Particularism in the University:
REALITIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR
JEWISH LIFE ON CAMPUS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

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**PURPOSE**

The purpose of the interview is to understand current realities: (1) the student population; (2) the campus climate (with regard to key dimensions of diversity, political activism, unity, tolerance, Israel, etc.); and (3) the organization’s/office’s work and how it fits in with the realities of the student population and the campus climate.

The purpose is also to learn about future opportunities for and obstacles to the extension or intensification of Jewish life on campus.
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1. HILLEL/CHABAD INTERVIEWS

**Introduction: Personal background**
- How long have you been in the Hillel/Chabad field?
- When did you come here?
- Why here?
- What is your vision for your directorship here? What do you want to accomplish?

**Planning**
- How do you define Hillel’s/Chabad’s mission or purpose on this campus?
- If Development Director: How do you present Hillel to potential donors?
- How do you do your planning? Do you set goals? If so, what goals do you have for the next year or so? [Probe: To what extent is programming aimed at connecting students to Jewish spirituality and ritual, to Jewish ethnicity and culture, to each other socially?]
- What will facilitate your meeting those goals? What could get in the way?
- What are the greatest strengths of this Hillel/Chabad? What are its weaknesses or vulnerabilities? [Probes: student leadership, lay leadership, staff, facilities, students, image, politics]
- What are you doing/planning to do with regard to building your internal strength?
- How does the staff structure fit with the mission?
- Where does funding come for Jewish activities on campus? What is the size of the budget?

**Students**
- How would you characterize the types of (Jewish) students at this school?
- What “types” does Hillel generally serve? [Probe for specifics about which groups they think they are doing their best work with. Check on gender differences.] What strategies do you use for reaching different types of students?
- What types/groups of Jewish students are you missing or are least successful in engaging? How possible is it to reach those students? What would it take to reach them?
- How unified or divided is the “Jewish community” here? Along what lines do students in Hillel divide themselves? How about Jews on the larger campus? How intense are these divisions? How are you dealing with them? [Probe not only on denominational differences, but also on multi-racial and multi-ethnic Jews; gay and lesbian Jews. What happens to these students?]
Lateral relationships

- How well integrated is Hillel into the college/university? into the intellectual life on campus? [Probe on points of structural integration and on programmatic collaborations, etc. Are these collaborations sustained or episodic? May have to ask about money (e.g., are Hillel staff on the university payroll? Do they also teach? who owns the building? who gets donations to Hillel?)]

- What are your personal relationships with other units on campus? [Probes: campus ministries, faculty, Jewish studies department, other academic units, administration.] Where do you find support? Where do you encounter opposition or challenges?

Priorities

- Is it fair to assume that your main emphasis is on undergraduates? How much effort also goes into serving graduate students? serving the local community? doing other work on campus?

Campus Climate

- What kind of campus is this?

- You no doubt share experiences with your colleagues at other schools. What’s unique about [college]? How is Jewish life here different from Jewish life on other campuses? How is your work same/different from that of colleagues at other colleges?

- What changes have you noticed in the past few years? [Probes: changes in students, campus, administration, programs, internal workings of Hillel]

- Is there a lot of emphasis at [college] on diversity and respecting differences etc? How well do these efforts work? Is there a diverse population? Is there respect? Any incidents of bias or prejudice? How does all this affect your work?

- OPTIONAL general question; not related to Jews in particular: How activist would you say this campus is? What are the key issues--in the past year or so--that students have organized around or that have gotten a lot of talk? [Or ask about issues we have read about in the student paper.]

- What do you think are the big issues that (Jewish) students today face? How are they affected by the situation in Israel, threats of terrorism, threats of war? What is the campus reaction to these? What is Hillel’s reaction? How do current events affect your work?

Programming

- If you had to choose a favorite program that you’ve done here, which would it be? Why? What made it work so well? If you could do more with this program, what would you do?

- And what about your “least favorite” program? What did you learn from that program? Why did it fail?
• Name of the game seems to be reaching students in one way or another. What is your “philosophy”/practice of engagement? Where have you been most successful? What else would you like to do in this arena?

• What are your strategies for student leadership development—identifying leaders, developing their skills, empowering them etc.? Where have you been most successful? What else would you like to do in this arena?
2. STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS  
Primarily for the Unengaged

Introduction
• What do you like best about being at [college]? Where has it fallen short of your expectations?

• What are the main things that you’re involved with at school? Aside from classes and studying, where do you put most of your time/energy?

• Is this where you met most of your close college friends? If not, how did you meet them? Is it pretty easy or difficult to get to know new people here?

• Suppose someone from your high school came to [college] to visit to see if s/he wanted to go to school here. And suppose this person were pretty much like you in terms of Jewish background and feelings. What would you tell this person about coming here? If they asked you what it’s like to be a Jew here, what would you tell them?

Climate
• Does [college] put a lot of emphasis on diversity and respecting differences etc? How well do their efforts work? Is there a diverse population? Is there respect?

• Have there been any incidents of anti-Semitism on campus? other incidents of discrimination or intimidation?

• What kinds of things do students talk about? Is there much concern with current events? What are the hot topics? What about the situation in Israel, threats of terrorism, threats of war? How do people on campus talk about these things? Do they ever come up in class? How do you feel about them?

Involvement in Jewish activities & Jewish life
• How would you describe the Jewish community on campus? How are relations among different groups of Jews—for example, those that go to Hillel versus those that don’t; those in fraternities versus not. What difference—if any--does this make to you personally?

• Do Hillel, Jewish studies department, Jewish fraternities, sororities, or social clubs, and other Jewish organizations have much of a presence on campus? What do you know about them? What kinds of things do they do? What’s your image of them?

• What—if anything--have you done this (academic) year in terms of Jewish activities, events, or practices? [Be clear that these don’t necessarily refer to Hillel or anything formal; could just be lighting Hanukkah candles in your dorm room.] Why? What drew you to that? How did it go for you? [If they’ve done a lot, get one example for follow-up questions.]

• When deciding whether or not to get involved in Hillel, what did you think?
• Why not do more?

• Do you have connections to Jewish organizations off campus?

• What about dating?—Do you date? only Jews? same as when you were home?

• Some people come to college and have the same kind of Jewish life—whatever that means to you—that they had back home. Some people do more at school than they did at home. And some people do less. How do your Jewish feelings and practices at school compare with those from your life back home? Why do you think this is your pattern? [Probe for influences on campus that affect choices.]
3. AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEWS WITH UPPERCLASSMEN
(Unengaged)

Individual or small group interviews (up to 5 students maximum) with particular types of seniors (e.g., engineering students, athletes, members of a Jewish fraternity, etc.). These are simple autobiographical interviews with basically four questions:

1. What were you like when you came here? (Probe on personality, career interests, behaviors, attitudes, values.)

2. How have you changed over the three or four years you have been here?

3. What were you like as a Jew when you came here? (Probe on beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, values.)

4. How have you changed (or not) over the years you have been here?
4. MEETING WITH HILLEL BOARD

Twenty- to thirty-minute conversation at a regular Hillel board meeting. Describe the study for their information. Then as two simple questions. Let them run with each one about 10-15 minutes each question.

1. What are your favorite things about the work you do through Hillel? What motivates you? drives? satisfies you? makes you happy you took on this responsibility?

2. What’s the downside of the job? What frustrates, annoys, disappoints you or otherwise makes you wonder why you took on this responsibility?
5. Student Leaders

Individual or group interviews with two types of student leaders: leaders in Hillel and other Jewish organizations and Jewish students on campus who are in general leadership positions (e.g., editor of the school newspaper, head of student government). Groups might separate or combine these two types of leaders, depending on logistics. Questions may need some adjustment to fit one type or the other. “[org]” refers to the particular organization with which they are involved.

Introduction

• Tell me a little bit about [the job]. What do you do? How many hours a week do you spend at it? How—if at all—do you manage to keep balance in your life? Or is this kind of all-encompassing?

Involvement

• How did you come to [your job]? [Probe on internal vs. external forces—e.g., whether they sought out the position or someone there sought them out.]

• Did you have prior experience in this kind of work? [Look for patterns of prior leadership—does this role seem continuous or discontinuous with previous roles?] What connection do you see between [prior experience] and the work you are doing at [org].?

• What do you find most gratifying about the work? What keeps you going? What gives you pleasure? What have been your greatest successes?

• In what ways is the work a pain? [Probe around frustrations, disappointments, difficulties, conflicts.] What hasn’t worked out the way you hoped?

Relation to Jewishness

• Are a lot of the other people who work on [org] Jewish? How do you explain that?

• How does this work—if at all—relate to your Jewishness?

• Suppose you had a chance to be the head of Hillel or the head of student government. Which would you choose? Why?

Relation to Future

• Do you think you’ll stay with your [org] work until you graduate? Why/why not?

• What connection—if any—do you see between this work and your future career, profession, or life after college?

• Think about the 4 or 5 people at school that you feel closest to. Are they involved in [org]? What difference—if any—does it make to you that your friends are/are not involved in [org]?
What do your family and friends back home know about/think about your work in [org]? How do you feel about that?

**Conclusion**
- If you had $1 million to apply to your work at [org], or if you could change anything there you wanted—what would you do?

_IF TIME_, repeat the Jewish identity and campus climate questions with these students.

**Jewish identity**
- Some people come to college and have the same kind of Jewish life—whatever that means to you—that they had back home. Some people do more at school than they did at home and some people do less. How do your Jewish feelings and practices at school compare with those from your other life back home? Why do you think this is your pattern? [Probe for influences on campus that affect choices.]

**Campus climate**
- Does [college] put a lot of emphasis on diversity and respecting differences etc? How well do their efforts work? [Is there a diverse population? Is there respect? any incidents of bias or prejudice?]

- What about in the Jewish community on campus? How are relations among different groups of Jews? What difference—if any--does this make to you personally?

- How activist would you say this campus is? What’s been the big issue, in the past year or so, that students have organized around or that everybody talks about? [Or ask about issues we have read about in the student paper.] What’s your position on these?

- Do you think much about current events--the situation in Israel, threats of terrorism, threats of war? How do people on campus talk about these things? Do they ever come up in class? How do you feel about them? Do they affect your work in [org]?

- Suppose someone from your high school came to [college] to visit to see if s/he wanted to go to school here. And suppose this person were pretty much like you in terms of Jewish background and feelings. What would you tell this person about coming here? If they asked you what it’s like to be a Jew here, what would you tell them?
6. ADMINISTRATORS

The primary purpose of these interviews is to learn more about the college climate and to look for opportunities for and obstacles to expanding the interests of Jewish students. “xx” refers to the interviewee’s particular office or line of work.

Introduction

• How long have you been in this position?

• In terms of the work or accomplishments of your office, what are you most proud of?

• What are the biggest challenges facing your office today?

Climate

• We’re finding that every campus as a “diversity statement” of some kind. What’s the reality of the statement here? In particular, how do you balance creating a diverse community with creating a unified community? [American dilemma—wanting to be with your own kind; wanting to empower various groups yet needing to avoid balkanization] How does this affect the work of your office?

[Probe around admissions, housing, activities, academic courses. Ask about policies and the rules of thumb they follow. For example, how do you respond if a student requests a roommate of his/her same race or religion? What has been the college’s stance toward ethnic studies courses/majors? Is there some kind of communication about pluralism or diversity on campus during orientation? What implications—if any—do the University of Michigan cases and current rhetoric about affirmative action have for [college]?

• How would you characterize the [college] community? [Probe: Are there identifiable divisions on campus? How intense are these? How is [college] dealing with them?] How does this affect the work of your office? Where do tensions lie? How do these play out for the Jewish students?

• How do the campus ministries fit in with these philosophy/practices/divisions? What is the relationship of the campus ministries to the college? What are the points of cooperation, collaboration, conflict, opposition? How does [college] benefit from their presence on campus? [Probe both around the structural-organizational relationship and the actual, in-practice relationship.]

• What are the specific ramifications of these philosophy/practices/divisions for Jewish students?

• What changes (at this school or in your particular work) have you noticed in the past few years?

• Where do you think the work of xx is heading in the near future?
• How activist would you say this campus is? What are the key issues—in the past year or so—that students have organized around or that have gotten a lot of talk? [Or ask about issues we have read about in the student paper.]

• What do you think are the biggest challenges facing students today? facing Jewish students? Do they seem to be affected by the situation in Israel, threats of terrorism, threats of war? What is the campus reaction to these? What is your office’s reaction? Do current events affect your work?
7. Heads of Other Campus Ministries

One-on-one interviews with the heads of the other campus ministries—Catholic, mainline Protestant, and evangelical. The purpose is to learn more about the relationships among groups on campus. More importantly, we want to learn if they face the same issues as Hillel or whether their philosophy, practices, success and failures are distinct from those of the Jewish groups. What can we learn from them about organizing on this campus?

Introduction
- How do you define your ministry’s mission or purpose on this campus?
- What is the size and shape of the ministry?
- What are your (personal/organizational) relationships with other units on campus? [Probes: other campus ministries, faculty, religious studies department, other academic units, administration]. Where do you find support? Where do you encounter opposition or challenges?

Planning
- Where is your ministry headed? What’s the vision for the future?
- How do you do you planning? Do you set goals? If so, what goals do you have for the next year or so? [Probe: To what extent is programming aimed at religion, education, social life etc.]
- What will facilitate your meeting those goals? What could get in the way?
- What are the greatest strengths of this ministry? What are its weaknesses or vulnerabilities? [Probes: student leadership, lay leadership, staff, facilities, students, image, politics]
- What are you doing/planning to do with regard to building your ministry?

Campus Climate
- What is the place of religion on this campus?
- Is there a lot of emphasis at [college] on diversity and respecting differences etc? How well do these efforts work? Is there a diverse population? Is there respect? Any incidents of bias or prejudice? How does all this affect your work?
- What changes have you noticed in the past few years? [Probes: changes in students, campus, administration, programs]
• **OPTIONAL**: How activist would you say this campus is? What are the key issues—in the past year or so—that students have organized around or that have gotten a lot of talk? [Or ask about issues we have read about in the student paper.]

• What do you think are the big issues that students today face? How do the students you work with view the situation in Israel, threats of terrorism, threats of war? Do current events made any difference to you in your work?

**Programming**

• If you had to choose a favorite program that you’ve done here, which would it be? Why? What made it go well? If you could do more with it, what would you do?

• In the Jewish community we think a lot about outreach—reaching the students who would otherwise not show up at the door. Is outreach a concern to you? If so, what’s your “philosophy” and practice of outreach?

• What groups/types of students have you been particularly successful in attracting to your ministry?

• What groups/types of students are you least successful at attracting to your programs? What would it take to attract these students? Is that possible?

• Do you think that students from your denomination are exploring other faiths or denominations? Are there groups on campus that are actively recruiting them to other faiths? How do you deal with this?
8. JEWISH FACULTY

One-on-one interviews with two sorts of Jewish faculty: those that teach Jewish studies courses (including the head of the Judaic Studies Department) and Jewish faculty members in other departments who have some connection to the Jewish community. The purpose is to learn about how hospitable the campus is to Jewish studies, the links between academics and campus life, the integration of specialty subjects, and so on.

Introduction [All Faculty]

- How long have you been at [college]?
- What brought you here? What keeps you here?

Jewish Studies Faculty

- What is the place of Jewish studies on this campus? [E.g., how popular as a major? how integrated into the academic program?]
- Does the program attempt to reach out to/serve the general college community? How? With what effect?
- What do you know about your student body? What kinds of students major/minor in Jewish studies? What kinds of students generally take courses here?
- Do you see students who are working their way through their own Jewish journeys by taking Jewish studies courses? If so, how do you deal with that?
- What are the program’s strengths?
- What are its challenges or shortcomings? [Probe on intellectual, human, and financial capital.]
- What would it take to overcome these?
- Where is the program heading? How do you see it developing over the next 5 to 10 years?
- If you had unlimited funds to build Jewish studies here, what would you do? What reaction would that likely have?

All Faculty

- What is your own relationship to the formal Jewish organizations on campus (Hillel most notably)? What—if anything—do they do to get you involved?
- Our study is concerned with three things: Jewish life, Jewish community, and Jewish learning on the college campus. How would you characterize each of these on this campus?
• What changes have you noticed--in general at [college] and in the Jewish aspects--in the past few years? [Probes: changes in students, campus, administration, programs, etc.]

• Is there a lot of emphasis at [college] on diversity and respecting differences etc? How well do these efforts work? Is there a diverse population? Is there respect? Any incidents of bias or prejudice? How—if at all—does this affect your work?

• Sometimes we are more aware of the divisiveness than the unity in the Jewish community or between Jews and other groups. Along what lines do Jewish students at [college] divide themselves? How intense are these divisions? How are you dealing with them?

• What do you think are the big issues that Jewish students today face? Are they affected by Israel and The Situation (ha matsav), threats of terrorism, threats of war? What is the campus reaction to these? What stance has the program taken? What role does it play in campus dialogues? How are current events dealt with in the classroom? How—if at all—do they affect your work?