

Social and Political and Psychological Changes in Kuwait: An Aftermath of the Gulf War^{*}

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Abstract

This paper examines stress among Kuwaiti citizens in the aftermath of the Gulf War. We examine the impact of individuals' political allegiances and cultural norms in a time of political crisis while controlling for variables traditionally used to measure status, social support, personal control and stress. We surveyed a random sample of 1500 Kuwaiti citizens in 1994, two years after the Gulf War ended and during a continued period of occupation. Ordinary least squares regression and progressive adjustment analyses demonstrated that citizens who feel powerful and occupy social statuses which are powerful experience less stress. Analyses also demonstrated how involvement in social groups and interactions with family and friends over politics can be stressful in periods of war and invasion when a culture is politicized. We found that respondents who discussed politics with family and friends experienced stress. We also found that citizens who sided with the nations defeated in the Gulf War and consequently were not aligned with the national political agenda of Kuwait were stressed. Finally, we found that first class citizens, caught with balancing traditional ideas and Western norms, were stressed despite the stress-proofing advantage of their social positions.

Research interest in mental health, particularly stress, spans several decades. Recently Thoits (53-79) pulled together findings on stress and identified unanswered questions and new directions for research by summarizing literatures on stressful events, strains and the moderating effects of social support, coping resources and strategies. She noted the importance of investigating links between macro level events and micro level experiences and of demonstrating the relevance of stress research to questions of social change. In general, research linking mental health to social structure and change has focused on the importance of family and gender statuses and socioeconomic positions of individuals. The associations between mental health and marital status (Gove 34-44) social class (Dohrenwend et al 946-52; Eaton 1986) and gender (Nolen-Hocksema 259-82; Al-Issa 83-110) are well conceptualized, examined and documented. In the literature, structural stressors experienced individually are emphasized. Other research has attended to mental health outcomes when individuals collectively experience change, especially economic crisis and change. Studies of plant closings in the United States (Perrucci et al, 1988), of the 1980s farm crisis (Lobao and Meyer 60-73; Conger and Elder 1994) of environmental disasters involving hazardous toxic waste and toxic exposure (Edelstein 1988; Bachrach and Zautra 127-41) of recession (Bagguley et al, 1990) and of widespread job loss and unemployment (Bowman 75-97; Nowak and Snyder 1984) document mental health outcomes.

Economic events which precipitate large scale structural changes are viewed as washing differentially over individuals and affecting their mental health in ways consonant with their social statuses. In sum, the literature linking structure and mental health has advanced knowledge in two directions: mental health outcomes are linked to individually experienced persistent and changing features of the social structure and they are linked with collectively experienced structural change and crisis.

In this paper, we address collectively experienced crisis and stress but focus on political crisis and change rather than economic. We view individuals as actors who conceptualize and act within political systems and realities as well as economic ones. We examine perceptions of stress among Kuwaiti citizens several years after the Gulf War and incorporate findings from mental health research and from studies of political crises such as war, invasion, and post-war and invasion events. In particular, we examine the impact of individuals' political allegiances and norms in a time of political crisis while controlling for variables traditionally used to measure status, social support, personal control, and social psychological well-being.

In so doing, we have expanded traditional social support/stress models by paying careful attention to political/historical context in our analysis. Sometimes, studies of mental health outcomes focus on individuals' experiences and treat all contexts the same. We maintain that stress develops not only from difficult experiences of individuals but also from political and cultural experiences that impact entire populations to a greater or lesser extent. Given the circumstances of invasion and occupation, we expect political and change related variables to be important predictors of stress because individuals' sense of their place in a larger sociopolitical framework is particularly salient during crisis conditions.

The survey data come from a sample of 1500 Kuwaiti citizens interviewed in 1994, two years after the Gulf War ended and during a continued period of occupation. The survey was the first general social survey conducted on a Middle Eastern population and was unique in inquiring about political opinions, attitudes, behaviors and social psychological states. We will review the literature on traditional predictors of stress before discussing the literature on war, invasion and change and the special characteristics of Kuwait.

Social Support, Personal Control and Structural Statuses

Research on stress emphasizes the importance of three sets of variables: social support, personal control, and structural status.

Social support: The extensive literature on social support summarized by Thoits (53-79) includes several themes important to research on Kuwait after the Gulf War. One is the importance of community-level structures promoting social integration and providing access to assistance; another focuses on the intervening mechanisms through which support influences psychological well-being and a third is the cost/benefit element of social ties. As Felton and Shinn (103-15) noted, voluntary associations, local groups and membership organizations can support individuals by socially integrating them. This observation extends other findings about the importance of ties with spouses, parents, friends, etc. for mental health in U.S. populations (e.g. House and Kahn 83-108). In Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries, the pervasiveness of family and tribal ties creates a cohesive social network and yield invariant responses to survey questions about connection with other individuals. Seemingly, everyone is integrated into networks which are ample and complex. For example, in our survey, only a tiny proportion of respondents reported ever being lonely. Nonetheless, Kuwaitis do vary in their affiliation with macro-level and community groups. Thus, we examined variations in interpersonal support through organizational memberships of respondents rather than through family and friendship ties. We used respondents' attempts

to inform and influence family and friends about political issues as indicators of their interactions with networks already perceived as dependable and supportive.

Research on social support identifies some mechanisms through which community level and interpersonal support affect stress. Feron and Shinn (103-15) and Maton (203-32) found that membership in churches, neighborhood associations, and similar groups influences perceptions of support. Thoits (53-79) comments that perceived support may vary with group cohesiveness and homogeneity. Cohen and Wills (310-57) and Lin and Westcott (213-37) found that social ties are bases for intimacy, perceptions of support, and functional assistance; consequently, they lessen stress. However, the mechanisms which intervene between social ties and stress, aside from reception and perception of support, remain untested in general and conceptually undeveloped (Thoits 53-79). Social movement and social change literature reports that community groups and other voluntary associations bring together like-minded individuals and also socialize members to homogeneous perspectives. Similarity of world views, values, beliefs, norms, opinions and preferences are essential components of group existence. At the same time as groups incorporate and advance similar cultural perspectives among members, they maintain varied positions of integration within the larger society. Some groups reflect societal culture and others deviate from it. Thus, integration into a group may reduce individuals' stress but it may also increase stress if group membership separates individuals from the larger society and its culture.

Positions of deviance are stressful whether they are individual or group related. It is possible that research on social ties shows contradictory findings about stress reduction (Thoits 53-79) because it does not examine whether or not group membership advances and nourishes the norms and preferences of the larger society. In this research, we examine how stress is affected by membership in different kinds of groups; namely, those that uphold Kuwait's social cultural norms and those which do not. Specifically, we analyze how respondents' preferences for groups that are aligned with either Kuwait's enemies or allies, respondents' preferences for norms reflecting adherence to beliefs about Arab unity and respondents' preferences for norms common in the West influence their stress. We expect that respondents' normative and political preferences, together with their embeddedness in social and community groups, predict variations in stress.

Social support research examines the costs and benefits of social ties and demonstrates that ties can either reduce or increase stress (Rook 157-69; Berbrier and Schulte 1993). As noted above, we think that a group's social ties

need to be viewed in a larger structural context. Social ties can be costly or beneficial not only because they produce either avoidable or inescapable demands, as Coyne and Downey (401-25) found, but also because they integrate or fail to integrate individuals into a sociocultural structure larger than the group itself. In this research where we examine respondents' political allegiance with Kuwait's allies and enemies and their norms concerning Arab unity and westernization. We hypothesize that citizens who prefer Kuwait's enemies and non-traditional norms will experience the cost of deviance in increased perceptions of stress.

Personal control: Research literature about the direct effects of personal control on stress yields fewer contradictory or ambiguous findings than the literature examining the direct effects of social support. Personal control, measured by mastery (Rosenfield 77-91), self-efficacy (Grembowski et al 89-104), internal locus of control (Mirowsky and Ross 1989) and self-esteem (Shamir 61-72) reduces stress. Further, stress varies inversely with social statuses, some of which can be viewed as indicators of objective measures of personal control. In Kuwait, religion, gender, socioeconomic and citizenship statuses vary in social importance. Individuals who are male, first class as opposed to second class citizens and those who have higher levels of income, education, and occupational prestige control more social resources than women, second class citizens, and citizens ranking lower in socioeconomic status. Sunnis are both a numerical majority of citizens and members of the same sect as the ruling class; both of those positions connote control. We hypothesize that respondents reporting a sense of personal control and occupying privileged social statuses will be less stressed than others. We included age and whether or not respondents remained in Kuwait during the war and invasion, because other researchers (see Thoits 53-79) found age increased stress, and we thought that individuals' geographical locations during the war might also increase stress.

War, Invasion, and Social Change

Research on war, invasion and occupation that centers on mental health outcomes is scarce. Also, characteristics of the Gulf War make Kuwait's experience empirically distinct. The Gulf War was implemented, completed and resolved in a relatively short period of time. Literature that deals with long-term war, its process, its aftermath and perhaps even its lack of resolution (Babiuch 247-271; Morgan and Levy 43-56) relates only tangentially to Kuwait. In addition, Kuwait was occupied for a short period of time which distinguishes its experience from long-term occupation by an enemy or by a peacekeeping force (Gochman 287-308). Also, Kuwait was occupied sequentially by an enemy and

by an outside intervening military organization and then by a peacekeeping group; this is a common pattern in wars of the twentieth century. From an ecological perspective, patterns of invasion and succession are characterized by cultural and social balancing (Hawley 1968). Extrapolating from ecological theory, researchers examining war and its aftermath expect social and cultural accommodations among populations.

Macur Olsen (1982) found that a period of military occupation or something similar in India, Japan, and Korea facilitated a loosening of ties to traditional structures, attitudes and ways of doing things. Olsen and others also found that breaking with tradition creates uneasiness in populations. In Kuwait, since occupation and invasion occurred in such a short period of time, we expect to find variation in acceptance of new norms rather than widespread population adaptation to them, but we think that those accepting new Western norms will perceive themselves as more stressed because normative change is unsettling.

Variation in norms occurs not only because of the brevity of the Gulf War experience but also because change of events distribute collectively experienced stressors differentially across populations in keeping with individuals' in keeping with their backgrounds and histories (Lobao and Meyer 60-73). In other research (Meyer, Rizzo and Ali 131-144; Meyer, Ali and Locklear 57-80; Ali, Meyer and Locklear 11-29) we have found that there is more variation among Muslims and more variation within religious sects than some who study the Middle East would suggest. In Kuwait, citizens have different geographical and cultural origins; consequently, some citizens express allegiance to military enemies of Kuwait, some citizens believe strongly in Arab unity, and some do not like the United Nations and the West. We expect citizens with preferences for Kuwait's enemies and for the unity of all Arab nations to be more stressed than others because their allegiances and ideas are not consonant with the national interest of Kuwait as perceived by its government and many of its citizens. Beliefs and preferences which lessen social integration are costly.

In the vocabulary of stress research, war and invasion can be characterized as life events, i.e., acute changes which require major behavioral readjustments within a relatively short period of time; they affect the life of a nation as well as its citizens. Occupation and the aftermath of war are chronic strains for a country and its people. Lobao and Meyer (60-73) point out that economic crises render financial concerns salient to an entire group and particularly stressful to some; most likely, political crises work the same way. We expect citizens' discussions with family and friends about politics to be stressful.

Kuwait: War and Postwar

Describing the war and postwar period in Kuwait, Laila al-Othman, a novelist, spoke about the continuing malaise of the Kuwaiti people (*New York Times*, 1992). More than a year after being invaded, the worries and concerns that marked seven months of occupation made it difficult for people to get on with their lives. Constant reminders of the event were present then and are present today. The population shrank from 2.1 million Kuwaitis and foreigners to about half that size. Official estimates are that only 1.2 million people live in Kuwait, of whom about 700,000 are citizens. More than half a million foreigners left and are not expected to return. Once thriving neighborhoods are empty, adding to a generalized uneasiness. Although there are many components of psychological discomfort, several seem particularly relevant. The sense of powerlessness noted above is one. Another is depression. Researchers have found consistently that critical life events and chronic strains are linked to generalized distress (Lin and Ensel 382-99); some point out that stressors are tied in with multiple health related outcomes (Aneshensel et al 166-78). In this research, we expect powerlessness and depression to be predictive of stress. We expect a general constellation of distress to be present in a collectively experienced political crisis.

Hypotheses

In this research, we expect that personal control, measured by social statuses and perceptions of personal efficacy, will lessen stress. Social support, manifest in respondents' personal interactions and group affiliations, could be either costly, beneficial or a mixture of both as the literature suggests. In postwar Kuwait, we expect that structural statuses and social ties will influence stress through the political allegiances and norms which they encourage and perhaps even spawn. We expect that allegiances with Kuwait's victorious allies will reduce stress, particularly when it is coupled with remaining in Kuwait during the invasion. On the other hand, adherence to non-traditional social norms will be stressful. We also expect that interacting with family and friends about politics will be stressful. Finally, we expect that powerlessness and depression will be associated positively with perceived stress.

Methodology

Sample

The data were obtained in 1994 from a sample of fifteen hundred households in Kuwait selected within census tracts from a population of 700,000 citizens. Respondents within households were identified for interview by the Selection Table Method for selecting persons eighteen and older within

households which was developed by Kish (1965), and routinely used in survey research. Special attention was directed to insuring that all younger women within households were listed. Within Bedouin households, family units were identified and sampling took place within those units. Follow-up interviews were conducted for missing respondents so that the sample was complete. The team of ten interviewers, fluent in Arabic, completed the surveys within a three-month period. Respondents reported demographic information including those data specific to their statuses in Kuwait, such as class of citizenship and religious sect. Also, They articulated preferences reflecting a political culture and reported their political activities, work-related behavior, social psychological well-being and views toward social change. About 53% of the respondents were male; 67% were Sunni in a population where 70% of the citizens are Sunni. Median age of the sample was 30; and 11% were first-class citizens. Population estimates are that over 80% are second class citizens and about 15% or less are first class citizens.

Measures

Stress was measured by scales commonly used in the mental health literature. Perceived stress was composed of three items with responses ranging from (1) none/no stress to (4) feelings of great stress (Belyea and Lobao 58-75; Lobao and Meyer 60-73). Items asked how frequently respondents were concerned with stress, experienced stress daily and felt stress had increased over the past three years. The alpha reliability coefficient was .70.

Depression was measured through a shortened, validated version of the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression (CES-D) Scale, following the work of Ross and Mirowsky (206-19) Lasley, Leistritz, Lobao and Meyer (60-73) and numerous others. The scale consisted of 10 items reflecting feeling such as sadness, hopelessness, loneliness, anxiety and behavior such as distractibility, sleeplessness, laborious effort and inertia; the alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was .79.

A subjective measure of personal control was a scale assessing lack of control or powerlessness, which included five items reporting a sense of interpersonal ineffectiveness and of an inability to shape the future. Respondents evaluated their ability to influence government officials and other people and to control their future outcomes. Responses ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree; factor analysis yielded a coefficient alpha reliability of .53.

Structural statuses included age, socioeconomic status, sex, religious sect, class of citizenship and an additional contextual war-related variable,

whether or not respondents remained in Kuwait during the invasion. Age was analyzed as both a continuous variable and as a variable divided into three categories: between 18 and 45, 46 through 63, and over 64. (Findings remained stable regardless of which measure was used). Socioeconomic status included income, education and occupation; sex and invasion were coded 1 for male and for remaining in Kuwait respectively. Citizenship was coded 1 for first class and 0 for second class. Socioeconomic status, sex and class of citizenship represented status and simultaneously served as measures of structural or social control. Similarly, sect represents more than religious preference as Sunnis are the majority and consequently control social resources. Sunni was coded 1 and Shiia was coded 0.

Measures of support commonly used in Western countries where family and friendship interactions vary among individuals are basically invariant in a Kuwaiti population where familial and tribal networks encompass virtually every citizen's life and there are extensive networks for personal support. So, we measured variations in respondents' social support through memberships in organizations beyond the family and through linkages and ties surrounding politics. Network interaction about politics was measured by two items reporting discussion of politics with family and friends. The dichotomous responses were correlated.⁸³

We developed a set of scales through confirmatory factor analyses to measure respondents' political allegiance preferences and their beliefs about Western and Arab norms. Respondents reported how friendly they felt toward various other countries including nations which were allies of Kuwait during the Gulf War and those which were opponents. Responses ranged from 1 (very unfriendly) to 4 (very friendly). The opponent nation scale included Jordan, Yemen and the PLO, and the allied nation scale included France, the United States, Britain and Japan. Each reliability coefficient was .77.

Arabism or adherence to norms stressing a solid Arab identity was measured by respondents' approval of a union of Arab nations, a single flag and anthem for all Arab nations, a strong Arab identity in the world system and Arab Solidarity in trade and business (Barakat 1983, Ghaleon 1992, Yaseen 1992, Ebraheem 1988, Aljabri 1990). Responses ranged from strong approval of those norms (5) to strong disapproval (1); the reliability coefficient was .66.

Approval of norms associated with Western countries was measured by two items: the practicality of Western clothing and the sanctioning of divorce.

Pretesting and validation

The survey instrument was pretested in 1993 on more than 100 students at Kuwait University; all measures and scales were analyzed and adjusted where

clarity and preciseness were needed. Bilingual professors from the social science departments (sociology, psychology and anthropology) at Kuwait University served as a panel of judges both before and after the pretest to insure that measures specific to the Arab World and to Kuwait, such as Arab identity and Kuwaiti supporters and opponents, were accurately conceptualized and that the domain of the concepts measured by scales was appropriately sampled by the items used. Particular attention was paid to insuring that measures of social psychological characteristics (depression, powerlessness and stress) which are used in surveys of Western populations, adequately represented sentiments experienced by Kuwaiti citizens. Findings from the pretest were presented at the International Sociological Association meetings in Bielefeld, Germany, in 1994.

In short, the survey instrument and measures developed from literatures on the social structure of Middle Eastern societies and on Kuwait, which are employed here, were validated in three ways: by pretesting them on college students knowledgeable about Kuwaiti society, by utilizing a panel of bilingual judges having expertise on the Middle East and the Gulf States, and by incorporating insights from scholars into conceptualizations we developed over time through research and first-hand knowledge. All survey instruments were administered in Arabic; careful attention was paid to translations to and from English to ensure that nuances of meaning in the two languages were respected.

Regression and Progressive Adjustment Analyses

Analysis proceeded in multiple stages. Assumptions for multivariate analysis were examined. Throughout all analyses, bivariate normality was approximated; an exception was the skew in age, a variable which we recoded and entered into analysis with and without skew to assess bias. Also, multicollinearity was tested by examining the bivariate correlations among the variables and by using collinearity diagnostics. There were no bivariate correlations greater than 3 and no variance inflation factors exceeded 1.23. Thus collinearity among independent variables, defined as a variance inflation factor greater than 4 (Fox 1991) was not problematic. Further, examination of predicted and observed values revealed minimal correlation among error terms.

Multivariate procedures were employed to estimate a series of regressions. First, ordinary least squares identified significant and direct effects on stress as shown in Table 1. We included an interaction term expecting that individuals who were both in Kuwait during the invasion and supportive of the allies would be less stressed because they identified with the victorious side and felt loyal to the nation in its time of trouble.

Second, progressive adjustment was used to examine total, direct, and indirect effects of variables significant at the .05 level or greater in the ordinary least squares analysis. We sequentially introduced variables in sets into the model. In the first equation, stress was regressed on depression. In each subsequent equation, more independent variables were added to the regression. Equation 2 included powerlessness. Equation 3 included all social status variables and social support variables. Equation 4 included the political allegiances and Arab/Western norm variables.

We trimmed the model by conducting regression analyses on Equations 1 through 4 using only the significant findings and presented those findings in Figure 1. Our interest in this research focused on adherence to Arab and Western norms and preference for Allied nations or for nations opposing Western intervention, because the contribution of our research to scholarly work rested on whether or not political/historical context moderates the effects of structural status, social support and personal psychological states on stress.

Verification of Analyses

We consistently explored problems that could compromise analyses in scale construction, regression and progressive adjustment. We explored the independence of the depression, powerlessness and stress scales by combining all items from them and estimating a reliability coefficient. It was considerably lower than the coefficients for three separate scales which resulted from confirmatory factor analysis which identified three separate components. Further, correlations among the scales were .12 (powerlessness and stress), .18 (powerlessness and depression) and .38 (depression and stress), suggesting that multicollinearity, which is problematic at associations .5 or greater, was not severe.

Interactions were thoroughly examined. Because different explanatory models for men and women have been found in other research on mental distress (e.g., Lobao and Meyer, 60-73; Mirowsky and Ross, 1989), we compared direct effect and interactive models using a chow test for significant differences by gender. Although explanatory variables predicted more or less strongly for men or women, differences by sex were not significant. We examined interactions between all explanatory variables and whether or not respondents remained in Kuwait during the invasion. We expected that explanatory models would differ for respondents who had experienced the war for the duration and those who did not. However, we did not find that to be the case.

Regressions were conducted with and without depression in the equations to estimate whether or not the effects of political allegiances and normative

preferences on stress were influenced by feedback from stress to depression. Both with and without depression, path coefficients remained consistent, suggesting that coefficients from depression to stress were not serious overestimates. In sum, at all points of analysis, we attended to possible errors in measurement and specification and explored issues of discriminant validity, interaction and feedback to insure robust findings.

Findings

Direct effects model: Findings from ordinary least squares regression analysis are shown in Table 1. Results from other research about the importance of personal control, depression, structural status and social support are confirmed.

First, powerlessness and especially depression are associated with stress. These findings support those by Ross and Mirowsky (1989) and others about the importance of control in lessening stress and the cumulation of negative mental health outcomes. Second, two structural statuses, sex and class of citizenship, are predictive. These variables reflect the personal control which individuals enjoy because of their social statuses. Socioeconomic status, age and sect, other indicators of control, are not significant predictors; neither is whether or not citizens remained in Kuwait during the Gulf War and invasion. Third, respondents involved in interpersonal networks felt stressed. Specifically, members of organizations and those interacting with family and friends about politics experience more stress than others. These findings support research by Rook (1992), Berbrrier and Schulte (1993), and others who note that social integration and ties can be costly to mental health. Also, hypotheses were developed about the importance of political allegiances and social norms in periods of political crisis and change were confirmed.

Political allegiance to either Kuwait's allies or opponents during the Gulf War predict stress. As expected, those favoring the victorious United Nations' countries experience less stress than those favoring the defeated nations. Finally, respondents who embrace Western ideas about divorce and clothing are more stressed, most likely because accepting non-traditional and non-normative idea threatens individuals' social integration and solidarity. Contrary to prediction, respondents' adherence to norms of Arab unity is not a significant predictor of stress.

Progressive adjustment: Next we examined a series of equations through the technique of progressive adjustment. Next, we examined variables which had direct effects with significance levels greater than .05 and displayed the significant direct and indirect effects on stress in Figure 1.

As noted above in Table 1, powerlessness and especially depression are associated with stress. The model in Figure 1 not only confirms the importance

Table 1. Regression of Stress on Population Characteristics, Personal Control/Support, Political Allegiances, Arab/Western Norms, and Depression

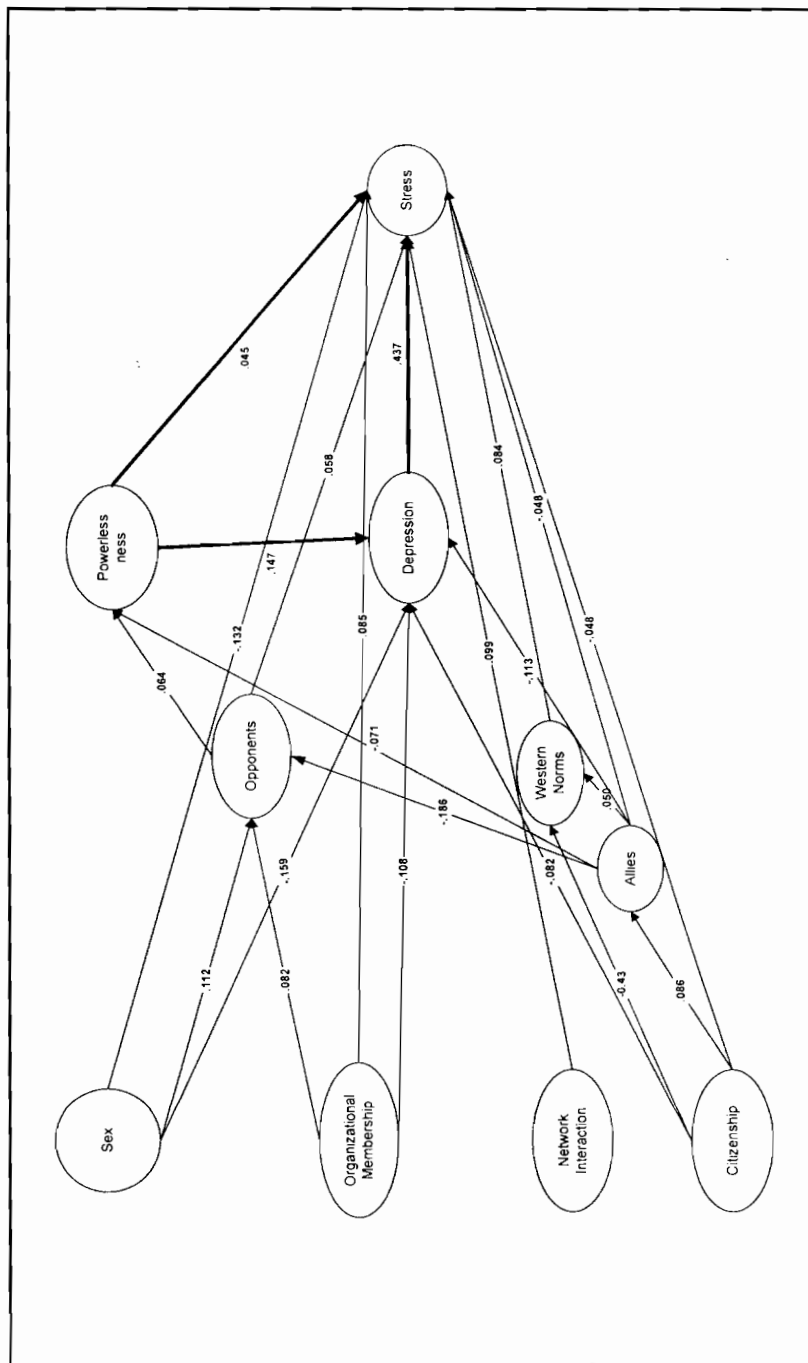
Independent Variables	b	β	t
Personal Control/Depression			
Depression	.511***	.351	14.274
Powerlessness	.145*	0.52	2.182
Structural Statuses			
Age	.029	0.23	.943
SES	.009	.015	.583
Sex	-.231***	-.141	-5.524
Sect	.035	.023	.917
Invasion	-.110	-.068	-0.624
Citizenship Status	-.132*	-.058	-2.461
Social Support			
Organizational Memberships.	.132**	.071	2.855
Network Interaction re Politics	.239***	.092	3.830
Political Allegiances			
Opponent Nations	.101**	.070	2.816
Allied Nations	-.182*	-.141	-1.970
Arab/Western Norms			
Arabism	.010	.012	.515
Western Norms	.069***	.090	3.847
Constant	.560		
R ²	.199		
N	1500		

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$, two-tailed test.

** Significant at $\alpha = .01$, two-tailed test.

*** Significant at $\alpha = .001$, two-tailed test.

Figure 1: Significant Direct and Indirect Predictors of Stress
("b" coefficients significant at least at .05 level)



* This Figure is not intended to be a causal model path analysis model.

of control as a stress reducer but also it specifies the general malaise which the novelist Laila al'Othmann (cited earlier) noted in Kuwait and which afflicts populations after war and invasion. The constellation of powerlessness, depression and stress reveals the association among important components of generalized and diffuse discomfort.

Also, Figure 1 shows that powerlessness, a subjective measure of control, predicts both stress and depression. In addition, several other measures of control based on individuals' positions in the social structure, namely sex and class of citizenship, are predictive. Men in patriarchal Kuwait and first class citizens are significantly less stressed and experience less depression than others; their lower depression, in turn, reduced stress. Involvement in social networks which included family and extended family or which go beyond these intimate groups effects stress in direct and indirect ways. Interacting with family and friends about politics increased stress. Organizational membership also increased stress, but it decreased depression and consequently reduced stress. The trade-off in personal well-being is between increased stress and depression. In sum, findings in Figure 1 confirm results from studies of Western populations in peaceful times about the importance of a sense of control, the relevance of actual control derived from being in socially preferred statuses, and the potential for stressful outcomes from belonging to social networks.

Additional findings extend our understanding of how community level structures work and of the importance of political allegiances and normative positions in situations of war, invasion and social change. Membership in organizations is associated with political preference for opponent nations. That posture increases stress, probably because it distances respondents from other citizens, from their support and from the feeling that victors have of living in harmony with, and being upheld by, the social structure. Organizational membership and a preference for opponent nations also increase powerlessness and indirectly contribute to stress.

Citizens' allegiance to either Kuwait's allies or opponents during the Gulf War increased or reduced stress respectively. First-class citizens who supported Kuwait's allies also felt more powerful and less depressed than others; identifying with the victors and being male in a patriarchal society reduces stress both directly and indirectly for the most part. However, since some first-class citizens who favored Kuwait's allies also held Western beliefs, their normative break with traditional beliefs worked in contradiction to the low stress that siding with the victors, feeling powerful and being happy would otherwise have guaranteed them. Finally, citizens who embrace Western ideas are more stressed than others; note that first class citizens, a generally low-

stressed group, did not support Western ideas. In sum, findings in Figure 1 show that citizens' political allegiances in the aftermath of war and invasion have mental health outcomes. Allegiance with Kuwait's allies, who were also victors, reduced powerlessness, stress and depression. However, it did not completely mitigate stress because allegiance with the victorious allies was associated with acceptance of some of their norms which are nontraditional in Kuwaiti society. Allegiance to Kuwait's enemies, a political preference found among members of organized groups, increases postwar stress, powerlessness and depression.

DISCUSSION

Research on Kuwaiti citizens after the Gulf War sharpens our understanding of the importance of social control in reducing stress. Stress is less for citizens who feel powerful and occupy social statuses which are powerful, such as being male in a patriarchal society and a first class citizen in nations where there are classes of citizenship. In times of war and invasion, the sense of control deriving from statuses and confidence in one's effectiveness is supplemented by siding with those who are victorious. Generally, stress is reduced in both direct and indirect ways for citizens exhibiting control based on their structural statuses, their personal confidence, their preferences for political allegiances and social norms which enjoy national approval.

This research also demonstrates how involvement in social groups and interactions with family and friends can be stressful in periods of war and invasion or other times when political allegiances are salient and community groups are politicized, political groups become mobilized, and new groups with political agenda are formed. Citizens who sided with Kuwait's opponents, the defeated nations, and those discussing politics with relative and friends were stressed. Research literature on social support has demonstrated that social integration does not deaden the impact of major stressful life events (House, Landis and Umberson 1988) or of chronic problems (Cohen and McKay 253-67; Kessler and McLeod 219-40). We found that membership in groups which lessen individuals' support for a national political agenda actually increases stress. Further, talking to relatives and friends can be stressful when the culture is politicized and the topic of discussion is politics. In general, stress increases with social embeddedness during a period of social change and political upheaval and division like that found in postwar Kuwait.

In addition, this research points out the stressful outcome of not holding traditional views in a time of social change and political conflict. Early social theorists, such as Toennies and Durkheim, later social thinkers, like Parsons and Metron, researchers studying social change, such as Lipset, and students

of war and invasion, like Gochman, (287-308) and Olson (1982), discussed how costly deviation from prevalent cultural norms and adherence to norms from another culture can be. Here, we found that first class citizens tended to avoid the break with traditional ideas, but their allegiance to Kuwait's allies drew them towards Western norms and consequently increased the stress of individuals whose structural status alone should render them stress-proof.

Finally, the research presented here suggests the importance of examining individuals' norms about what is socially and politically preferable in studying stress.

Respondents' political allegiances and related beliefs were significant predictors of stress; moreover, they clarified how social integration or networks works and how social control based on social status operates. Even though the findings generally reflected current findings from Western societies and pointed out that personal efficacy and high social position reduce stress while social ties may increase it, they showed some exceptions. Whether or not preferred social statuses and membership in community groups reduced stress was tied in with the political and normative preferences that these statuses and memberships gave birth to or developed.

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