Talia Tron (Granot) tells about her research at ELSC

By Omer Sharon

Talia arrives at this interview at the end of a long day. We meet for a chat on the grass of Seminar Hakibbutzim. She is in the fourth year of her Ph.D. studies, under the joint guidance of Prof. Daphna Weinshall, from the Computer Science department, and Prof. Avi Peled, head of the closed ward unit at the Sha'ar Menashe Mental Health Center. She divides her time between the hospital patients, data analysis on campus, the kibbutz where she lives, and, on top of all that, working on releasing her first album as a singer.

What kind of research do you do, and what are you trying to discover?

I'm studying non-verbal behavior in schizophrenic patients, with a focus on facial expressions. In clinical settings, doctors encounter a massive amount of information and are required to make critical choices. I analyze videos of the patients during clinical interviews and while responding to questions, images and videos. Using state-of-the-art algorithms, we hope to develop tools that will pinpoint relevant information from facial expressions, which could assist doctors in diagnosing, monitoring and treating patients. In addition, I believe that better understanding of the phenomenology of the disease may contribute to understanding the mechanisms that cause it.

Why did you choose this field?
I was always interested in psychiatry, and I really wanted to engage in applicative research. During my first degree, in psychobiology, I discovered that I love the computational side of science and continued to pursue it at ELSC. Thanks to my two supervisors, Daphna and Avi, I was able to integrate many of my hobbies into one project.

What do you like about being a student at ELSC?

The education I received during my Ph.D. studies at ELSC really constructed my way of thinking, and the way I approach data. In addition, this environment exposed me to the vast interdisciplinary aspects of the field. I like the family atmosphere, in which I have encounters with super talented students and researchers on a daily basis. Moreover, I feel that the place is really open to new ideas? many students are leading joint projects that are pioneering new fields, and I feel that the program deeply encourages it. And I have to mention the awesome new cafeteria in Rothberg.

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