulating students' identity introspection and formation of identity as a *liminal* [1] space where youngsters interact with peers of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs (Schwartz, Côté & Arnett, 2005).

The college years for young adults represent a transitional period from adolescence to adulthood, offering opportunities for intellectual, social, and personal trial and error (Sales & Saxe, 2006). Significant developments in identity are anticipated to take place during the college years (Waterman & Archer, 1990), as students make crucial decisions across different areas of life (Luyckx, Goossens & Soenens, 2006). The shift to college life brings many changes, including new expectations and rules that can influence an individual's identity formation (Yares, 2006). Most students, being in their late teens, are in the process of exploring and developing their personal identities (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). The academic environment allows them to expand their social networks, explore fields of study, and join voluntary organizations of their choosing, free from parental oversight (Yares, 2006). This stage of academic study delays their entry into the workforce, extends adolescence, and

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[1] According to Turner (1969, p. 95), "liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial." Thus, liminal entities are in an "in-between" state in which subjects are separated from their previous identity, but have not assumed a new identity.

provides a space for developing independent youth cultures that are part mature and part youthful (Kahane, 2007). It is a time of accumulating life experience that plays a crucial role in identity formation, where the choices made during this period impact not only career paths but also religious, ethnic, and political identities (Sales & Saxe, 2006).

As aforementioned, young adults' time in college can be described as a *liminal stage* (Field & Morgan-Klein, 2010; Tsuda, 1993). A *liminal stage* refers to a period where an individual's identity is no longer tied to their previous self, yet has not fully transitioned into a newly established one (Field & Morgan-Klein, 2010). Liminality describes the in-between phase, between two phases of active social participation, signifying a transitional or undefined state between culturally significant stages in life (Alter & Cook-Sather, 2011). It represents a transitional period in the life cycle, often associated with rites of passage or shifts in class, social status, or age (Tsuda, 1993).

The idea of liminality in higher education stands out In Tsuda's study (1993) on Japanese universities. He challenges the common narrative that Japan's economic success stems from a rigid and competitive formal education system. Instead, Tsuda argues that academic life in Japan is characterized by significant freedom and a moratorium period, which he frames through the concept of liminality. According to him, this liminal phase allows for flexibility and the exploration of diverse values, ideologies, and ways of thinking, ultimately supporting creativity among graduates as they enter the workforce, including Japans' advanced technology industries.

Over the years, higher education has received less attention in research as a framework for nonformal education. While earlier studies on adolescent identity construction focused primarily on formal education settings (Carter, 2006; Coleman, 1961), later research expanded to include nonformal frameworks such as sports activities, graduation ceremonies (Best, 2011),

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and youth movements, which have significant potential for socialization and identity formation (Kahane, 2007).

Researchers distinguish between informal learning, where the teacher and the learner actively aim for learning, and nonformal or incidental learning, where only one party directs the learning process (Hamadache, 1991). Kahane defines informal education as structured, preplanned activities that operate independently of state-sanctioned schooling, aimed at achieving specific goals and often reflecting socio-economic and cultural identities (La Belle, 1982).

The academic framework, akin to digital space, creates an environment that institutionalizes liminality in postmodern society, enabling young people to simultaneously inhabit both the adult and youth worlds, which in turn facilitates a space for identity development (Kahane, 2007, Tsuda, 1993). This postmodern development offers a *moratorium* - i.e. a temporary postponement of commitments and decisions, which allows trial and error in a wide range within and outside institutional boundaries (Kahane, 2007) - providing a structured space to navigate social complexities and rapid technological change. For students, "social requirements, cultural norms, social roles and relationships are temporarily suspended" (Tsuda, 1993: 310). Likewise, these two arenas, academic life and online social media, share liminal characteristics and at the heart of this study.

American Jewry: Grappling the Hyphenated Self

The origin of the Jewish community in North America began in September 1654, with the arrival of 23 Jewish refugees from Brazil to the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, today's New York (Diner, 2004; Faber 2005; Sarna, 2004). With an aspiration to live as Jews and practice Judaism, amid a Christian Anglican and Congregationalist majority, Jewish immigrants strategically activated an identity of integration into American society and adjusted to a Pan-American liberal worldview which partially drew on universalistic principles in the "new

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world". An identity that operates in tension with the particular Jewish identity of the "old world"[2], and has been in constant negotiation, even amongst the more separatist groups such as the ultra-Orthodox variants (Meyer, 1995). Overall, the American Jewish community, particularly in its non-Orthodox segments, has largely connected its future to the ideals of the liberal framework as a minority within a broader liberal society (Barak-Gorodetsky, 2022).

The concept of the Jewish-American experience, in which Jewish tradition merges with American culture, is a central element in the belief system of the Jewish People in America (Sarna, 2021). In the *New World,* individualism and free choice constituted the foundations of "Americanism". Until 1840, there were no qualified rabbis and official communities that would enforce religious obedience. Most of the Jewish settlers were far from observing traditional Jewish practices, and religion was a voluntary and conscious choice (Meyer, 1988). Into this landscape, a worldview of the Reform movement emerged and reinforced the universalistic idea.

While Sarna (2021) describes the concept of an ongoing effort on the part of American Jews to interweave their "Judaism" with their "Americanism", as a 'Synthesis Cult', Woocher (2005) considers this amalgamated identity a core of an American 'Jewish Civil Religion'. Paradoxically, the challenge of creating an integrated selfhood has become a key challenge of American Jews as they constantly grapple to accommodate both identities. This challenge is occasionally framed among researchers as a "hyphenated identity". Hyphenated identities have been studied within two distinct scholarly traditions. In one tradition, sociolinguists describe hyphenated identities (e.g., Afro-Americans, Asian-Americans, and Jewish-Americans), as a means of expressing and negotiating a dual identity (Giampapa, 2001). Thus, affirming Glazer

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[2] Scholars mentioned that immigrants to North America, including Jewish immigrants, adopted the "Old/New World" distinction to contrast the American and European experience (e.g. Katz, 2010; Sarna, 2021)

and Moynihan's (1970) seminal thesis of the persistence of distinct ethnic identities amid the *melting pot* ethos. Other scholars highlight hyphenated identity as a discourse that emphasizes either cultural assimilation or cultural distinctiveness (acculturation) (Bélanger & Verkuyten, 2010).

For scholars, this hyphenated identity enabled an integration, which eventually allowed many Jews to insert themselves into the American labor market and gain access to society's cultural and educational institutions. In the early twentieth century in the United States, Jewish students faced restricted access to higher education as universities and colleges implemented quotas limiting their admission (Kushner, 2009; Mayhew et al., 2018). Moreover, on many campuses, Jews were excluded from extracurricular activities, including participation in the prominent Greek-letter fraternities that were a central part of American college culture (Behneman, 2007; Katz, 2020).

Today, large participation rates in higher education institutions characterize American Jewry. Most Jewish high school graduates attend college and about half of them continue their studies towards an advanced degree (Koren, Saxe & Fleisch, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2016). However, while most universities are driven by a universalistic ethos that highlights academic achievements and a broad American identity, minority groups, including Jewish variants, struggle to manifest their distinct identity on campus. An identity that is challenged by multiple affiliations (Alper et al., 2022; Rosner, 2011; Sarna, 2004). To wit, Jewish students view themselves through a fused definition of integrated religion and ethnicity (Kushner, 2009). Exploring Jewish-American identity, Cousens (2007) emphasizes the diverse religious classifications associated with students who identify themselves as Jewish. These classifications go beyond the orthodox/progressive split, to include agnostic or atheist, not affiliated, and dual affiliations between Judaism and other faiths. Indeed, variations in Jewish

identity in the US often draw from both religious and non-religious spheres and practices, which can be understood through ethnic, religious, or a conceptual framework of multiple secularities (see Kleine & Wohlrab-Sahr, 2020).

Within the Jewish mosaic, educational organizations strive to highlight various identity facets (e.g. religious, social, and cultural). In this context, the largest presence in US universities is that of *Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life*, which boasts over 550 centers spread out on American campuses and over 800 worldwide (Hillel International, 2024; Sales & Saxe, 2006). Hillel has become a central education agency for outreach and engagement of Jewish students. Thus, as this research aims to explore the overt and tacit identity work implemented in informal student organizations, I contend that Hillel and its online activity (webpages, YouTube, Facebook and TikTok videos) serve as an effective case study for examining identity construction on the internet. Working within a competitive online identity marketplace, this study focuses on the digital campus experience of Jewish American students and examines the ways that student organizations negotiate identity building via online outlets.

Methodology

To explore how student organizations shape the identity construction of Jewish American students via digital means, the study design will employ qualitative methods from the rich repertoire of research tools associated with digital ethnography (also known as netnography or cyber ethnography). Specifically, the study will combine semi-structured interviews with webmasters, semiotic analysis of videos, posted images on social networks and think-aloud interviews with both webmasters and media consumers. For context, this design will be accompanied with ethnographic observations of key sites and events of interest. All of which have been largely enabled by my personal acquaintance with Hillel and North American Jewish institutions, and will be elaborated below.

Qualitative researchers have increasingly highlighted reflexivity as part and parcel of ethnographic research, acknowledging its role in constructing knowledge and making inter-subjective elements explicit to ensure trustworthiness and transparency (Finlay, 2002). This approach encourages researchers to explore how their personal biographies shape their interpretation of fieldwork, ensuring that personal experiences become accountable knowledge (Clifford & Marcus, 2023; Seale, 1999).

In line with this reflexive approach, my connection to the Hillel organization began in 2008 when I worked at the newly established 'Haifa Hillel' center, which introduced me to American Jewry. My involvement led to participation in the Haifa-Boston connection, supported by the Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP), fostering collaborations in Jewish culture and community volunteering. This experience deepened my understanding of American non-profits and the organizational culture of Hillel, allowing me to critically reflect on my role within these communities, in alignment with the growing emphasis on researcher subjectivity in anthropology. Later in my career I worked for the University of Haifa's International School. In this capacity, I regularly met groups of students that were visiting Israel in student exchange programs, and in both the *Taglit and MASA*[3] informal program for young diaspora Jewry. Furthermore, on several occasions I took part in Hillel General Assembly (HIGA), the annual general meeting of the Hillel organization, which unites all active Hillel centers in the US. I attended workshops and sessions that discussed a variety of areas of community life. These events were conducive to understanding the socio-organizational landscape of informal education within American Jewry as well as establishing connection with key educational

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[3] Taglit offers Jewish students a ten-day educational tour to Israel. The program was founded 23 years ago with the help of benefactors of the American Jewish community and in cooperation with the Jewish Agency. See https://taglit.foundation/ retrieved October 23, 2024. Similarly, MASA program offers diaspora youngsters a more extensive stay in Israel with vocational or academic affiliation. See https://www.masaisrael.org/ retrieved November 4, 2024.

leaders, which are instrumental in advancing the study's empirical layout and provide some key informants, which can support its interpretive analysis.

Investigating Jewish American identity formation, the study focuses on the online operations of 'Hillel the center for Jewish life on campus, a key Jewish student organization. Hillel is the oldest, and according to Sales & Saxe (2006), the most prominent Jewish organization at universities, operating alongside *Chabad on Campus*[4] centers. The organization is regarded as a primary support system for Jewish students. Students that face challenges related to their identity, such as antisemitism on campus (Katz, 2020), and an ongoing struggle to maintain identity in the face of alternative lifestyles, which include secularism and historic variants of alternative young adult subcultures (e.g., Hippies, Grunge, Hipsters, Zoomers).

To enable a holistic overview of the communicative identity work that Hillel operates, the research will include a three-pronged design, which will examine webmasters, the online content uploaded by them, and the users of Hillel's social media accounts, spanning through an academic year. Accordingly, the sub-questions address the primary research question as follows: (1) What are the creeds (e.g. religious, professional, national) and worldviews of webmasters, and how do these ideals shape online workers' media activity in their identity work? (2) How are identity narratives constituted and transmitted through the visual discourse of Jewish student organizations' social media in the US? (3) How is Jewish identity interpreted and negotiated by users of student organizations' social media?

To address the first subquestion, the study will draw upon 25 in-depth remote (Zoom) and in-person interviews with Hillel webmasters who manage social media accounts. Webmasters are content creators and often operate as behind the scenes agents that orchestrate the interface and

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[4] See Chabad on Campus website - https://chabadoncampus.org/ retrieved October 23, 2024

social aspects of a website or social media page (e.g., editing videos, composing captions, vetting user responses) (Golan & Martini, 2022). Similar to religious influencers, who attain status as religious leaders through their direct approach and parasocial relations to users (Einstein, 2024), webmasters develop influence and authority albeit remaining invisible. Thus, investigating their worldviews opens a gateway to understanding objectives and motivations that underpin Hillel Instagram feeds.

To this effect, initial contacts have been established with leaders in managerial positions at Hillel and a snowball sampling process has been enacted to identify potential subjects. Sessions with subjects will include an interview segment alongside a think-aloud procedure all of which will extend between 45-60 minutes. Interview questions will discuss the webmaster's background (with particular attention to Jewish lifestyle, culture, and education), worldviews, creed and online activity in their capacity at Hillel and beyond. To this end, a preliminary interview protocol has been composed (see appendix A) and will be adjusted throughout the initial stages of the study to fit the subjects' worldviews and modes of discourse.

The interview session will be followed by the think-aloud portion. Rooted in cognitive psychology and the learning sciences, think aloud research involves participants verbalizing their thoughts while completing tasks, allowing researchers to gain real-time insights into their interpretive processes. This method not only reveals what participants are thinking but also encourages reflection on their actions, such as in social media use (Lundgrén-Laine & Salanterä, 2010). The assumption is that thinking aloud exposes cognitively processed information stored in memory, aiding in the study of decision-making and task interaction. Employing a think aloud method, webmasters will be asked to respond to select images. These images were chosen from Hillel Instagram accounts to represent key categories of American-Jewish identity and student culture (see appendix A.1).

The second undertaking will focus on visual content, which includes uploaded photos and videos (reels), inserted image captions as well as user comments from the Instagram accounts of four prominent Hillel centers. These postings converge tacit and explicit meanings, which webmasters opt to convey, alongside user responses. Instagram posts consist of four fields (see figure 1). Images and captions that are uploaded by the webmasters, alongside a caption, which provides a description of the visual and a call to action (e.g., invitation to Jewish holiday gathering, Jewish ceremony, various announcements). On the right-hand side, we can also find users' textual comments, which relate to the central image and are often accompanied by an emoji insignia. On the bottom right, users are able to tag, like and share the post with others. Thus, displaying public affirmation and popularity of the posting.

Figure 1. Sample screenshot of a Hillel Instagram post.

The four Hillel centers accounts that will be analyzed, are selected from the list of top schools by Jewish population percentage.[5] Further considerations in selecting the Instagram account

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[5] See Hillel International website listing - https://www.hillel.org/top-60-jewish-colleges/ retrieved October 21, 2024.

include recommendations by key informants and available contact with the selected Hillel centers, their staff and webmasters. So far, initial contact has been made with staff at Queens College (CUNY) and Northwestern University. As of October 21, 2024, the @northwesternhillel account has 4,333 followers and 477 posts. @qchillel account has 1,675 followers and 1,462 posts. Two additional Hillel accounts will be added from the top Jewish attendance university list, pending additional communication with informants and research networking.

Addressing the third subquestion, the methodological design will also consist of two components: in-depth interview questions and a think-aloud procedure. Interview questions (see appendix B) will pertain to users' primordial identity and educational background, with special attention to their affinity to Jewish institutions (school, voluntary associations). Furthermore, questions will aim to uncover the role of Hillel's social media outlets on their online and offline social networks. During the think-aloud procedure, Hillel students will again be asked to comment on select images from Hillel's Instagram feed that represent key identity narratives (see appendix B.1).

Images (see appendix A.1 and B.1) were gathered after reviewing hundreds from Hillel Instagram accounts, with select images chosen to represent key identity facets (student, religious, national, youthfulness, disciplinary/professional). Additionally, these images were shared with Hillel staff during preliminary discussions conducted remotely via Zoom. In addition, the respondents will be asked to discuss their impressions and positions towards their own postings on the feed or with Hillel hashtags. Student responses will shed light on how Jewish identity is negotiated through the ongoing exposure to representations of Jewish life on campus, as well as the ways that social capital is established and maintained by these online images and user participation.

As mentioned, background and supportive information will be gathered through ethnographic field analysis of Hillel's annual events and visits to Hillel Campus centers in the US. Visits will include meetings and informal conversations with professors and students who are active in Hillel and its online outlets. Moreover, efforts will be made to collect documents pertaining to Hillel's outreach efforts including its press, distributed pamphlets and giveaways, as well as meeting protocols (if attainable), with special attention to meeting protocols on media policy.

Data Analysis

All three subsections' transcriptions and visual corpus will be separately coded and analyzed with Dedoose qualitative research software in line with the principles set forth by Glaser & Strauss (1967). Code selection will be guided by an open and largely inductive approach, where original codes will be developed, rather than plainly adopted from other sources. While this approach may somewhat slow down the procedure due to the need to simultaneously learn and create codes, it prevents researchers from imposing pre-existing frameworks onto the data, allowing for a more organic discovery process (Saldana, 2021:41). Coded data will be discussed with a fellow researcher (supervisor or collaborator) and compared to past literature on identity construction with special attention to Jewish identity socialization.

Significance of Proposed Research and Relevance to Education

The study offers contributions to fields of digital religion, online community building, lived Judaism, visual exchange and more. However, for brevity, I would like to emphasize three aspects of cultural and educational merit:

Students' Online Cultures - Scholars have often emphasized students' activity as grounded and stem from either expressive, hedonistic (Alon, 1986; Taub, 1997; Tsuda, 1993), or professional and goal-oriented motivations (Tomlinson & Jackson, 2021). This study seeks to

shed light on identity building motivations and cultivating a sense of belonging over digital tracts.

Online (Visual) Activity of Voluntary Organizations - While organizational activity is often evaluated through economic or behavioral criteria, this work will shed light on the online strategies initiated by voluntary organizations to enhance social mobilization, galvanize participation, and build trust in the organization and its mission. The study emphasizes the visual elements employed to achieve these goals.

American Jewry and Higher Education - The research will elucidate Jewish community leadership's actions to counter processes of secularization and assimilation that threaten Jewish identity amongst students in higher education. Threats that have been compounded on campuses in the aftermath of the October 7 attack, and the emergence of widespread antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments (Elman, 2023). Unlike scholars that emphasize efforts of Jewish NGO's to the development of formal studies (i.e. Jewish and Israel studies) (Koren, Saxe & Fleisch, 2016), this research will highlight informal socialization channels which the communities indirectly foster within American academia to cement Jewish identity, ensure cultural reproduction, foster the development of young leadership and the cultivation of Pan-Jewish community boundaries.

Research Pitfalls

Positionality and Cross-Cultural Encounters: A significant methodological consideration in cross-cultural studies pertains to the researcher's positionality and perspective when encountering unfamiliar cultural contexts. Ethnographers have underscored the researcher's role as it relates to their insider/outsider position as well as their biography with regard to race, nationality, sexuality, class and gender. All of which are relevant towards not only attaining

trust and access but also shape the interpretive and theoretical claims after leaving the field (Best, 2007: 6). Accordingly, my position as an Israeli student who is older than the subjects and studying American campus culture, presents a challenge of cultural distance. To mitigate this gap, the research design employs engagements with informants that will support interpretive analysis. Furthermore, the think aloud procedure will enable discussions with subjects about cultural artifacts (Instagram posting), thus the interviewees *de facto* act as informants that interpret their own culture.

Remote Research: Since its early beginnings, the legacy of ethnographic research has involved the study of remote cultures. Nevertheless, contemporary scholars often rely on their proximity to subjects for frequent and rich access to the objectives of the study at hand. As an Israeli based student this poses a geographical challenge. To address this potential impediment, the study employs three strategies: (1) Netnographic research, which traverses geographic distance (Utekhin, 2017). (2) Remote interviews (Zoom) which enable in-depth conversations with subjects from afar and enable easy documentation (Gray et al., 2020). (3) Planned fieldwork to Hillel centers in US campuses. For this purpose, preliminary contacts have been initiated specifically at Northwestern University and in some other venues. Preliminary digital correspondence with Hillel administrative personnel will facilitate institutional access and establish foundational rapport with prospective research subjects. If access to a specific Hillel center is denied, an alternative, which meets the research design criteria, will be selected.

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Appendix

Appendix A:

Preliminary Interview Protocol: Hillel Social Media Webmaster

Primordial identity: Personal Questions, Creeds and Worldviews:

- Can you tell us about yourself? Where are you from originally and how old are you?

- Tell me about your Jewish background. What denomination do you affiliate yourself with?
- How do you describe your affiliation? (Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Secular, Reformist, Conservative, other)
- How would you define your identity? Rate your identity? (American, Jewish, student, professional/disciplinary - professional training such as doctor and attorney)
- Do you have a background in religious schooling (including extra-curricular/Sunday school)?
- Organizational Affiliation by Religious-Secular Continuum
- Do you have any professional or academic background in the online field?

Affinity with Jewish Identity Organizations:

- Are you active in a Jewish community center or organization aside from Hillel?
- Did you know Hillel before you started your studies?
- How did you hear about Hillel?
- When did you start working/being involved in Hillel?
- Tell me about your Job at Hillel
- How long have you been working with Hillel?
- Have you been involved with other projects at Hillel and Jewish (informal) education?
- Have you participated in the Birthright Israel program?
- In your opinion will your involvement in Hillel affect your involvement in the community or your Jewish life later in life?
- What in your opinion is Jewish Identity?
- Did your involvement with Hillel strengthen your desire to build a life with Jewish involvement?
- Do you see Hillel as a hangout place? Do you invite your friends to join?
- Do you use other social media platforms?
- Do you upload Jewish content on your own social media?
- In your opinion, is the activity in the Hillel network primarily Jewish or American?
- Do you think there is an ideological component in Hillel online?
- Do you think this component has changed since October 7th?
- Do you think that Hillel's online activity helps counter antisemitism?

Hillel Objectives, Work Creed and Social Media Practice

- Tell me about how you see the role and use of social media for Hillel?
- Can you tell us from your experience what social media do Hillel students mostly use?
- What is the strategic purpose of using Instagram? Do you have any specific goals?
- What are you presenting on Instagram?
- How do you create content to share on social media?
- How do you choose what to share?
- Differences between Instagram 'Stories' and posts?

- What do you do with the story? What topics do you cover in stories?
- Do you have stories that you liked or had a strong impression? How do you see the difference between different platforms (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok) for Hillel's postings?
- Can you describe a day in work as a digital webmaster?
- Could you identify a disengagement from Hillel or its social media in the aftermath of October 7th attack?

Peer Influence and Partnerships:

- We see some similarity between a few different Hillel's, are you inspired by each other?
- Do you consult with colleagues from other Hillel centers? Is there a group that shares ideas for posts or what to present on Instagram/social media?
- Is there any guidance from Hillel International regarding the use of new media in general and Instagram in particular? If so, can you elaborate?
- In your experience, does using Instagram contribute to Hillel's activities? In what way? Can you give us an example?
- Do you think the use of Instagram meets Hillel's main objectives or is it more fitting for the regional goals of your campus?
- How do you think other people view Hillel's Instagram/Social media activity?

Identity Representation: Jewish, Organizational and College Identity

- Who are you catering for (student's parents, students, donors/alumni, academic staff)?
- Who is the audience of your feed? Do you have feedback or meta-data on this?
- How do you characterize your Hillel activities on Instagram posts? What inspires it or would do you choose to emphasize it in cultural terms? Is it the Jewish Tradition? American culture? Israeli? Student life?
- Do you post current events or is your focus on campus happenings?
- How do current events influence the feed?
- Have the events of October 7th and their aftermath on American campuses influenced the way you represent (up-play/downplay) Jewish Identity?
- Do the comments reflect the political climate on campus?

Think Aloud – Webmasters:

- We have a few pictures from some Instagram feeds - Can you tell us how do you view these images and what, in your opinion, does it represent? What's the use/purpose
- Describe what you see
- How does this reflect Jewish identity?
- Will you post it?
- I see you also have the badges that represent saved stories, these badges vary from each Hillel center and its feed. How do you decide what kind of badges to create?
- Do you have anything to add or share regarding the use of New Media and Instagram?

- Do you have any questions for me?
- Can you recommend to us colleagues from other Hillel centers that we can talk to?
- How does this reflect Jewish identity?

Closing Question:

- What role do you think social media plays in expressing and shaping Jewish identity on campus?

Appendix A.1: Webmaster Think Aloud
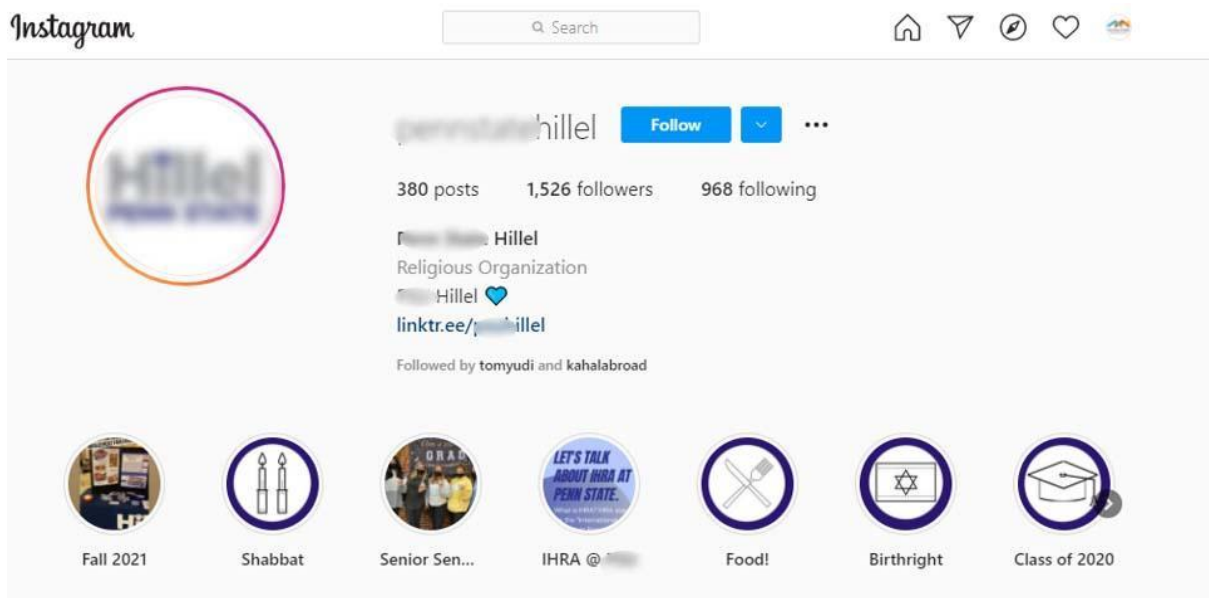
hillel • Follow

llel Rosh Hashanah Recap:
We loved spending time all together to
celebrate the New Year! Thanks to
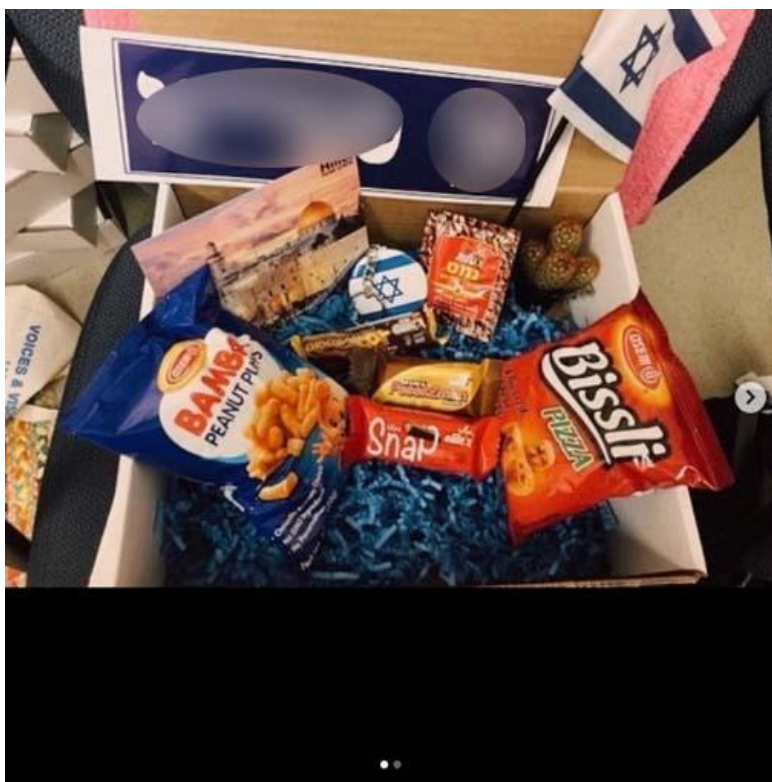everyone who attended! 🧧🍯❤️

2w

girl I see my daughter
@r so proud

2w 3 likes Reply

141 likes

SEPTEMBER 13

Add a comment...   Post

hillel • Follow

hillel It may be a gloomy
Tuesday but we have tons of great
things planned for you this week!

Did you know that Hillel is
starting an Israel IL subscription box
service "Sababa Box"? Register via the
link in our bio!!

Here's some of the Israel-themed gifts
that you will receive in your first launch
box 📦!

45w

91 likes

NOVEMBER 17, 2020

Add a comment...   Post

pennstatehillel Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg passed away the day that Rosh Hashanah began. According to Jewish Tradition, a person who dies on Rosh Hashanah is a tzaddik, a person of great righteousness. Baruch Dayan HaEmet. Thank you for all you did for women and the world ❤️

53w

j____del1 Baruch dayen emes

53w Reply

____llam Rip 😭

53w Reply

140 likes

SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

Add a comment...   Post

____hillel Happy almost new year!!! 🍎
Amy from @whatjewwannaeat created these delicious Pumpkin Chocolate Chip cookies stuffed with halva inspired tahini filling! 🍪🎃😋

You can find the recipe at @jewishboston 🍎🍎🍎

These are the perfect dessert to go along with your Rosh Hashanah meal! And if you haven't already signed up to get yours, today is the last day to do so!

If you do make this delicious treat - dm us a picture 📷 to be featured on the Instagram!!

53w

68 likes

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020

Add a comment...   Post

Student Spotlight

Nicole ▊▊▊▊▊

Hillel

▊▊▊▊▊ Hillel · Follow · · ·

▊▊▊▊▊ Nicole, 2021- Nicole has been spending her time during quarantine building her academic experience by focusing on her classes and continuing her research in astrophysics. She has also been trying to find new ways to create music and bring positivity and joy to others.
Nicole's favorite Hillel memory was attending interfaith Shabbat her sophomore year. She thought it was amazing to meet so many new people who had come to learn about Judaism and others who had just begun searching for their own Jewish identities. She thought this experience was eye opening because she learned about the fascinating religious and cultural backgrounds of other students and the

58 likes
JULY 8, 2020

Add a comment...   Post

▊▊▊▊ Hillel · Follow
Penn State Center for Spiritual and Ethical Develop

▊▊▊▊ hillel Our Sukkah is officially up! Come by to eat, relax, and chill with friends! You could even JewPAC a meal and get it paid for by us! DM for more details 🍝

102w

72 likes
OCTOBER 10, 2019

Add a comment...   Post

Full video clip can be viewed here:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OD9pJpKyGIXk47C6rJJnIKzAdyV2rjBu/view?usp=sharing

Appendix B:

Preliminary Interview Protocol: Hillel Social Media Users

Primordial identity: Personal Questions, Creeds and Worldviews:

- Can you tell us about yourself? Where are you from originally and how old are you?
- Tell me about your Jewish background. What denomination do you affiliate yourself with? (Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Secular, Reformist, Conservative, other)
- Do you have a background in religious schooling? (including extra-curricular/Sunday school)
- Organizational Affiliation by Religious-Secular Continuum

Online Identity:

- Are you active on social media? what platforms?
- Do you follow Hillel, other student associations, or other Jewish organizations?
- In your opinion, is the activity in the online Hillel network primarily religious, Jewish/cultural or American/student oriented?
- Do you mention any Jewish affiliation on your profile picture or history?
- Do you upload Jewish content on your own social media?
- Some people avoid including any Jewish-identifying markers on their online profiles, while others choose to emphasize them. What are your thoughts on Jewish identifying markers on social media?
- In what way do your online networks correspond or overlap your real life network? (Does it represent you?)
    - Friends and acquaintances
    - Leisure activities
    - Jewish affiliation and practice

Affinity with Jewish Identity Organizations:

- Are you active in a Jewish community center or organization aside from Hillel?
- Do you frequently visit Hillel? Tell me about your visits
- Were you acquainted with Hillel before starting your academic studies?
- Have you been involved with other projects at Hillel and Jewish (informal) education?
- Have you participated in the Birthright Israel program?
- Do you see Hillel as a hangout place? Do you invite your friends to join?
- When you think about how you would describe yourself, how important are these different elements: being American, being Jewish, being a student, and your professional or academic field? Could you rank them?
- Do you relate to Hillel's online content?
- Do you think there is an ideological component in Hillel online? Can you elaborate?
- Do you think there has been a change in its creed since October 7th?
- Do you think that Hillel's online activity helps counter antisemitism?

Think Aloud – Users:

I want to share with you some images from various Hillel Instagram postings: Please share how you view these images and what, in your opinion, does it represent? What's the use/purpose

- Describe what you see?
- Please explain what is being conveyed by the Instagrammer?
- (How) does this reflect Jewish identity?
- Would/Do you post similar images?
- I see you also have the badges that represent saved stories, these badges vary from each Hillel center and its feed. How do you decide what kind of badges to create?
- Do you have anything to add or share regarding the use of New Media and Instagram?
- Do you have any questions for me?
- Can you recommend to us colleagues from other Hillel centers that we can talk to?

Closing Question:

- What role do you think social media should play in expressing and shaping Jewish identity on campus?

Appendix B.1: User Think Aloud

hillelintl and **cbhillel**
Original audio

hillelintl @i.noagirl, member of @cbhillel and recent Barnard College graduate, was recognized for her UNWAVERING commitment to fighting antisemitism - and is the recipient of @ajc.global's Sharon Greene Award for Campus Advocacy.

Noa inspires us, and after a school year marked by rising antisemitism, she remains unabashedly PROUD of her Jewish identity and her love for the state of Israel.

Read more about Noa and the students who are leading the fight against antisemitism at the 🔗 in our bio.

#hillel #jewish #jewishlife #college #jewishlifeoncampus #jewishtiktok

20w

cgkatz02 Mazel tov!! You make this Barnard alumna proud 💙!
20w 2 likes Reply

sydsydcohen your passion and courage is an inspiration, much love to you Noa ❤️
20w 5 likes Reply

yuvall.mazorr I'm so glad to have met you! You have given me and so many others the strength to stand up against antisemitism 💙
20w 3 likes Reply

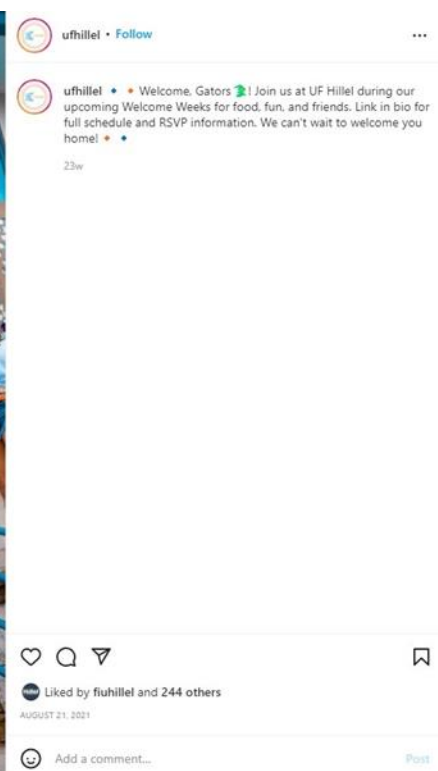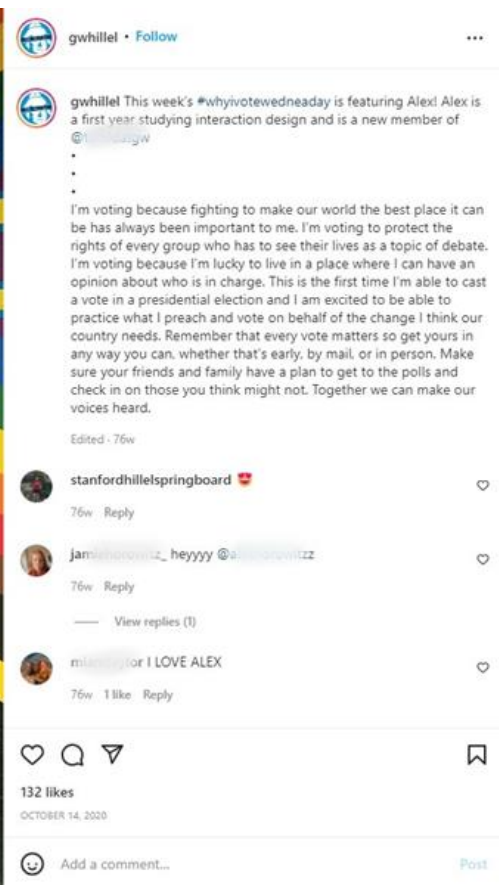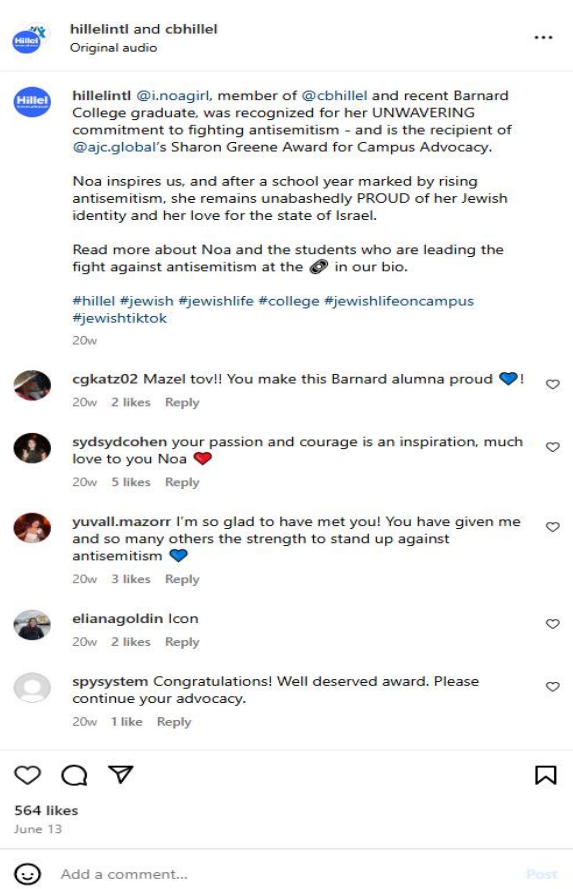**elianagoldin** Icon
20w 2 likes Reply

spysystem Congratulations! Well deserved award. Please continue your advocacy.
20w 1 like Reply

564 likes
June 13

Add a comment...   Post

Full video clip can be viewed here:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OD9pJpKyGIXk47C6rJJnIKzAdyV2rjBu/view?usp=sharing

northwesternhillel • Follow

northwesternhillel Today is October 7.

A year ago today, a tragedy befell the Jewish people, and we are still living in its aftermath.
Today we mark one year of pain, tears, loss, and grief.

This is a day to commemorate, pause, reflect, and mourn those lost on that day and every day since. It's been 366 days too long.

Jewish tradition teaches that mourning is something we do together, so on this difficult day, our students, staff, and community join Israel, Jewish communities, and people of goodwill around the world in mourning the loss of those murdered one year ago today, and we continue to hope fervently for the safe return of those still held hostage who were taken on that horrible day.

We are filled with ahava (love) and rachamim (compassion).

We continue to hold tikvah (hope)

3w

lilyfeinberg ❤️❤️❤️
3w 1 like Reply

alexangrist 🏋️🇮🇱
3w 1 like Reply

madeleine.stern 🇮🇱🏋️💙
3w 2 likes Reply

andy.hartman 🏅🏅🏅
3w 2 likes Reply

klotsmanirena 🕯️🕯️🙏🏻❤️🇮🇱
3w 1 like Reply

Liked by **jsedelman** and others
October 7

Add a comment...   Post

46