

Adolescents in Kuwait and Pittsburg (U.S.A): Results of a Cross-National Study*

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Abstract

The study aimed at comparing the problems and coping strategies of Kuwaiti and American adolescents, and the types of help they seek to solve their problems. 107 Kuwaiti and 787 American adolescents of both sexes, between the ages of thirteen to fifteen, were selected as the sample of the study. Data collection and coding instruments, as well as procedures used to collect data in the two countries were similar. A regular questionnaire was used, and translated into Arabic for the Kuwaiti population. The psychometric properties of the tool were obtained, and the following results were arrived at:

1. Although schooling is the most frequently reported problem for both Kuwaiti and American adolescents, academic failure and achievement appear to be of far more concern among all groups of Americans, than of Kuwaiti groups. Teacher - related concerns appear to be more important to Kuwaitis than to Americans.
2. As for coping strategies, individual problem-solving is reported most frequently for all groups. Being resigned is more frequently reported as a coping method for Kuwaitis, than for their American counterparts.
3. With regard to preferred helpers, both groups are more likely to approach a family member for help with problems. However, Kuwaiti females are less likely than American females, to seek help from non-family members.

The study makes the point that counselors of adolescents in both countries should realize that the problems of young people will be related to their stage of development, and that although some differences between the two groups of adolescents can be anticipated, the concerns of adolescents are generally overwhelming.

Introduction

This study is a descriptive analysis of what Kuwaiti and American adolescents themselves, report to be the types of problems, coping strategies and types of help they seek to solve their problems. Its purpose is to provide information useful to the helping professionals (psychologists, counselors, social workers, teachers, and others whose responsibility it is to help adolescents solve these problems), as well as to these young people themselves, in understanding their perceptions and behavior. The study was conducted at a time in world history when governmental and business concerns had brought the peoples of these two nations together, and when understanding between the two has never been so important. It was conducted at a time, also, when helping professionals have begun to realize the importance of national, ethnic and cultural factors in determining how people think and act, and also, what interventions are most effective (Garnezy, 1981).

Kuwait today has more than 3000 privileged students enrolled in U.S. schools, living and studying with their American counterparts. This number is expected to increase considerably over the next decade. In addition, increasing numbers of Kuwaiti families come to the U.S. to work or study, bringing their children with them. Just as the young people of Kuwait and America can expect increasing interaction with one another in the foreseeable future, both Kuwaiti and American helping professionals can increasingly expect to be called on to assist youngsters whose different experiences, affected by national / cultural backgrounds, may cause them to perceive their problems in different ways. Privileged Kuwaiti adolescents coming to the U.S. can be expected to meet and possibly interact with both privileged and disadvantaged American youth. On the other hand, Kuwaiti youth who may be considered disadvantaged may never study in the U.S. or interact with Americans there, but they may well come into contact with Americans in their own country.

The Kuwaiti and American youngsters who constitute our sample populations grew up in their own countries. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to compare the views of these young people themselves, rather than go by what professionals believe are their views, at a stage in their lives before cross-cultural experiences have affected their perceptions and behavior.

The paragraphs that follow provide brief descriptions of the two countries of our study, and their young people, as well as what helping professionals have surmised to be their predominant problems.

Kuwait and the U.S

The two countries of our study, Kuwait and the U.S., are vastly different in a variety of ways. Kuwait, a small state situated at the northwestern end of the Arabian (Persian) Gulf, has an area of 6,880 square miles, which makes it approximately the size of the state of New Jersey. Kuwait's population at the time of data collection in 1989, just prior to the 1990 Iraqi invasion, was estimated to be 2.2 million. Kuwaitis are a minority in their country, which is constituted of 37.9% Arab, 21% Asian, and 0.9% European and American populations (Al-Ebraheem, 1991). With the recent advancement of Kuwaiti society, a sense of political duality has been realized. Traditionalism remains strong, particularly with the older generation and among Islamic fundamentalists, but there is also a strong and growing liberal element, mostly among those who come into contact with Western ideas, or those who pursued their education elsewhere.

Kuwait's 80-year-old educational system has problems of its own. It suffers from the fact that teachers are generally preoccupied with mastery of subject matter, and not enough attention is directed to the learner's mode of thinking or to problem solving (Al-Sarraf, 1980). Teachers are also too strict in their disciplinary system and expect too much from the learner, thus creating personality conflicts in the teacher-student relationship.

The U.S., by contrast, is a large modern industrial western nation. The U.S., unlike Kuwait, is a multicultural society, with citizens coming from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. U.S. national identity is not based on a single group of people. Although approximately 84% of the population is of Caucasian descent, the proportions of other groups are significant and steadily increasing (Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1991). According to the 1991 census, 12.4% of the American population is African-American, 2.7% is Asian, 0.7% is Native American or Alaska Natives. In addition, 3% of the U.S. population is Hispanic (persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race). Many religions are represented among the citizenry of the U.S., as well as many different political views (Ondis and Gibson, 1992).

Adolescents of Kuwait and the U.S., and their Problems

Adolescence, the period from about age thirteen to age nineteen, is marked in most societies by profound psychological and physiological change. A restless transition is common, marked by temporarily increased conflict between young people and adults. While many young people go through the adolescent period in relative calm and develop in socially acceptable ways, many others have social and emotional problems that they did not have before.

Although traditional psychoanalytic theory suggests that adolescent

problem behaviors tend to have some universal qualities, many problems and problem behaviors of adolescents appear to be related to environmental factors such as cultural change. Kuwaiti adolescents, for example, appear to have problems associated with access to different types of living. The extent of alcohol and drug use, for example, is problematic in a country where drugs were not known until very recently, but are being made more easily available to Kuwaiti youth. The Statistical Abstract of Kuwait (1990) reported 343 cases of serious drug abuse in 1989. 63% of these cases were male high school students; 37% were female. Many other cases were unreported. Alcohol abuse is also increasing among adolescents. In a country where drugs and spirits are strictly prohibited, one study found that 36% of young males and 28% of young females reported to having been drinking, and 30% of young males and 19% of young females reported to have had marijuana or other illegal substances at least once in their life (Tohah et al, 1985).

Antisocial behavior is also reported. Adolescents reported having engaged in vandalism (28% males, 22% females), rejecting local culture and imitating western cultures (62% males, 65% females) (Tohah et al, 1985). The latter is considered antisocial behavior because it represents a challenge to the traditional values of the older generation, and a deviation from the religious norms. The rate of delinquent behavior of adolescents is on the rise. Khateeb et al reported (1981) that 11% of adolescents committed criminal acts in 1977; Tohah et al reported (1985) that this figure had increased to 22% in 1985.

It is well known that American adolescents are also at risk for serious problems. About one-third report moderate to severe depression (Albert and Back, 1975; Terry, 1982). Alcohol and drug abuse, including the abuse of hard drugs, is widespread and on the increase, and is affecting children at increasingly younger ages. One survey found that 12% of fifth graders reported that they had been "drunk" at least once in the preceding year. 28% of ninth graders reported that they had been drunk at least once and 20% admitted to the use of marijuana at least once in the past year (Benson et al, 1970). Antisocial and criminal behavior, including vandalism, physical attacks, gang fighting, shoplifting and cheating, is also prevalent (Benson et al, 1970).

Many adolescent problem behaviors have been explained by researchers as being associated with problems in the home. Christopher et al (1989) suggest, for example, that in the U.S., disruption of family life increases adolescents' risk of loneliness and social isolation, as well as alcoholism, delinquent behavior, truancy, dropping out of school and depression. In Kuwait, the divorce rate is 32% (Kuwait Abstract, 1990). Another problem is polygamy, especially among the disadvantaged population. Polygamy often causes problems because of disagreement among wives, and because of the neglect of children by fathers who divide their time and tend to give their

attention to wives more than to children. The Kuwaiti family in its extended form had always been central to Kuwaiti life. Accordingly, decisions relating to childrearing methods and adolescent supervision involve parents, grandparents and other relatives. Nowadays, as Kuwaiti mothers depend on household maids or nannies more and more while they are away at work, many children assimilate the cultural values of these people, who usually come from different cultures. One result is that many Kuwaiti children today have less contact with their parents than did the previous generation, and grow alienated from their cultures as they reach adolescence (Al-Sarraf, 1991). Another negative element in this is that because of the presence of maids and nannies in Kuwaiti families, children become increasingly dependent on them. Thus dependency is fostered in youngsters. In Kuwait, as in all Arabs countries, boys and girls are brought up differently. Individuals are strongly influenced by social expectations as to the role that men and women should play. While girls are socialized for the role of housewife as their main responsibility, boys are trained to be productive breadwinners (Azzam, 1981).

Family problems also are on the increase in the U.S. for different reasons :

Divorce rate in the U.S. is still increasing and is currently approximately 50% (Brough, 1990). The single parent family, in which the head of the household works outside the home is rapidly becoming the norm.

The Present Study Methodology

Subjects

The subjects in this study live in the five Governorates of the State of Kuwait, and in the city of Pittsburg, Pa. and its surrounding suburbs, in the U.S.A. They consist of two samples of male and female Kuwaiti and American adolescents aged thirteen to fifteen years, whose responses to a survey questionnaire were collected as part of a larger multi-national research team project studying adolescents and young adults, and on which the two researchers served as co-investigators (Gibson et al, 1991). Both samples included privileged as well as disadvantaged subjects defined, for the purposes of this study, according to the national norms of each country, as follows:

Privileged subjects in our study include those who come from families in the upper half of the socioeconomic structure of their countries, with parents who have completed at least high school education. In the U.S., privileged subjects had parents who worked primarily in the professions. This criterion was not used in Kuwait.

Disadvantaged subjects include those who come from families in the lower half of the socioeconomic structure. Parents had often not completed high school education. In the U.S. sample, these subjects had parents who had worked in blue collar jobs.

The two samples in this study differ in size, with 107 Kuwaitis and 787 Americans. Table 1A shows the numbers of male and female subjects in these two samples, categorized as privileged and disadvantaged. The reason for the discrepancy in sample size is that data collection took place in 1989 and 1990, during which time Gulf War hostilities, including the destruction of Kuwait University facilities, prevented completion of Kuwaiti data collection. Since data collected after the Gulf War would not be comparable to that collected prior to the war, the 107 Kuwaiti adolescents whose responses are included here, represent the only data source that will ever be comparable to that obtained from the U.S. sample of the same time.

Because this study is purely descriptive and not designed to prove causal relationships, and because the world political situation is such that a comparable group of subjects may never again be attained for study, it is felt appropriate to present the results here in the form of group profiles.

Instruments

Data collection and coding instruments, as well as procedures used to collect data in the two countries, involved similar processes. Procedures were standardized and identical to those used in the larger international study, of which this study is a part. All essential details describing development of instruments, and the coding procedures, can be found in Gibson et al, 1991.

Survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire was initially prepared in English. For Kuwaiti subjects, it was translated into Arabic, re-translated for accuracy of translation, and then corrected until the English and Kuwaiti wording was demonstrated to convey the same meaning. The instrument was then pilot tested on a small group of subjects, identical in background to the subjects of this study, to correct any possible errors that may have remained. The final survey questionnaire asked both Kuwaiti and American subjects the following seven questions:

- 1 Name one problem that causes you to worry or to feel pressured.
- 2 Please describe this problem in more detail.
- 3 When you have this problem, what do you do about it? What are the things you would do in order to deal with this concern, pressure, or difficulty?

- 4 If you do not do anything to solve this problem, what do you do to make yourself feel better?
- 5 If you were to discuss this problem with anyone, who would that person be? Please mention three persons you might like to discuss this problem with.
- 6 What qualities of these persons allow them to help you?
- 7 What would these persons say or do to help you?

Data Collection

Responses of adolescents in both Kuwait and the U.S. were collected within school classrooms by research assistants of the project who were trained to administer the questionnaire in a standardized manner.

Response coding and data analysis

Responses of all subjects were coded within their countries by research assistants using a procedure developed as part of the Gibson et al (1991) study. Responses were coded into classes of responses at a macro level, and further broken down into categories of classes at a micro level.

Results

Table 1A provides the percentage of response and rank orders for classes of problems (questions # 1 and #2 of the survey questionnaire) for 13 problem areas coded by researchers. Male and female responses and privileged and disadvantaged responses, are coded separately. For both Kuwaitis and Americans in all groups, "schooling" is ranked as the most frequently reported class of problem. Among Kuwaiti subjects, privileged males appear to report family problems, and disadvantaged males appear to report identity problems proportionately less frequently, than American or Kuwaiti female subjects.

Although schooling is the most frequently reported problem, Kuwaiti males appear to report school problems somewhat less frequently (44.3% and 39.4% respectively) than privileged and disadvantaged American males (48.9% and 42.4% respectively). Also, both privileged and disadvantaged Kuwaiti female subjects report interpersonal concerns somewhat less frequently than their U.S. counterparts (9.2% and 5.6% vs. 13.1% and 11.6%, respectively). Only Kuwaiti disadvantaged females did not report any problems related to sexuality.

Table 1A
A. Percentage of Responses and Rank Orders for Classes of Human Problems within Socioeconomic Groupings and for Total Population

Classes of Problems	Kuwait Responses						U.S.A. Responses					
	Privileged			Disadvantaged			Privileged			Disadvantaged		
	Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female	
	%	Rank	%	%	Rank	%	%	Rank	%	%	Rank	%
Extreme Poverty	-	11	-	10-	10	-	7		.0	11	.0	13
War	-	11	-	10	-	10	-	7	.0	11	.2	12
Catastrophe	-	11	.8	8.5	-	10	-	7	.2	10	.5	11
Material Desires	3.1	8	.8	8.5	-	10	-	7	3.4	6	.7	9.5
Family Issues	6.9	5	20.6	3	12.1	2.5	19.4	3	8.0	4	18.6	3
Schooling Issues	44.3	1	29.2	1	39.4	1	44.4	1	48.9	1	26.9	1
Identity	9.9	3.5	23.3	2	6.1	5.5	-	7	1.0	9	2.0	8
Sexuality	1.5	9.5	-	10	6.1	5.5	-	7	1.0	9	2.0	8
Courtship/Dating	4.6	7	8.3	5	9.1	4	5.6	4.5	1.7	8	8.6	5
Interpersonal	12.2	2	9.2	4	6.1	5.5	5.6	4.5	8.5	3	13.1	4
Emotions	9.9	3.5	6.7	6	12.1	2.5	-	7	7.2	5	5.0	6
Self Fulfillment	1.5	9.5	-	10	3.0	9	-	7	.0	11	0.7	9.5
Altruism	6.1	6	1.7	7	6.1	5.5	2.8	6	2.7	7	4.2	7
Total Responses	131		120		33		36		415		602	
No. of Subjects	44		40		11		12		159		221	

Table 1B lists all categories-within-classes of problems representing at least 5% of total responses. School related concerns are most frequently cited for all groups. Again, categories dealing with school related concerns are most frequently cited by all groups.

Academic issues (failure and achievement), appear to be of far more concern among all groups of Americans than of Kuwaiti groups, with these academic issues not even listed for privileged Kuwaiti females. Teacher-related concerns appear to be more important to Kuwaitis than to Americans. Domestic quarreling seems to be a problem among disadvantaged Kuwaitis, but no one else.

Coping Strategies

Regarding classes of coping strategies (questions # 3 and # 4 on the survey questionnaire), individual problem-solving is reported proportionately most frequently for all groups (Table 2A).

Being resigned is less frequently reported as a coping method for Americans than their Kuwaiti counterparts, while religious response is far more frequently reported for Kuwaitis. U.S. adolescents are more likely to report withdrawal as a coping strategy (representing at least 5% of total response) than are their Kuwaiti counterparts (4.9% to 9.5%).

With regard to categories of coping strategies (Table 2B), Kuwaiti adolescents are similar to U.S. adolescents in citing trying harder, seeking support, and planning towards a solution as the most frequently utilized categories of coping strategies. Inconsistent with the U.S. sample, Kuwaiti males and females do not at all cite psychological distancing as their coping strategy. American females do not cite crying as do Kuwaiti females as a coping strategy.

Helpers

With regard to classes of preferred helpers (question # 5 on the survey questionnaire), consistent with the U.S. sample, Kuwaiti adolescents report that they are most likely to go to family members for help with problems (Table 3A). However, and unlike the U.S. females, Kuwaiti females are less likely than the Kuwaiti males to seek help from non-family members. Similar to the U.S. sample, privileged Kuwaiti subjects are more likely than disadvantaged subjects, to seek help outside the family.

Examination of the responses by category (Table 3B), shows the similarity between Kuwaiti and U.S. adolescents in that both groups are more likely to approach a personal friend for help. However, Kuwaiti subjects, are somewhat less likely to go to a friend than are their American counterparts.

Table 1B
Categories accounting for 5% or more of Total Responses

KUWAIT				U.S.A.			
Privileged Male		Privileged Female		Privileged Male		Privileged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Acad. Failure (Schooling) Other Time Pressures Stress Teacher Related (Altruism) Other	11.4 9.1 8.3 7.6 7.6 5.3	Behav. Issues Teacher Related Mental Disab. Inter-Gen. Disag Self Confidence Parents Strict. Stress	10.8 10.0 9.2 6.7 6.7 5.8 5.0	Ac Achievement Ac Failure Time Pressures Extra Curr. Act. Behav. Issues	9.4 9.2 9.2 7.0 6.3	Friendship Ac Failure Ac Achievement Self Confidence	11.1 7.1 6.0 5.3
Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female		Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Time Pressures Stress Teacher Related Acad. Failure (Altruism) Other Domes Quarrel	12.1 12.1 9.1 6.1 6.1 6.1	Teacher Related Behav. Issues Acad. Failure Time Pressures Mental Disab. Inter-Gen. Disag Domes quarrel	13.9 13.9 8.3 8.3 8.3 5.6 5.6	Ac Achievement Ac Failure Behav Issues	13.8 9.3 9.1	Ac Achievement Friendship Behav. Issues Ac. Failure	10.8 10.0 7.8 7.2

Table 2A
Percentage of Responses and Rank Orders for Classes of Coping
Strategies within Socioeconomic Groupings and for Total Population

Kuwait Responses										U.S.A. Responses									
Classes of Coping Strategies	Privileged				Disadvantaged				Privileged				Disadvantaged						
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female				
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank			
Seek / Give Assist	25.3	2	12.7	3	26.3	2	14.3	3	7.8	5	17.0	2	11.6	4	20.8	2			
Interpersonal	3.8	5.5	8.5	4	-	7	2.0	6.5	12.0	4	14.7	4	12.4	3	19.6	3			
Ind. Prob. Solv.	33.5	1	36.6	1	52.6	1	46.9	1	46.6	1	36.6	1	44.0	1	29.8	1			
Stress Manag.	3.8	5.5	1.4	8	2.6	55	2.0	6.5	4.0	6	2.8	6	4.4	6	1.5	7			
Crying	-	9	7.0	5	-	7	6.1	4.5	.2	9	1.3	7	.6	8	2.9	6			
Religious	3.2	7	2.1	7	2.6	5.5	2.0	6.5	.4	.8	8	1.2	7	.6	.6	9			
Be resigned	19.6	3	26.8	2	7.9	3.5	20.4	2	12.7	3	11.4	5	10.0	5	7.7	5			
Withdraw	9.5	4	4.9	6	7.9	3.5	6.1	4.5	15.9	2	15.0	3	15.6	2	16.0	4			
Anti Social	1.3	8	-	9	-	7	-	9	.4	7.5	.4	9	.2	9	.9	8			
Total Responses	158		142		38		49		498		778		500		648				
No. of Subjects	44		40		11		12		159		219		287		194				

Table 2B
Categories of Coping Strategies accounting for 5% or more of Total Responses

KUWAIT				U.S.A.			
Privileged Male		Privileged Female		Privileged Male		Privileged Female	
Category Name		%Category Name		%Category Name		%Category Name	%
Seek Support	20.3	Try Harder	17.6	Try Harder	21.1	Try Harder	15.0
Try Harder	12.7	Seek Support	12.7	Plan Solut.	17.3	Seek Support	14.6
Plan Solution	10.1	Do Nothing	11.3	Escape / Avoid	8.6	Plan Solution	13.5
Mental Preocc.	7.0	Plan Solut.	9.9	Seek Support	7.2	Assertive Cop.	11.3
Take Fatal View	5.7	Cry	7.0	Psy. Distancing	7.0	Escape / Avoid	7.8
Escape/ Avoid	5.7	Assertive Cop	6.3	Do Nothing	6.2	Psy. Distancing	7.2
Do Nothing	5.7						
Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female		Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female	
Category Name		%Category Name		%Category Name		%Category Name	%
Try Harder	31.6	Try Harder	20.4	Try Harder	21.0	Seek Support	18.6
Seek Support	18.4	Seek Support	14.3	Plan Solut.	15.2	Assertive Cop.	15.4
Accep. Respons.	10.5	Plan Solut.	14.3	Seek Support	11.2	Try Harder	12.3
Offer help	7.9	Ang. or Depress	10.2	Assertive Cop.	8.2	Plan Solut.	10.3
Plan Solut.	5.3	Do Nothing	8.2	Escape / Avoid.	8.2	Escape / Avoid.	8.6
Escape / Avoid	5.3	Cry	6.1	Psy. Distancing	7.2	Psy. Distancing	7.4

Tables 3B
Categories of Chosen Helpers Accounting for 5% or more of Total Responses

Kuwait				U.S.A			
Privileged Male		Privileged Female		Privileged Male		Privileged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Personal Friend	18.2	Personal Friend	19.4	Personal Friend	20.8	Personal Friend	32.7
Mother	11.5	Mother	18.7	Mother	14.5	Mother	13.7
Father	11.1	Cousin	6.6	Father	11.8	Parent / Family	7.0
Brother	7.1	Sister	6.3	Teacher / Inst.	11.8	Teacher	6.7
Teacher	5.4	Father	5.9	Parent / Family	9.4	Sister	6.3
School/Classmate	5.1					Prof / Counselor	6.3
Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female		Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Personal Friend	24.7	Personal Friend	22.0	Personal Friend	24.3	Personal Friend	30.1
Mother	14.3	Sister	19.8	Mother	17.3	Mother	17.3
Father	9.1	Mother	15.4	Father	13.7	Father	6.2
Brother	7.8	Father	7.7	Teacher	7.4	Sister	5.7
School/Classmate	5.2					Teacher / Ins.	5.3
						Aunt	5.0

Also consistent with the U.S. data, Kuwaiti adolescents were found to be more likely to approach their mother, as opposed to their father, for help with problems, with Kuwaiti females demonstrating more of a same-sex preference (mothers, sisters) with regard to help from family members than do Kuwaiti males. Also, Kuwaiti adolescents are less likely to seek help from teachers than are their American counterparts.

Helper Qualities

Regarding classes of helper qualities (question # 6 on the survey questionnaire), Kuwaiti adolescents are similar to U.S. adolescents in reporting personal qualities, knowledge and concern as the most frequently desired attributes (Table 4A).

With regard to categories of helper qualities (Table 4B), Kuwaiti adolescents appear somewhat dissimilar to U.S. adolescents in their reporting of desired helper qualities, with Kuwaiti subjects tending to cite the "Concern" class categories of understanding and caring / loving less often than their American counterparts, trustworthy more frequently, and giving advice less frequently than U.S. subjects.

Helping Modes

With regard to desired classes of helping modes, (question # 7 on the survey questionnaire), the response of the total Kuwaiti sample is consistent with that of the U.S. in that "Counsel" and "Attend to" are ranked as the two most frequently desired classes of helping modes, across gender and socioeconomic class (Table 5A).

Kuwaiti privileged and disadvantaged subjects appear to report counsel more frequently than U.S. privileged and disadvantaged subjects. However, U.S. privileged and disadvantaged males and females report "attend to" more frequently than their Kuwaiti counterparts.

At the category level (Table 5B), Kuwaiti adolescents are similar to U.S. adolescents in that both groups report advice, problem solving, assistance and direction as the three most frequently desired forms of help. However, U.S. subjects appear to cite non-directive help in the form of comfort more frequently than Kuwaiti subjects.

Table 4A
Percentage of Responses and Rank Orders for Classes
of Helper Qualities within Socioeconomic Groupings and for Total Population

Classes of Helper Quality	Kuwait Responses								U.S.A Response							
	Privileged				Disadvantaged				Privileged				Disadvantaged			
	Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Powerful	7.4	4	1.8	5	3.1	5	3.8	4	4.9	4	2.2	4	6.2	4	3.3	4
Knowledgeable	30.9	2	30.3	2	32.3	3	41.3	1	28.0	3	28.2	3	37.6	1	29.6	2
Available	.4	5	3.3	4	-	6	2.5	5	2.3	5	1.9	5	.7	6	2.8	5
Personal Quality	41.2	1	39.1	1	50.8	1	40.0	2	30.9	1	31.4	2	29.3	2	32.9	1
Concern	8.1	3	22.9	3	9.2	3	12.5	3	30.8	2	34.7	1	20.0	3	28.7	3
Uncertain	-	6	.7	6	4.6	4	-	6	.2	6	.9	6	2.8	5	1.2	6
No List	3.1	X	1.8	X	-	X	-	X	3.0	X	.8	X	3.4	X	1.5	X
Total Responses	243		217		65		80		572		1036		564		778	
No. of Subjects	44		40		11		12		156		219		175		193	

Table 4B
Categories of Helper Qualities accounting for 5% or more of Total Responses

Kuwait				U.S.A			
Privileged Male		Privileged Female		Privileged Male		Privileged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Approachable Similarity	11.5 9.5	Caring / Loving Trustworthy	11.8 11.1	Understanding Caring / Loving	14.8 13.1	Understanding Approachable	19.9 14.4
Understanding Caring / Loving	8.2	Understanding Content Knowl.	8.9	Approachable Generous/Willing	10.8	Caring / Loving	11.7
Exercise Auth. Trustworthy	7.0 5.8	Similarity Approachable	8.1 6.6 6.3	Similarity Content Knowl. Trustworthy	8.9 7.0 6.5 5.9	Similarity Generous Give Advice	8.8 8.6 7.0
Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female		Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Honest Approachable Intelligent/Wise Generous Experienced Similarity	9.2 7.7 7.7 7.7 6.2 6.2	Experienced Content Knowl. Similarity Trustworthy Give Advice Loyal	8.8 7.5 7.5 7.5 7.5 7.5	Similarity Generous Understanding Approachable Give Advice Caring/Loving Experienced	11.7 10.4 9.5 8.1 8.0 7.4 6.5	Understanding Approachable Generous Caring/Loving Give Advice Content Knowl. Experienced	14.5 12.8 11.0 10.6 10.4 5.8 5.1

[illegible]

Table 5B
Categories of Helping Modes accounting for 5% or more of Total Responses

Kuwait				U.S.A			
Privileged Male		Privileged Female		Privileged Male		Privileged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Advise	28.0	Advise	32.4	Direct	18.1	Advise	19.8
Help Sub. Solve	14.3	Direct	17.9	Help Sub. Solve	16.8	Comfort/Reassure	16.0
Direct	10.6	Comfort/Reassure	12.7	Advise	15.0	Help Sub. Solve	15.1
Comfort/Reassure	8.7	Help Sub. Solve	9.8	Comfort/Reassure	12.5	Direct	7.2
Solve Problem	5.6			Nothing	7.7	Encourage	6.9
Encourage	5.6			Solve Problem	5.0	Listen	5.4
				Encourage	5.0	Does not Know	5.1
Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female		Disadvantaged Male		Disadvantaged Female	
Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%	Category Name	%
Advise	37.2	Advise	40.8	Advise	21.2	Help Sub. Solve	18.0
Help Sub. Solve	14.0	Direct	16.7	Help Sub. Solve	16.2	Advise	17.2
Direct	9.3	Help Sub. Solve	13.3	Encourage	10.8	Comfort/Reassure	14.0
Encourage	9.3	Encourage	10.0	Comfort/Reassure	8.9	Direct	10.1
Comfort/Reassure	7.0	Share	6.7	Direct	8.7	Encourage	7.5
Similarity		Comfort/Reassure	5.0	Does not Know	5.6	Share	6.1

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

First of all, and not surprisingly, our data reveals a number of important similarities between the perceptions of Kuwaiti and of American adolescents. They also show differences that may be important to counselors and other professionals, whose role it is help them.

At the macro level (as shown by classes listed in table 1A), the most frequently reported problem area of the youthful respondents in both countries is schooling. This is true regardless of gender or socioeconomic background. At the micro level (as shown by categories-within-classes in Table 1B), however, American youth in our study expresses far more concern about school issues related to academic success or failure, than do their Kuwaiti counterparts. Privileged Kuwaiti females, in fact, appeared to show such a low level of worry related to academic issues that less than 5% of their reported concerns fell into these categories, and thus did not even appear on the table of categories-within-classes. By contrast, Kuwaiti adolescents in general, reported a greater variety of teacher-related schooling problems than did American youth, including such concerns as teacher strictness, personality conflicts between teachers and students, what are perceived to be too-high expectations by teachers, etc. Time pressure and stress also seem to be of concern to Kuwaiti youth, but not so much to Americans.

Does this mean that, by and large, Kuwaiti adolescents 1) are simply far more burdened with homework and heavy curriculum activity load than American youth, 2) that they have sufficient assurance that they are successful, that they have few concerns, or 3) that teacher-related concerns are of such magnitude that they override academic issues? The descriptive nature of this study does not permit us to answer these questions definitively. However, all three of these choices, either by themselves or in combination with each other (or with other additional as yet unnamed possibilities), appear important factors in making a conjecture. It may be, for example, that Kuwaitis are less concerned than Americans about academic success because they are aware that future success in life is less dependent on school grades than on support from their families. The extended family assures its sons and daughters that they will always stand by them and support them both psychologically and financially under any circumstances. This reassurance is perpetuated throughout life.

It may also be that Kuwaiti families, as compared to American families, are sufficiently supportive in terms of time and effort, of their children's school activities that their children do not worry. This argument is strengthened by the finding that privileged Kuwaiti females, who make up the only Kuwaiti group in the study whose concerns related to academic matters were less than 5% of

the total number of problems they reported, get more help from home than all other Kuwaiti groups in this study. This is because girls at this age have to stay at home most of the time after school, and thus their spare time is set aside for studying, with the help of paid tutors who usually visit their homes often. Certainly, the difference is strengthened by the increasing number of dual working parent families, divorce and other family problems plaguing the U.S. at this time, that tend to diminish family support for children (Brough, 1990).

It is both interesting and sad to note that domestic quarreling seems to be one of the problems reported by disadvantaged Kuwaitis, although not by other subjects in the study. In cross-national studies of privileged and disadvantaged subjects, domestic quarreling is an issue of concern reported more frequently by disadvantaged than privileged youngsters (Gibson et al, 1991). This might be due to the fact that disadvantaged families tend to have more problems and less support as afforded both by finances and time, than do privileged families. In Kuwait, in addition, domestic quarreling may be increased in disadvantaged families by the practice of polygamy. Polygamy is reported to be over 15% among Kuwaiti's (Al-Tohah, 1985), and much more prevalent among the disadvantaged families. Bringing two or more wives into a family often constitutes a threat to the psychological well-being of wives and children, especially when fathers become too preoccupied with their personal problems to play effective roles in child-rearing.

In terms of coping, although individual problem-solving was the strategy reported by all groups in this study, Kuwaiti adolescents appear to be more resigned to their problems than U.S. youngsters, with the exception of disadvantaged Kuwaiti males. This may be explained by the fact that the Kuwaiti way of life fosters dependence, and increases the possibility that Kuwaiti youngsters expect problems to eventually be solved by their families, not by themselves. As evidenced in this study and in Gibson, Ondis et al (in press), U.S. youngsters, by contrast, try harder, plan and cope in more assertive ways. The fact that disadvantaged youth sometimes appears more active in its problem-solving, than privileged youth, was also noted in the multi-national study by Gibson et al (1991). This is certainly tied up with the way of life in the society they are brought up in. Disadvantaged youth has to rely on themselves in doing things more than do the privileged youth. They are also more challenged by the fact that they have to struggle hard in order to satisfy their basic needs.

This study found that, regardless of country of origin, when adolescents seek help to solve their problems, they are more likely to go to family members than friends or professional help providers (Table 3B). This clearly puts at a disadvantage, youth who come to live in a new country for extended periods of time, either alone or without the family members from whom they are used to

receiving help. This is true not only for Kuwaiti youth, but also for American, although the greater dependence on the extended family in Kuwait, should make it more difficult for Kuwaiti youth.

What can we conclude from these findings as regards counseling of Kuwaiti and American adolescents? First of all, if we accept the perceptions of our respondents as evidence that schooling poses serious problems for them, we must conclude that some form of school counseling is important in both societies. One area in which services may be helpful is motivation to succeed academically. Since adolescents tend to seek help first, from family members, those Kuwaiti and U.S. families with little knowledge of what academically, is important to professional success, are least able to provide assistance in this area, and may themselves need assistance in order to help the youth in their families. By and large, this need is greater among disadvantaged than privileged families. It is especially great in Kuwait where parents in many, even financially sound families, have little education or knowledge of the modern world. The fact that Kuwaiti youngsters, as many of their counterparts across the world, are less unlikely to request professional help (Gibson et al, 1992) is an issue that must be dealt with and that is discussed further on.

The fact the Kuwaiti youngsters were far more concerned than their U.S. counterparts with teacher-related problems suggest, in addition, that Kuwaiti counselors need to consider these problems seriously and, hopefully, serve as change-agents for a school system that would benefit from democratization.

Our Kuwaiti subjects grew up in Kuwait and, if they visited the U.S. prior to the study, it was for short periods only. Because of the increasing number of Kuwaiti families now living in the U.S. for extended periods of time, however, it is extremely important that U.S. helping professionals begin developing intervention programs for these youth, helping them to reduce being resigned to events around them and, instead, help themselves. Certainly Kuwaiti children in U.S., as other children living in countries other than their own, need special support to deal with their new lives. Among Kuwaiti children, however, the fact that the Kuwaiti way of life nurtures dependence, exacerbates the problem.

In addition to programs run by helping professionals for visitors in host countries, it would be helpful to provide pre-departure services, both for adolescents and their families, to forewarn them of what is to come. Through such programs, youngsters may learn what to expect of their counterparts in the host country, how to understand their values and behavior, and how to behave towards them to allow satisfactory and meaningful exchanges. Follow-up programs should be designed in host countries to deal with new problems that may develop. Finally, since both Kuwaiti and U.S. families can be expected

to continue to be the major sources of support for these adolescents, an approach that would seem most useful would have helping professionals help parents to help their own sons and daughters.

A concluding note: No matter how counselors choose to proceed, in order for them to understand youngsters from other cultures, they must realize and accept both the similarities and idiosyncracies of their behaviors, perceptions and values. In Kuwaiti culture, as discussed earlier, sex-roles are more differentiated than in the U.S., and males and females are both expected (and themselves expect) to have sex-related attitudes and perceptions different in many respects from their U.S. counterparts. One issue not investigated in this study is the extent to which boys and girls in Kuwait today are brought up differently, and the fact that little counselling is being done in the direction of narrowing differences between the two sexes (Al-Sarraf, 1992). Counselling in Kuwait has a lot to offer in this respect. In the U.S., similarly, counseling has a lot to offer in knowing what to expect and understanding the behavior of Kuwaiti youth.

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