

JTEENS OF THE IGENERATION

By

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Capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the joint degree of Master of Arts in Jewish Nonprofit Management and Jewish Education

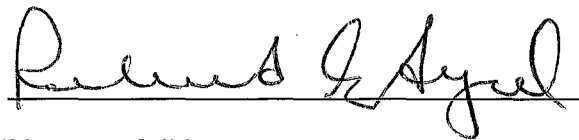
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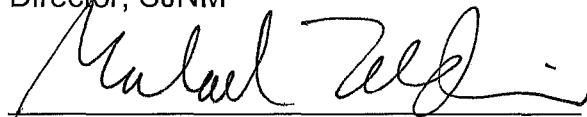
SCHOOL OF JEWISH NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT
AND RHEA HIRSCH SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

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Approved By:

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I. Abstract

This research project investigates how teenagers and young adults access the news, more specifically news regarding the Middle East and Israel. The project supposes that social and news media play a role in how they interact with the news. The research will also examine how social and news media portray the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and thus, the information the teenagers and young adults receive. The research findings will then inform a tenth grade Jewish Religious School confirmation curriculum, which will teach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the use of online media sources. The goal of the curriculum is twofold. Primarily, teaching a challenge facing Israel through the Israeli-Palestinian conflict allows students to directly confront a troubling concern and cultivate a genuine understanding of the many factions who share a stake in Israel. Secondly, using online resources to convey the information, explore the legitimacy and sources of that information, and to engage in the broader conversation around the conflict allows students to develop the faculties necessary to assess the validity of sources.

The results from the research confirmed that many of the respondents do indeed access the news through online news and social media resources. The results also showed that many of the respondents feel knowledgeable about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and have engaged in conversations regarding the conflict on Social Networking Sites. Finally, the results established an interest in the subject matter amongst teenagers. Consequently, the curriculum guide will follow the research project with the use of online news sources as a way to engage the students.

II. Introduction

This research project seeks to investigate two objectives: first, how do teenagers and young adults learn about the news, more specifically news regarding the middle east and Israel; and second, assuming that social and news media play some role in how they interact with the news, how accurate are these social and media news sources. The research findings will then inform a tenth grade Jewish Religious School confirmation curriculum, which will teach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the use of online media sources. The goal of the curriculum is twofold. Primarily, teaching a challenge facing Israel through the Israeli-Palestinian conflict allows students to directly confront a troubling concern and cultivate a genuine understanding of the many factions who share a stake in Israel. Secondly, using online resources to convey the information, explore the legitimacy and sources of that information, and to engage in the broader conversation around the conflict allows students to develop the faculties necessary to assess the validity of sources.

The reasoning behind using social networking and multi-media sites is that it serves as a way to engage the students through their language and interests. In addition, while news media largely influences the views of most, a shift is occurring in how younger people obtain their news and who shapes their opinions. Now many get their news through abbreviated, easy to read articles or even single lines either on mobile devices or their computers via Internet web browsing or social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. This curriculum aims to help students engage in the conversation happening on these sites in a way that can help them sort through the information and

learn to use their critical faculties to read through the material, make their own conclusions, and join the conversation.

III. Expected Results

This research and curriculum works on the supposition that results will show the majority of fourteen to twenty-nine year olds spend a significant amount of time on social networking sites (SNS) per day, in excess of ten hours a day. The number of hours they spend online will presumably correlate to their age, the younger demographics likely spending more time on these sites than the older. In addition, the survey, in all probability, will show that the majority of their exposure to and engagement with the news comes from various online sources including phone news applications, online news articles, and social networking sites. Furthermore, the research may indicate that students use search engines such as Google or information sharing sites such as Wikipedia as their primary sources for obtaining new information.

It is at present unclear how much teenagers follow the news, but this paper supposes that most will fall into the sometimes category, only somewhat following the news. Lastly, this paper works on the theory that day school students are more familiar with international news, especially news regarding the Middle East and Arab-Israeli conflict than their peers who do not attend a Jewish high school.

IV. Literature Review

There exists a substantial amount of research regarding the impact of social and news media in peoples' lives, the use of it in classrooms, the biases within these various sites, and curricula that exist that focus on media literacy in general as well as specifically regarding Israel. Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) and the Pew Research Center

joined together on projects to expand their research activities. PEJ “is dedicated to trying to understand the information revolution. They conduct research on journalism, trends in media, and tracks changes that occur in media.” The Pew Research Center “is a nonpartisan fact tank... The center conducts public opinion polling, demographic studies, media content analysis and other empirical social science research.” The PEJ and the PEW Research Center provide useful data on trends in media and information regarding media literacy.

The supposition of this research paper is that teenage students look to online news media sources more than they do to more traditional sources. As PEJ tracks these trends, they published a number of articles that not only follow the trends of sites such as Google news, Yahoo news, and Wikipedia, but they also track the accuracy of these sites. They did a study on the “Veracity of the ‘Wiki’ concept,” in order to test “the Wikipedia method of editing” A.J. Jacobs uploaded an article he was writing and put in around 15 intentional errors. The editors of the wiki site corrected all but one error, allowing him to conclude that Wikipedia is a reasonable site for orienting oneself, but should not be quoted as a source (Seigenthaler and Wikipedia 2005).

Similar to the study on Wikipedia, The Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence also performed a content study on Google News. They found that Google News acted differently than traditional news outlets because instead of using editors, it uses algorithms to collect news from various outlets. This means that it produces no original content, but pulls from a variety of resources. Furthermore, because people who use Google news or similar news search engines will receive news from a variety of news outlets, they are likely to get broader picture of a news cycle than someone who only uses

one traditional news outlet such as the New York Times. The study found that in the 24-hour news cycle, little new news came up, but instead it cycled the same news source, merely pulling from other outlets (Online Content, A Day in the Life 2006). This informs the research for this paper as it stipulates that young people get the majority of their information from online sources.

The curriculum has a secondary goal of allowing students to look at news critically. If they get news pulled from a variety of outlets then they may get a less skewed version of the story than if they only look at one news outlet. Another survey done by Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence tracks teenagers and adults usage of YouTube. They found that the increased viewing of YouTube led to a decrease in the viewing of television (Harris Interactive and the Center for Media Research, 2007). This might speak to data in the survey for this paper as well as the paper hypothesizes that teenagers and young adults will look to online sources more than any other sources including more traditional news outlets such as television, radio, or newspapers. If people viewing YouTube led to a decrease in those watching television, than people going to online news sources could similarly lead them to stop getting news from other sources.

Pew Internet and American Life Project in June of 2011 "decided to examine SNS in a survey that explored people's overall social networks and how use of these technologies is related to trust, tolerance, social support, and community and political engagement." They traced a trend in an increase in adults using SNS. They also found that Facebook users are more engaged in political activities such as rallies. This paper suggests that the majority of teens will use at least one SNS, if not multiple SNS. Pew Internet and American Life Project also conducted research to track the use of Social

Media and Mobile Internet Use among teens and young adults in February 2010. They found that since 2006 the rates of teens and adults that use Social Media and Mobile Internet have steadily gone up. They tracked what social networking sites different age groups and genders were likely to use and how they use those sites. Their survey of teens found that more than 50% of teenagers get news about current events and politics online. (Lenhart 2010).

Larry Rosen gives data regarding how much the various age groups consume media per day and via what outlets. He then discusses ways that schools should respond in addition to what the future may look like with technology used to engage students. This article completes similar research to that of this research project. Rosen identifies how many hours a week various age groups spend 'consuming media,' including using computers on and offline, listening to music, playing video games, talking on the phone, instant messaging, texting, sending and receiving emails, and watching television. Notably, young adults, ages twenty-one to thirty-one spend the most time consuming media with older teens coming in a close second. His research discovers how much time these various groups spend consuming a wide range of media outlets, but does not explore them as a source of news media (Rosen 2011).

Aside from finding out where teenagers and young adults get their news, this survey also seeks to find out how much they follow the news and if they consider themselves knowledgeable about news concerning the Middle East. The curriculum guide is on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so the survey seeks to assess if they feel knowledgeable about this issue. The sources above confirm that students get news from online sources and that they use SNS. The Project for Excellence in Journalism

conducted studies to find out the content regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on these sites. PEJ published an article called “Social Media Express Strong Support for Israel.” The article explains that Blogs, Twitter, and Facebook overwhelmingly support Israel. Twitter and Facebook show the tone of conversation was similar with sixty percent pro-Israel compared to twenty percent pro-Palestinian and twenty percent neutral. The article gives a window into some of the questions this research seeks to answer, including how people use social media to give shape opinions as well as what are those opinions. Interestingly, of those who engaged in conversations regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on blogs, Facebook, or Twitter, only about twenty-five percent were neutral. This Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) report intended to analyze these issues on the entire social Internet. This PEJ report does some of this research in assessing what biases may exist and in which direction these sites may lean (PEJ 2011).

Pew Research Center put out the article, “Israel Defenders Join Middle East Debate on Blogs.” This article explains how a poll generated an online discussion. It chronicles how people voiced their opinions regarding Middle Eastern politics online. The research indicates that while mainstream media sources focused primarily on issues other than the Middle East, while blogs with a focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict rated very high. This article came shortly after an incident in which Israel set up a blockade of Gaza. According to this research, the incident received significantly more coverage on social media sites than in the mainstream media. The article establishes how news attention in the social networking sphere differs from that of the mainstream media (Pew Research Center 2011). The fact that Blogs and SNS sites gave more airtime to this news cycle than more traditional news outlets suggests that those getting information

from these sites may have more exposure to these news issues than those using more traditional news outlets.

The purpose of this survey and research is to inform a curriculum guide. Aside from teaching on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the curriculum will use methods that the students already use to access news, namely online resources, possibly SNS. Jamie Seger, Marge Scherer, and Mark Blankenship agree that technology should be used in the classroom as a way to engage students. They also all specifically mention SNS as a tool for classroom use. Marge Scherer seeks to transform education through the use of technology. In this article, Scherer explains why she believes that technology can transform education. She also provides many questions as well as answers to the difficult issues the use of technology brings to the surface, such as how to address the inequities of student access (Scherer 2011). Mark Blankenship believes that social media can and should impact education. Mark Blankenship makes the argument for why teachers should use social media in their classrooms for higher education (Blankenship 2011).

Jamie Seger wrote about the “Barriers to the Adoption and Adaptation of New Technologies to Deliver Extension Programming and How to Address Them” for the *The Journal of Extension (JOE)*. This article discusses the rise of social media and the need for program cohesiveness. According to the author, “many barriers exist to the successful use and implementation of technology, including an organizational structure that does not cater to the short turn-around new technologies demand and ideological generational divides among all who are affected by the organization. In order to allow new technologies to positively affect Extension programming, we must first break through such barriers with a powerful combination of enlightened knowledge and hands-on

training” (Seger 2011). This article informs the curriculum by focusing on how to integrate technology into the classroom. As students continue to engage with the world through online sources, educational programming needs to stay current and adapt to these changing situations. This not only allows the students to engage with the material through sources they are already using, but also teaches them how to use these resources responsibly.

Finally, this curriculum is specific to teaching on complexities regarding Israel. A curriculum already exists that uses media to teach about Israel. Hillel Zaremba discusses the ways various researchers look at how the news media influences its audience. “One of the chief goals of *Eyes on Israel* is to help students to explore media “texts” (articles, radio and television broadcasts, Web sites) and historical facts so as to encourage insight into the nature of the Middle East conflict and the way in which it is portrayed by the media. It is our belief that this approach will appeal to students’ developing need to question and probe, while providing them with the data necessary for understanding the challenges Israel faces.” This curriculum provides an example of how an existing curriculum uses media ‘texts’ to teach some of the challenges facing Israel (Zaremba 2011). While Zaremba’s curriculum serves as a starting place and a reference from which to work, the curriculum to follow this paper will focus more on social media as a news source versus some of the more traditional outlets of articles, radio, and television found in this curriculum. This curriculum will address where teenagers get their information and allow them to become media literate in new sources of information.

V. Methodology

The focus of the research so far has looked at how much young adults and teenagers use online media sources, how social media can transform educational practice, and how social media portray Israel. Some of the articles charted how much teenagers and young adults consume media via various outlets. This research intends to explore how social media impacts teenagers. They consume media 24/7, but one does not know what they absorb and how it shapes their opinions. In order to answer these questions an online survey was distributed that asks teenagers questions regarding their news consumptions including how much time they spend taking in the news, what outlets they use to obtain said news, and how much it influences their views, perceptions, and decisions.

Teenagers and young adults will take the survey online in the form of a simple questionnaire. The questionnaire begins with questions to obtain basic information regarding the gender, age, and Jewish background of the respondents. It includes questions about the amount of time they spend online and on social media websites as well as what sites they use. It also explores the primary sources they use to obtain their knowledge of news, both locally and nationally. Finally, it asks questions regarding their existing knowledge of the Middle East and Israel. The participants will also have the opportunity to write in any additional comments. The questionnaire will be distributed to various schools via survey monkey in an attempt to get a sampling of Jewish teenagers and young adults of various levels of Jewish involvement ages fourteen and older (see Appendix A).

VI. Analysis

The survey garnered a wide range of responses from a diverse, well-representative group of Jews from the entire spectrum of Jewish backgrounds. Out of the total 184 teenagers and young adults who responded to the survey, 87 were male and 97 female. The largest portion of participants, 39%, fell into the fifteen to seventeen age range, which correlates to the age the curriculum is geared towards. The next largest age group was eighteen and nineteen year olds who made up nearly 36% of respondents, followed by those over twenty at 16.5%, and lastly thirteen and fourteen year old who came to nearly 9%.

The survey also asked participants to identify their Jewish backgrounds and check all that apply. There was undoubtedly overlap for many of the respondents who engaged in multiple Jewish activities, but nonetheless displayed that the respondents came from a broad spectrum of Jewish backgrounds. Over 50% of the respondents checked one of the following as background; Supplementary School (Hebrew, Sunday, Religious schooling), Israel trip, Day School, and camp. In addition to these, every other option received over 10% of responses, including Jewish Youth Group or Jewish Student Union, Study Abroad in Israel, Hillel, and other. Twenty-one respondents checked other and wrote in responses, which included, Chabad, Bar Mitzvah, living in Israel, and Jewish fraternity among others. Only one person skipped this question. The large number of respondents of various ages, fairly even gender division, and broad spectrums of Jewish backgrounds suggests representative snapshots of the target population (see Appendix A for survey responses).

The survey attempted to assess how much time Jewish teenagers and young adults spend online and on social networking sites in particular, if they follow the news, what news outlets they access if they do follow the news, and how knowledgeable they consider themselves about certain news cycles regarding the Middle East. The questions, for the most part, garnered high response rates. In questions one through eight, of everyone surveyed, all or all but one answered these questions. The survey asked basic questions about their backgrounds, the time they spend online and on social networking sites, where they learn about the news, and if they follow local, national, or international news. The last four questions, received a substantially lower response rate. These likely received fewer responses because they were worded in such a way that asked the respondent to answer only if they applied to them. Question nine asked: If you learn about news from online news sources or phone applications what are they? Please check all that apply. All but twenty-two respondents checked one or more options, 58 writing in additional sources. This suggests 88% of the respondents go to online resources or phone news applications to access the news, verifying the previous question in which 84% noted that they use online news sources and 50% phone news applications.

While question nine verified certain aspects of question eight, question ten seemed to negate one finding in question eight. 128 students checked that they watch television news. Question ten asked: If you watch news on the television, which station(s) do you watch? Please check all that apply. 153 respondents listed television news stations they watch for news. The apparent contradiction comes in that only 128 students said they watch television news as a primary news source, but 153 listed news stations they watch. While this appears to be a contradiction, it may not in fact be a contradiction.

Question eight asked respondents to check all the news outlets they use as primary news resources. The high number of responses to online news and phone news applications suggests that respondents actively use these resources as primary methods to access news. The higher number of responses to which television news stations they watch than the number that viewed television as a primary source for news suggests that a high number of respondents may occasionally watch, passively watch, or possibly sporadically see when family members, friends, or roommates watch television news rather than actively seek it out as a primary news resource.

The last two questions of the survey attempted to assess whether the students followed news cycles regarding the Middle East and Israel as well as how knowledgeable they considered themselves on these news topics. All but 32 respondents said they follow news on one or more of the following news stories; the Arab Spring, Iran seeking nuclear weapons, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Middle East peace process. However, in the final question of the survey, only 122 respondents consider themselves knowledgeable on one or more of the news stories listed above, 30 less than said they follow one or more of those news stories.

The Expected Results portion of this paper suggests several expectations of responses. The response that collected results that strayed the furthest from expectations were those regarding the time respondents spend online and on social networking sites. The Expected Results posited that teenagers, especially those of younger ages would spend in excess of ten hours a day online. While the survey showed that in fact only 1% spends eleven or more hours online, 18% spend six to eleven, 67.5% two to six, and 13.5% less than two hours online. The responses to time spent on social networking sites

were even lower. Less than 2% of respondents spend eleven or more hours on social networking sites, 5% spend six to eleven hours, 52% spend two to six hours, and 41.5% spend less than two hours on social networking sites a night.

Though the results to how much time students spend online were lower than anticipated, most of the other predictions in the Expected Results section of this paper were rather accurate. The Expected Results sections also predicted respondents would primarily access the news via online news sources. In fact, the highest number of respondents checked online news sources to the question: "What are the primary methods you use to learn about the news?" 84% said that they use online news sources as a primary method to access the news. 88% then followed up by indicating online news resources they use, verifying that this was the most frequently and actively used method for accessing news. Additionally, it speculated that many respondents would use Wikipedia or search engines such as Google to view information in the news. Wikipedia, which was provided as a possible response, received the second most viewings, following the New York Times, at 36.5%, the survey did not list Google or Google news as an option. Despite its not being an option, 58 people wrote in responses, 17 indicated Yahoo as a source for news and three Google. This suggests that respondents view Google, Yahoo, and Wikipedia as news sources and indicates that if the survey listed Google and Yahoo as possible options a large number of respondents would have checked them.

In addition to how much the respondents access the news online, a large percentage of them access the news from Social Networking sites. The survey results show that the fourth most common way they access the news following online news sources, television news, and family is through Social Networking sites with 68%

indicating that they use Social Networking sites such as Facebook, Youtube, or Twitter as a primary method for news acquisition.

These results indicate a number of tendencies of the respondents. 85.5% of respondents, the largest number of whom are between fifteen and nineteen years old spend somewhere between two and eleven hours online a day, only 13.5% spend less than two hours online a day and only 1% spends more than 11 hours online. This result indicates that while Jewish teenagers spend a significant amount of time online, they do not spend all their time online. Additionally, while as previously discussed, they access news from online news sources more than any other source as well as frequently using Social Networking sites, they do access news from a variety of outlets including, family, friends, television, school, newspapers, and radio. All these findings indicate that while there are clear patterns in their lives and in the use of the internet and SNS in particular in their lives, they do interact with other resources as a part of their daily activities and interests.

According to Rosen (2011) who studied thousands of children and teens at the George Marshall Applied Cognition Laboratory along with colleagues, the “iGeneration consumes massive quantities of media.” They also conducted an anonymous online survey, which asked questions regarding “being online, using computers offline, listening to music, playing video games, talking on the telephone, instant messaging, texting, sending and receiving e-mail, and watching television. According to these guidelines of what media consumption is, they found that children (4-8) consume the least amount of media at around 5 hours per day, followed closely by Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) at around 7 hours, then Tweens (ages 9-12) at around 9 hours, Generation X (born 1965-

1979) jumps to 15 hours, followed by Young Teens (13-15) at 16 hours, Older Teens (16-18) at 20 hours, and finally Net Generation (born 1980-1989) at around 22 hours a week of media consumption. This survey suggests then, that persons from 13 to 46 (at the time of the survey in 2011) consume between 15 and 22 hours of media every day. Of course, one must note this survey includes a wider range of media consumption options than the survey conducted for this paper.

This study also found how the various generations use technology. They found that while Baby Boomers prefer face-to-face or telephone communication, “Gen Xers—being the ambiguous, transitional generation that they are—seem to embrace both cell phones and e-mail, with a bit of instant messaging thrown in. The Net Generation began to carve out a new communication era, using many available technologies, including social networks like Facebook, instant messages, Skype, and texting.” He goes on to say that the iGeneration redefined communication, “to members of the iGeneration, a phone is not a phone. It is a portable computer that they use to tweet, surf the web, and, of course, text, text, text.” These findings do not appear to support the findings of the survey conducted for this paper as the data suggested that teens and young adults only spend around 2 to 11 hours online and using social media, implying that the majority of the time they spend online is on social media sites. However, this question only asked about time online, not questions about all the other media sources as well. Teenagers may be using phone applications that require internet access, but not counting that as time spent online. Thus, respondents may spend more time online than they indicated in the survey.

Pew Internet and American Life Project conducted research to track the use of Social Media and Mobile Internet Use among teens and young adults in February 2010.

They found that since 2006 the rates of use of social media and mobile internet teens and adults have steadily gone up. They tracked what social networking sites different age groups and genders were likely to use and how they use those sites, for example, 13% of girls ages 14-17 use Twitter compared to 7% of boys the same age, while 37% of adults ages 18-24 use Twitter. An interesting trend they found was that younger age groups are wireless internet users. 81% of adults ages 18-29 use wireless internet primarily on laptops or cell phones compared to only 34% of those ages 50 and older. According to their findings, “over the past 10 years, teens and young adults have been consistently the two groups most likely to go online.” Their survey found that for teenagers ages 12-17, “62% of online teens get news about current events and politics online.” (Lenhart 2010). As noted earlier, 83.7% of respondents checked online news sources as a primary method for accessing the news and 14.7% checked phone news applications. 88% answered the follow-up question of which sites they use to access news. 36.4% checked Wikipedia, second only to the New York Times and followed closely by other in which 20 respondents wrote in either Yahoo or Google news. Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism did a case study of the “Veracity of the ‘Wiki’ concept.” A.J. Jacobs, who tested Wikipedia’s method of editing, concluded that while he will use Wikipedia as an encyclopedia to orient himself, he underscored that it cannot “be a final source for journalists” and “he would never quote Wikipedia in an article as a source.”

Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism also performed an online content study on Google. They claim, “Google News offers an entirely different experience from the New York Times or the Web sites of other traditional news outlets.” On Google News “the news is edited not by people but by algorithms, and the site

produces no original content whatsoever. In other words, computers from a mix of content produced elsewhere.” They found that the news gets recycled, producing for little new content. For each news item, Google news offers every related story it can find. According to the findings of the survey for this paper 66.7% of respondents go to the New York Times online for news. If this is the only site they use, then this means that they are only getting information regarding the news from one source. However, they may go to multiple outlets. Those who go to Google News and similar news outlet that pull from every news outlet they can find are getting their news from a variety of sources, suggesting that they are getting a broader picture of the news pieces.

A large number of students, 65%, say they are Youtube users. A survey conducted by Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence confirms that teenagers and young adults are frequent YouTube users. They found the highest rates of viewers are males ages 18 to 24, 76% of young men say they have watched a video on YouTube and 41% say they do so frequently (Harris Interactive and the Center for Media Research, 2007).

The Pew Internet and American Life Project in June of 2011, mentioned earlier, examined SNS to trace “how use of these technologies is related to trust, tolerance, social support, and community and political engagement.” They found that since 2008 the population of those who use SNS has almost doubled, 79% of adults say they use the internet and 59% of internet users use at least one SNS. According to their findings, in 2008 40% of SNS users were ages 23 to 35, 28% of users were 18 to 22, and 22% were 36 to 49, the rest of the users were 50 or older. In 2010 the results shifted to 32% of users at ages 23 to 35, the next largest category of users were ages 36 to 49 at 26% followed by

20% of those 50 to 65, then 18 to 22 year olds dropped to 16% of users of SNS. This trend tracks older adults increasingly using SNS.

Similar to the results found in the survey for this paper, their results also showed that Facebook is the most dominate SNS. They found, “Facebook users are much more politically engaged than most people...a Facebook user who uses the site multiple times per day was an additional two and half times more likely to attend a political rally or meeting, 57% more likely to persuade someone on their vote, and an additional 43% more likely to have said they would vote.” This leads into a significant result found in the survey conducted for this paper. 96.2% of respondents say they use Facebook. If those who use Facebook engage in politics more actively, they may also use Facebook as a source to stay informed. 56.8% of those surveyed say they sometimes discuss the news on SNS, 18.6% say they usually do, and 7.1% say they discuss the news on SNS all of the time. That means over 80% have or with some frequency discuss news on SNS, most likely Facebook as respondents overwhelmingly use Facebook more than any other SNS. All but one respondent answered the question about how much they follow local, national, and international news as well as if they ever discuss the news on SNS. The results show that the majority of respondents usually follow the news (see chart A). Nearly half, 33.9%, say they usually follow local news, 41% say they usually follow national news, and 39% say they usually follow international news. Less than 10% say that they almost never follow all the above mentioned categories.

When asked about whether they follow specific news items about the Middle East, the majority of respondents who answered this question said that they follow each news cycle listed (see chart B). Out of the 184 who took this survey 152, 84% of

respondents, answered this question. The results show that 52% say they follow the news about Iran seeking Nuclear weapons, 62.5% follow news about the Middle East peace process, 68.4% the Arab Spring, 69.7% the Arab-Israeli conflict, and 89.5% of the 152 respondents who answered this questions follow news regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an encouraging statistic considering the focus of the curriculum guide is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This result means that 74% of all the respondents, including those who skipped this question, follow news regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Aside from the extent to which these respondents follow the news, a fascinating result shows that a considerable number of respondents regard themselves as knowledgeable about the Middle East news cycles. The final question on the survey was “do you consider yourself knowledgeable about any of the following? Check all that apply: Iran seeking a nuclear weapon, the Arab Spring, the Middle East peace process, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” This question garnered the fewest responses. Only 122 respondents answered this question, meaning 36% skipped this question. Most of the options elicited around 40% to 55% of respondents who answered the question saying they follow the news items listed above, with the exception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see chart C). Out of the 122 respondents who answered this question 107, 87.7% say they consider themselves knowledgeable about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This result shows that nearly 60% of those surveyed consider themselves knowledgeable about this conflict.

Many respondents said that they follow online news sources and discuss the news on SNS. The Project for Excellence in Journalism conducted a study and found that in May of 2010 following clashes between Israeli soldiers and a ship headed for Gaza that

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict topped the stories discussed on Blogs. Meanwhile, on mainstream news outlets, the story did not even register (Project for Excellence in Journalism 2010). A similar study conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism in 2011, also found that a significant number of people discuss news regarding Israel on SNS. When it came to the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict the study found on “Twitter and Facebook, the tone of the conversation was similar [to Blogs] with 60% pro-Israel compared to 20% pro-Palestinian and 20% neutral.” This statistic indicates that not only are people discussing this conflict on SNS, but they also more often than not are pro-Israel. The findings of these two studies demonstrate that SNS users discuss the news on these site, in particular news relating to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, supporting the findings of the survey conducted for this research paper.

VII. Conclusions

The results to this survey are rather encouraging. Not only do they show that teenagers and young adults get much of their news from online news sources, but quite a few occasionally or with some frequency discuss news on SNS. The research Pew Internet and American Life Project conducted in June of 2011 shows that those who use Facebook, which was the primary SNS respondents to this survey use, are more politically active. Furthermore, 74% of respondents checked that they follow news regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and nearly 60% of those who filled out this survey consider themselves knowledgeable about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was the most encouraging result as the curriculum to follow this paper will be a curriculum for teenage confirmation students on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The fact that almost three quarters of the students follow the news on the conflict and over half the

students consider themselves knowledgeable on the conflict suggests that there is in fact interest in the subject. If the results showed that there is no interest in the conflict, then perhaps an adjustment in the subject would be appropriate, but because a seemingly clear interest in the conflict exists, the curriculum should follow as planned. The question now becomes, how should this finding of the survey shape the curriculum?

The primary goal of this curriculum is to provide a comprehensive look at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through sources the students already use. The research confirmed both that students follow the news through online resources and that they follow the conflict. The respondents noted that they consider themselves knowledgeable on this issue. The question remains is their self-perceived knowledge as high as they believe? The survey did not include any questions that test their knowledge, so this is a difficult question to answer. However, one can attempt to assess what their knowledge may be through the other information the survey attained as well as outside research.

One can look to where students get their information to see if respondents are indeed as well informed as they assess themselves to be. As noted above, many of those surveyed indicate that they do get their information from online resources. 83.7% indicated that they use online news sources as a primary method to learn about the news. Pew Research Center (2011) conducted research on how people voice their opinions regarding Middle Eastern politics online. They found that while mainstream media focused on news other than the Middle East, blogs on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict ranked higher than any other news story. Events occurring in the region received significantly higher coverage on SNS than in the mainstream media. The PEJ article referenced above shows that social media, to a large extent tend to show support for

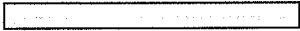
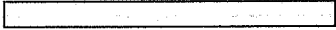

Israel. This data shows that one, the respondents do likely see more news regarding the Israel-Palestinian conflict due to its broader coverage in the social media sphere, and two, that the information the respondents see may be skewed towards a pro-Israel stance. All of this data suggests that they may in fact be fairly well informed about the conflict, but that their knowledge may not have much nuance.

What does this mean for the curriculum? The results suggest a diverse level of knowledge and background. 60% felt they are knowledgeable about the conflict, leaving another 40% unsure of their knowledge level. Students in a class using this curriculum will in all probability have varied understandings of the conflict. The curriculum must therefore cater to students with varying degrees of knowledge. Consequently, the curriculum must provide basic information and also be sophisticated enough to interest those with a greater understanding of the conflict. Approaching the conflict through the use of narratives allows one to nuance the issues for the students. An approach through a variety of narratives can interest everyone because it does not focus on the history or the politics, but simply presents a sampling of various narratives. This nuances the conflict because it works outside of the stigma associated with it, allowing the students to really see into different peoples perspectives.


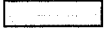
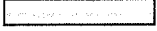

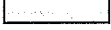
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1. What is your gender?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		47.3%	87
Female		52.7%	97
Transgender		0.0%	0
answered question			184
skipped question			0

2. What is your age?

		Response Percent	Response Count
13-14		8.8%	16
15-16		15.4%	28
16-17		23.6%	43
18-19		35.7%	65
20+		16.5%	30
answered question			182
skipped question			2

3. What is your Jewish Educational background? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Day School	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50.8%	93
Religious/Hebrew/Sunday/Supplementary School	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	62.8%	115
Jewish Camp	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	50.3%	92
Jewish Youth Group or Jewish Student Union	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	38.3%	70
Trip to Israel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	57.4%	105
Study Abroad in Israel	<input type="checkbox"/>	12.6%	23
Hillel	<input type="checkbox"/>	23.5%	43
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	11.5%	21
answered question			183
skipped question			1

4. How much time per day do you spend on social networking sites?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Less than 2 hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	41.5%	76
2 to 6 hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	51.9%	95
6 to 11 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	4.9%	9
11 to 16 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.1%	2
16+ hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.5%	1
answered question			183
skipped question			1

5. Which of the following social networking site do you use if any? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Facebook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	96.2%	176
Google+	<input type="checkbox"/>	14.8%	27
MySpace	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	26.2%	48
Friendster	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>	5.5%	10
Mettup.com	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.5%	1
Youtube	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	65.0%	119
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	10.9%	20
answered question			183
skipped question			1

6. How much time per day do you spend online?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Less then 2 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	13.6%	25
2 to 6 hours	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	67.4%	124
6 to 11 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	17.9%	33
11 to 16 hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	1.1%	2
16+ hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	0.0%	0
answered question			184
skipped question			0

7. Please select the answer that is most applicable to the following questions.

	Almost never	Sometimes	Usually	All of the time	Rating Average	Response Count
Do you follow or stay updated on local news?	8.2% (15)	44.8% (82)	33.9% (62)	13.1% (24)	2.52	183
Do you follow or stay updated on national news?	4.4% (8)	32.2% (59)	41.0% (75)	22.4% (41)	2.81	183
Do you follow or stay updated on international news?	9.3% (17)	35.2% (64)	39.0% (71)	16.5% (30)	2.63	182
Do you and your friends ever discuss issues in the news on social networking sites?	17.5% (32)	56.8% (104)	18.6% (34)	7.1% (13)	2.15	183
answered question						183
skipped question						1

8. What are the primary methods you use to learn about the news? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>	36.4%	67
Television News (Fox, CNN, MSNBC, BCC, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	69.6%	128
Online news sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	83.7%	154
Phone news applications	<input type="checkbox"/>	14.7%	27
Social Networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, youtube, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	67.9%	125
Radio	<input type="checkbox"/>	28.8%	53
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	66.8%	123
Family	<input type="checkbox"/>	76.1%	140
School	<input type="checkbox"/>	60.3%	111
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	3.8%	7
answered question			184
skipped question			0

**9. If you learn about news from online news sources or phone applications what are they?
Please check all that apply.**

		Response Percent	Response Count
New York Times	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	66.7%	108
Wallstreet Journal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	25.3%	41
The New Yorker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	13.6%	22
Drudge Report	<input type="checkbox"/>	2.5%	4
Huffington Post	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	27.2%	44
Haaretz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	24.1%	39
Jerusalem Post	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	16.0%	26
Wikipedia	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	36.4%	59
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	35.8%	58
answered question.			162
skipped question			22

10. If you watch news on the television, which station(s) do you watch? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
CNN	<input type="checkbox"/>	67.3%	103
FOX	<input type="checkbox"/>	47.7%	73
MSNBC	<input type="checkbox"/>	31.4%	48
BBC	<input type="checkbox"/>	12.4%	19
CBS	<input type="checkbox"/>	22.9%	35
ABC	<input type="checkbox"/>	37.3%	57
NBC	<input type="checkbox"/>	43.1%	66
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	6.5%	10
answered question			153
skipped question			31

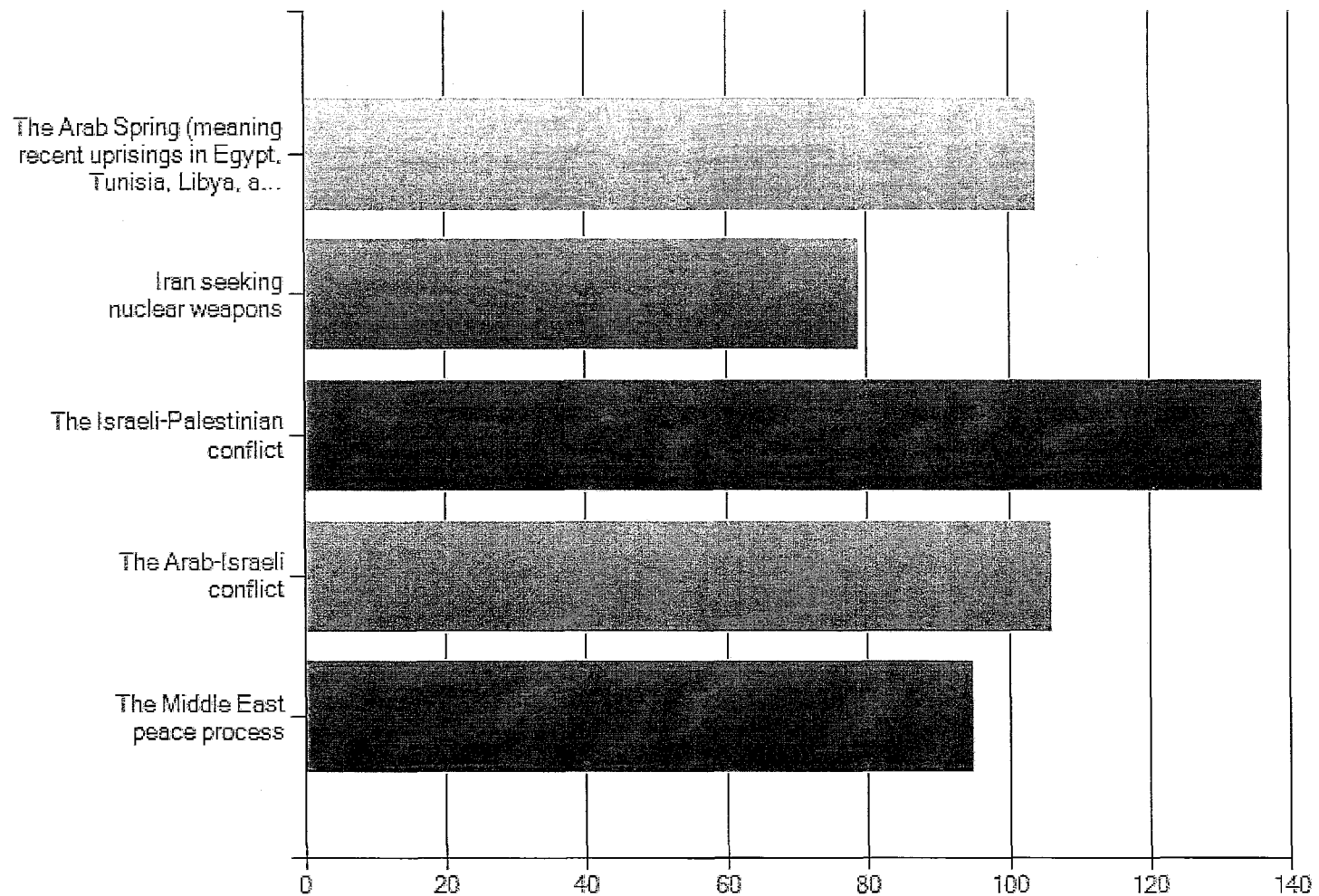
11. Do you follow news about the Middle East including any of the areas below? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
The Arab Spring (meaning recent uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and elsewhere in the Middle East)	<input type="checkbox"/>	68.4%	104
Iran seeking nuclear weapons	<input type="checkbox"/>	52.0%	79
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	89.5%	136
The Arab-Israeli conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	69.7%	106
The Middle East peace process	<input type="checkbox"/>	62.5%	95
	answered question		152
	skipped question		32

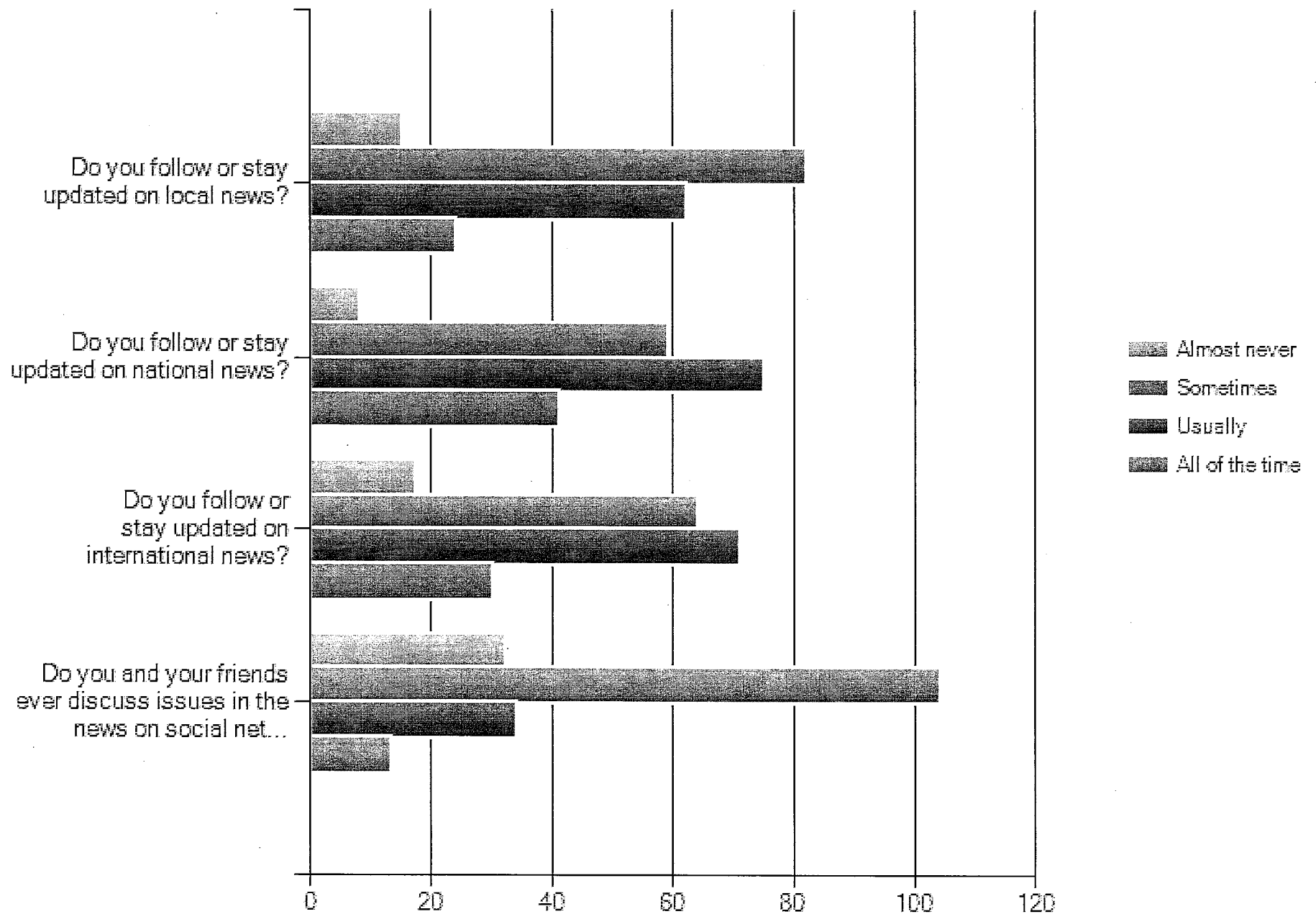
12. Do you consider yourself knowledgeable about any of the following? Please check all that apply.

		Response Percent	Response Count
The Arab Spring	<input type="checkbox"/>	41.8%	51
Iran Seeking a nuclear weapon	<input type="checkbox"/>	39.3%	48
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	87.7%	107
The Arab-Israeli conflict	<input type="checkbox"/>	54.1%	66
The Middle East peace process	<input type="checkbox"/>	42.6%	52
	answered question		122
	skipped question		62

Do you follow news about the Middle East including any of the areas below? Please check all that apply.



Please select the answer that is most applicable to the following questions.



Do you consider yourself knowledgeable about any of the following? Please check all that apply.

