

**NEUTRALIZING DEVIANCY AMONG
ADOLESCENTS IN BAHRAIN**

By

BROOKE A. AYARS

Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Sciences
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio
1994

Master of Arts in Psychology
University of Houston - Clear Lake
Clear Lake, Texas
1997

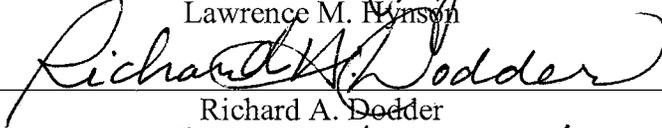
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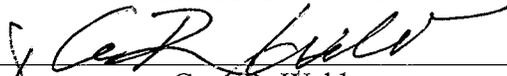
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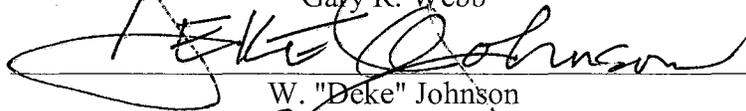
Lawrence M. Hynson



Richard A. Dodder



Gary R. Webb



W. "Deke" Johnson



A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

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This final report has a unique, vibrant personality representative of the many people who helped keep the study alive and prosperous. On more occasions than not, I felt I could no longer tolerate the loneliness and never-ending frustration of living in Bahrain; I often considered cutting the research short, abandoning my work at the school, and returning home. But with the encouragement of some very special people, I persevered and finished what was started. Any glory that might be granted as a result of completing this project is as much theirs as it is mine.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Formal Statement of the Problem	2
Purpose of the Study	4
Significance of the Study	6
Conceptualization of Common Terms	6
Assumptions.....	8
Organization of the Report.....	9
Section Summary	10
II. THEORY AND DEVIANCY	11
Social Construction of Reality	13
Theory of Neutralization.....	15
Denial of Responsibility	20
Denial of Injury.....	20
Denial of Victim	20
Condemnation of the Condemners.....	21
Appeal to Higher Loyalties.....	21
Metaphor of Ledger	22
Defense of Necessity.....	22
Denial of the Necessity of the Law	23
Claim that Everybody is Doing It	23
Claim of Entitlement.....	23
Review of Research	24
Criticisms	25
Section Summary	25
III. SOCIAL CLIMATE IN BAHRAIN	27
Five Pillars of Islam	27
Profession of Faith	28
Prayer	29
Alms Giving.....	29
Fasting.....	29
Pilgrimage to Mecca	29

Holy Struggle	30
The Divide: Shi'a and Sunni Muslims	30
The Kingdom of Bahrain	33
Society and Culture.....	34
Legal System and Crime.....	36
Economic System.....	37
Education, Rights of Women, and Social Welfare	39
Section Summary	41
IV. METHODS	43
Research Questions	44
Research Design.....	44
School Setting	46
Participants.....	48
General Characteristics	48
Moral Absolutes.....	51
Reported Deviancy.....	52
Social Bonds	52
Instruments.....	53
Orientation, Observation, and Exploration	53
Focus groups	53
Journaling.....	54
Survey	56
Procedure	57
Qualitative Component	57
Quantitative Component	59
Reliability.....	60
Validity	63
Generalizability.....	66
Limitations	67
Section Summary	68
V. FINDINGS	70
Research Question #1	70
Research Question #2	75
Research Question #3	81
Section Summary.....	87
VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS	88
The Research Questions.....	88
Research Question #1	89
Research Question #2	90
Research Question #3	93

Present Findings and Existing Literature.....	96
Interpretations of the Present Study.....	99
Critical Review	102
An Appraisal of Neutralization Theory	103
Applications of Neutralization Theory	104
Improving the Study	106
Section Summary	109
REFERENCES	111
APPENDIXES	118
APPENDIX A - DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY	118
APPENDIX B - LETTER OF CONSENT	120
APPENDIX C - STUDENT PARTICIPATION SCRIPT/ ASSENT FORM	122
APPENDIX D - STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS.....	124
APPENDIX E - NEUTRALIZATION AGREEMENT SURVEY	125
APPENDIX F - FOCUS GROUP.....	134
APPENDIX G - OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD	135

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1a. Characteristics of the Sample by Percentages.....	49
1b. Characteristics of the Sample by Mean Frequencies.....	50
2. Retest Reliability Correlation Coefficients for Sample Characteristics, Moral Absolutes, and Reported Deviancy.....	61
3. Response Percentages for the Social Construction of Deviancy and Examples of Deviant Behaviors.....	71
4a. Percentage of Sample that Agrees with the Moral Absolute and Agrees to Neutralize the Deviant Situation for the Original Neutralizations.....	76
4b. Percentage of Sample that Agrees with the Moral Absolute and Agrees to Neutralize the Deviant Situation for the Recent Neutralizations.....	77
5a. Correlation Coefficients Between the Original Neutralization Techniques and Committed Acts of Deviancy.....	82
5b. Correlation Coefficients Between the Recent Neutralization Techniques and Committed Acts of Deviancy.....	83

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Techniques of Neutralization and Respective Verbalizations.....	19

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

*"Whenever I go into the public I feel exposed...I am stared at, honked at, yelled at...I have been followed, cornered, and attacked...sometimes, it is like being a celebrity without the status...other times, I can feel their hatred and I know they want me to leave"
--the Author (8 October 2004).*

This research is concerned with the social construction of deviancy among adolescents in the Middle East and the empirical assessment of the theory of neutralization as originally formulated by Sykes and Matza (1957) and Matza (1964) and extended by Klockars (1974), Minor (1981), and Coleman (1985). A one-year study was conducted in Bahrain (Middle East) where the primary investigator integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the meaning of deviancy in relation to local normative standards, to identify unique cultural deviant acts, and to reveal the prevalence in which the Bahraini youth endorse the various neutralization techniques. Stated another way, this study was designed to grasp a better understanding of the Bahraini youth including their interpretation of and admission to deviant acts and to test the applicability of neutralization theory among these adolescents.

The everyday interaction and supervision provided by this investigator at a designated private school in conjunction with focus groups, newspaper articles, and previous experience on the island contributed to the construction of a definition of deviancy according to Bahraini adolescents. The primary investigator surveyed a

convenient sample of middle school students (N=227) by means of a modified agreement to neutralization survey (Collins 1994); 20 of those students were resurveyed to test the reliability of this questionnaire. In accordance to the theory, the researcher believed that those students who adhere to conventional normative standards would employ neutralization techniques for the purposes of justifying occasional acts of deviancy.

This study is twofold; one aspect of the research involves the qualitative investigation of the meaning of deviancy as reported by these youths and the other aspect involves the use of objective, quantitative measures to determine agreement to neutralizing. The information gained from this study is valuable because so little is reported in sociological research regarding youth in the Middle East, let alone issues concerning their perceptions and involvement (or lack of) in deviancy--adolescents in the Middle East essentially have not been scientifically researched.

Formal Statement of the Problem

What does deviancy mean to the youth in an Islamic society? Do adolescents in Bahrain associate similar meanings to the notion of deviancy as would American youth? One of the problems underlying this line of research is the lack of knowledge amid the scientific community regarding Middle Easterners' perceptions of deviancy. The researcher went about answering such questions by working from the social construction perspective. Is deviancy real? If so, how do the youth define and identify it? Ultimately, the meanings attached to the concept of deviancy became important benchmarks for framing and organizing the neutralization survey because it was imperative that the scripts resonated with the Bahraini culture, religion, and social climate.

A second hurdle in this project was the selection of a social theory; one which would aid in explaining why, or why not, the youth in Bahrain deviate or break social rules. Critics might argue that the theory of neutralization is outdated. Possibly so, but the theory continues to be outlined and discussed in current criminology, juvenile delinquency, and deviance texts as well as in the research journals.¹ Also, neutralization theory was selected because the primary investigator believed that the influence of Islam played a fundamental role in guiding everyday behaviors, and as a result the youth generally agreed to the moral standards. This is a necessary precursor--an assumption--of neutralization theory.

Another problem involved locating a group of adolescents in the Middle East to query. Many people are not familiar with the whereabouts of Bahrain nor have heard of the island. The primary investigator previously lived in Bahrain for three years (1997-1999) working in various educational fields and was familiar with the customs and traditions of the local people. So, with her connections, she was able to establish employment at a private school where she was formerly employed as a teacher. With the permission of the school officials, the primary investigator felt that researching the students she supervised was an idyllic prospect. What she did not anticipate were the effects that the administrative job responsibilities had on her research efforts. Her energies were channeled into being an effective principal, leader, and disciplinarian and less into being a researcher of deviant activities. She struggled to manage the role conflicts.

¹ Some examples of these publications which have been used in the undergraduate and graduate programs at Oklahoma State University are: *Juvenile Delinquency* (Bynum and Thompson 2002), *Criminology: The Core* (Siegel 2002), *A Sociology of Crime* (Hester and Elgin 1992), and even *Causes of Delinquency* (Hirschi [1969] 2002). And, the studies discussed in this paper were published in the popular journal, *Deviant Behavior*.

The discourse about deviant activity among the youth in the Middle East is negligible in the West; as stated before it is overlooked in scientific research. The investigator observed defiance in the school setting years back but failed to inquire if the students identified it as such. Moreover, she often listened to the students talk about being good Muslims, yet found it strange that fighting, bullying, and stealing were common occurrences. Therefore, this investigator set out to identify those circumstances that resulted in the display of deviant behaviors. Precisely, she wanted to know how, or why, these youth justify deviant acts when they essentially recognize them as being wrong. The survey was designed to reveal the techniques by which these youth permit themselves to engage in sporadic deviant acts while maintaining strong beliefs in the legitimacy of the Islamic social system.

Purpose of the Study

The research study was designed to reveal the importance of normative standards in relation to the interpretation and expression of deviancy and the means by which Bahraini adolescents minimize stints of deviant behavior. The aim of the study was to acquire an understanding of deviant behavior among these youth by observing, questioning, and surveying middle school students (grades six to eight and involving students of 10 to 15 years of age). The investigator concentrated her efforts on three research questions that involved the social construction of deviancy, the agreement to moral normative standards, the endorsement of the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five recently added neutralization techniques, and the reported commission of seven deviant acts--cheating, dating, fighting, vandalizing, stealing, drinking alcohol, and bullying.

This researcher's role as the middle school principal placed her in close proximity with the students and parents; therefore they were a convenient sample to research. A total of N=227 willingly volunteered to participate in the study.² The students' interpretations and perceptions of deviancy were collected by conducting focus groups in varying group sizes of five to 20 subjects. The students' demographic information and endorsements of the ten neutralization techniques were obtained by surveying techniques.

The present study examined the empirical validity of the neutralization theory as formulated by Sykes and Matza (1957), Matza (1964), Klockars (1974), Minor (1981), and Coleman (1985). The social control theories developed in the United States were used to explain the occasional deferment from conventional norms and standards. These theorists argued that individuals, for the most part, adhere to social rules, that individuals are most often compliant and only engage in deviant acts when they are able to dull the guilt beforehand. For instance, youngsters and adults alike who endorse the normative standards reportedly engage in deviancy because they accept certain techniques, which neutralize the defiant behaviors. In this study, the independent variables are represented by the moral absolutes and ten neutralizing techniques, and the reported deviant behaviors (i.e., commission of deviancy) are the dependent variables. The endorsement of the moral absolutes and ten neutralizations are measured quantitatively; that is, only those who endorsed the moral absolutes are analyzed.³ The nominal variables, or student demographics (e.g., sex, age, grade, religion, parent occupation, etc.), are used to describe the student sample.

² The intent of the study was presented to the middle school students via a pre-approved script. The primary investigator asked the students to participate voluntarily in the study. Parental consent and subject consent was obtained from those who agreed to participate.

³ The possible responses are consistent with a Lickert Scale, such that scores of 1 or 2 designate disagreement and scores of 4 or 5 reveal agreement.

Significance of the Study

A significant reason for conducting an empirical study is to test the validity of an existing theoretical perspective. Two basic, but significant, contributions are made in this study. One contribution is that it tests the validity of the neutralization theory. A second contribution is that it tests the validity of the theory in a different cultural setting. Basically, the importance stems from ways in which the theory can assess deviancy in another culture.

Another reason for conducting research is to enhance education. Many Middle Eastern youth live in the United States and attend American schools. These young people are often integrated into the public school systems and forced to adopt the regulatory and disciplinary standards utilized by the administrators and school officials. These events can be distressing for both the Islamic youths and the school systems. Therefore, this research is important because it has the potential to advance the knowledge of American educators and students who interact with Muslim youths, parents, and families on a daily basis. Moreover, this study has the potential to dispel many of the misconceptions about the Middle East which are spread about by the Western media.

Conceptualization of Common Terms

A typical American textbook definition of adolescence might include, "a socially created life stage between childhood and adulthood" (Bynum and Thompson 2002:235-36). Based on the lack of clarity or agreement regarding adolescence, young people (approximately between 10 and 17 years of age) find themselves in a social paradox where they are neither afforded the tolerance of childish behaviors nor are granted the

rights and responsibilities associated with adulthood. Appropriate and socially acceptable behavior for these youths becomes ambiguous; they often find themselves marginalized by society. Based on interacting with hundreds of youths and their parents over a total of four years, however, the author believes that the adolescents in Bahrain are not marginalized; they are quite integrated in the social order. Childish behaviors are permissible and anticipated; and more importantly, there seems to be a slow, highly monitored progression into early adulthood.

A frequently quoted definition of deviant behavior is "behavior which violates institutionalized expectations--that is, expectations which are shared and recognized as legitimate within a social system" (Cohen 1959:462). The institutionalized norms recognized in Bahrain appear similar to the many standards in place for adolescents in the United States, especially when comparing classroom behavior and student etiquette. But, there are some differences. There does not appear to be a distinct adolescent subculture. Any materials, discussions, or activities centered on sex are clearly taboo and prohibited for the youth. And, adolescent males and females are not to be alone together without parental approval--dating seems uncommon. School-age youth in Bahrain, particularly from the middle class and the royal family do not obtain employment outside of the home as many youths in the United States do. Finally, compared to the teenagers of America, Bahraini teenagers usually do not obtain their drivers' licenses until after 18 years of age; nor is there an apparent suppression of the adult value system by a pervasive adolescent subculture among these youth.

Assumptions

This investigator assumed that notions of deviancy exist in Bahrain; ones that parallel the definitions maintained in the United States. This assumption surfaced as an outcropping of personal experiences experienced by the investigator while living, working, and traveling in the Middle East from 1997 to 1999. During that time, the investigator witnessed what she would have labeled as deviancy (e.g., cursing, vandalizing, fighting, drinking, reckless driving, and loitering). Yet, at the time, she thought not to inquire among those youth displaying such acts whether or not they viewed them as defiant. The present study revealed that the youth are aware and sensitive to those individuals who break social rules, yet there seemed not to be a translatable word in Arabic for the English term of deviancy.⁴

A second assumption is that the young people in Bahrain believe in, and adhere to, the local moral standards. That is, most adolescents realize right from wrong and go about their daily activities adhering to social rules. The researcher also assumed this type of orderly conduct and behavior is more prevalent in an Islamic society because Islam is rooted in every aspect of the social structure (e.g., government, finance, education, family, employment, health, etc.). Islam, from the perspective of a Christian, is a strict and rigid religion that demands self-sacrifice and complete obligation from its followers. It is partly because of this assumption that the theory of neutralization was selected for testing.

⁴ According to the youths interviewed, they were not aware of an Arabic word that represented the English word "deviancy." Yet, they could readily describe a person who was deviant. It is important at this time to remember the young age of the students interviewed. Possibly, their English skills were not at a level where they could make the translation.

A third assumption is that the subjects would be able to comprehend and respond to the surveys, which were administered in English, even though their mother-tongue was Arabic. The researcher made this assumption because the students were attending a school that specialized in American curriculum; the primary subjects were instructed and tested in English. There were two reasons for not having the surveys translated. The most important reason is that content and meaning can be lost in the translation. And, the other reason is that the primary investigator, who does not speak Arabic, administered all the surveys and was in a position to assist with difficult terms or statements.

A final assumption is that the participants will be reporting about neutralization and not rationalization. Critics of neutralization theory argue a problem exists with the time ordering of events or when the deviant 'justifies' the wrongdoing. Rationalists believe that individuals excuse the deviant behavior after it takes place and not before as suggested by Sykes and Matza ([1957] 1964).

Organization of the Report

This report is organized according to the following sections: 1) an introduction to the study; 2) an exploration of the theoretical framework being tested in the research project; 3) a description of the research setting which includes Islam, the Kingdom of Bahrain, and its various social structures; 4) an outline of the methodologies employed in the investigation including descriptions of the subjects sampled; 5) an analysis of the findings; and 6) a discussion of the results including several conclusive thoughts of the research project.

Section Summary

The reader was introduced to this overseas research project in this section. The researcher has engaged in an empirical study, which was conducted in Bahrain (Middle East) concerning adolescent deviancy. The purpose for conducting this project, the significance of the investigation, key terms, and research assumptions were elucidated. The proceeding section involves an overview of the social construction of reality and the theory of neutralization.

Chapter Two

THEORY AND DEVIANCY

*"As Morris Cohen once said, one of the most fascinating problems about human behavior is why men violate the laws in which they believe"
--quoted in Sykes and Matza (1957:666).*

Deviancy has intrigued scholars for centuries. Early on, Durkheim (1896) theorized that deviancy was normal human behavior in response to anomic social conditions. In the 1940s, Merton extended Durkheim's theory of anomie to include the imbalances between socially endorsed means available to diverse groups of people in relation to the widely held goals and values of society. At about the same time, Sutherland (1940) recognized the importance of social learning and group affiliation relative to deviant activity. Later on, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) suggested that delinquent subcultures emerged to organize and expand systems of deviant activities. But, Reckless (1967) believed that a strong sense of belongingness combined with a degree of self-esteem protected individuals from the influences of deviancy. Cohen ([1955] 1966) pointed out that deviancy seemed to occur more often in the poorer sections of society. While, Miller (1958) observed that deviant groups maintained certain norms and values based on limited opportunities, not out of spite for middle class standards.

By taking a quick glance at Middle Eastern literature and history, the past 2000 years have been dominated by rigid, austere religious standards of living (Lewis 1995).

As a result of such inflexible, unwavering religious control, deviant behaviors are expected to be less prevalent and less threatening to the social order. A basic assumption is that very little social disorganization exists in such a strict cultural climate. However, the social environment in the Middle East is being affected by the increases of international trade and investment, the availabilities of advanced technology, travel, and higher education, the impacts of foreign political policies and war, the inflictions of natural disasters, and the influences of the mass media and popular culture. Both lifelong ideologies and everyday habits are probably being questioned by the local people, particularly by the younger generations of Muslims. The social construction of deviancy in an Islamic social system is presumed to be in the infant stages yet slowly blossoming as a social phenomenon. To guide the exploration of deviancy in Bahrain, the perspective of social construction claims that the construction of reality fails to have a beginning or ending; it is a fluid, ongoing process in which the observer can only hope to isolate, evaluate, and document a small portion of that process.

Many of the earlier perspectives which assessed deviancy were couched in the theoretical approach concerned with social disorganization, or traditional subculture-conflict models of deviance. However, according to the social control theories, individuals are free to commit deviant acts because their ties to the conventional order have somehow been weakened (Hirschi 1969:3). Or, individuals are free to deviate because they neutralize the guilt or shame associated with violating the normative standards in which they are committed. Rather than focusing on traditional conflict and social disorganization, the interest here lies in several key issues: 1) learning about the everyday lifestyles of youth in Bahrain, 2) understanding the basic control mechanisms in

an Islamic society, 3) recognizing the defining characteristics of deviancy in contemporary Bahrain, and 4) identifying the means by which youths occasionally engage in deviant acts while validating and supporting conventional norms and standards.

Social Construction of Reality

***"Sociologists must "get inside people's heads" and view the "world" as it is seen, interpreted, acted upon, and shaped by the people themselves"
--Max Weber's notion of Verstehen.***

The paradigm of symbolic interaction considers individuals' subjective experiences, understandings, and interpretations; it focuses on how shared meanings of the world emerge from social interaction. Interactionists emphasize that the capabilities humans possess seem to necessitate exposure to other people to develop fully (Hughes and Kroehler 2005). This social development is fostered by the ability to communicate with one another. Cultural signs, symbols, and language guide the information exchange process, and embedded in this exchange process are shared meanings of the social world. Therefore, social interaction and society itself are possible--are real things--because people share meanings. The constructivist contends that to understand this world one must interpret first, and only then do social things become real. Constructivists believe that an inquirer (of meaning) should elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actors (Schwandt 1998:222).

Interactionism and constructivism are based on some basic assumptions (Mead [1934] 1962; Blumer 1969). First, people respond to things in the social environment on the basis of their established meanings. Individuals' responses differ according to the situational circumstances and the signs and symbols associated with those moments.

Second, meanings are not inherent in material or nonmaterial things but emerge from social interaction. And third, shared cultural meanings are subject to change because people are continually interacting and reacting. The social world is essentially a social reality constructed out of the need for people to interact according to established signs and symbols; the world as we know it is a constructed reality.

Realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature...and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions. Constructions are not more or less "true," in any absolute sense, but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated. Constructions are alterable, as are their associated "realities." (Guba and Lincoln 1998:206).

In the social sciences there is only interpretation (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:313). Research that is grounded in the constructivist perspective takes shape because the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked such that the findings, or outcomes, are literally created as the investigation proceeds. And, the aim of inquiry is to understand and reconstruct the social constructions by which the investigatee initially adheres to; the aim is to find consensus. For this to take place, two primary criteria are necessary for insuring the quality of the inquiry: trustworthiness and authenticity (Guba and Lincoln 1998:213). These two attributes of the inquiry are obtainable by establishing oneself in the research setting; it is imperative to gain and maintain a positive rapport with those from whom one seeks information throughout the development of the social constructs.

There are some limitations to the interactionist/constructivist perspective. First, there is the temptation to conclude that because social reality is constructed, there is no reality independent of social constructions. For example, some theorists of this discipline might argue that mental illness is not real because the notion of mental illness is a

construction, which emerges from a process of diagnosis that is based on socially constructed categories of illness. Yet, critics argue that there is an objective reality whether humans perceive it or not. Second, people do not enjoy total flexibility in shaping their actions and behaviors in their everyday lives. Even though interactionists acknowledge systems of pre-established meanings, they have the tendency to downplay the influence that social structure and order have over individuals' daily lives. And finally, the research presented by interactionists and constructivists tend to be narrow in focus, value laden, and unequipped to describe large groups of people.

Theory of Neutralization

*"Norms may be violated without surrendering allegiance to them.
The directives to action implicit in norms may be avoided
intermittently rather than frontally assaulted.
They may be evaded rather than radically rejected.
Norms, especially legal norms, may be neutralized"
--David Matza (1964:60).*

Sykes and Matza originally formulated the theory of neutralization in 1957. The perspectives presented by Sykes and Matza's (1957) and Matza (1964) were attempting to explain why individuals drift in and out of deviancy. Their basic proposition was that juveniles sense the moral obligations to be bounded by conventional norms and laws, and such obligations between individuals and conventional society remained in place most of the time. However, individuals displayed a propensity to evade social controls from time to time. With that, Sykes and Matza were suggesting that people live their lives on continua somewhere between total social freedom and total social restraint. While neutralization theory was explicitly developed with juvenile delinquency in mind, the theory appears to be applicable to other deviant forms of behavior.

Neutralization theory is based on the premise that "the normative system of a society...is marked by...flexibility," and "not...a body of rules held to be binding under all conditions" (Sykes and Matza 1957:666). Basically, the normative restrictions placed on individuals are not understood by the proponents of this theory to be absolute or final; rather, social norms are seen as being situational and fluid. Hence, these restrictions often emerged within the context of situated, social interaction and functioned as social guidelines against which behavior were to be evaluated as appropriate or inappropriate, as right or wrong.

People are expected to adapt their behaviors to the normative expectations of given situations, yet there are legitimate circumstances in which normative standards cannot be maintained or are not applicable. As Parsons (1951:269) stated, "All normative patterns are to an important degree generalized relative to the particularity of the situation in which they apply." In fact, there are situational exceptions that are recognized by the criminal justice system whereby "certain would-be offenses may be negated on the grounds of self-defense, by an absence of *mens rea* (e.g., criminal intent), or by any other legitimate mitigating circumstance" (Collins 1994:7). It is assumed that individuals take this notion of exceptions to the extreme, such that even the most legitimated social standards are excusable so as to become, in effect non-binding from the perspective of the actor (Vold and Bernard 1986; Dodder and Hughes 1993). In essence, neutralization theory upholds that social actors "can avoid moral blame and maintain self-esteem while violating normative guidelines; if they can tell themselves and others that malicious intent was absent or that their behavior was in some way justified" (Conklin 1989:231).

Taken from a different angle, the neutralization theory is supported by the idea that "those who violate society's norms or their previously held value system do so, not because they rejected those norms and values, but because they were able to neutralize them" (Dodder and Hughes 1987:74). In other words, "During release [from the bind of conventional norms] the delinquent is not constrained to commit offense; rather, he is free to drift into delinquency," and this "drift is [an] episodic release from moral constraint" (Matza 1964:69). The opportunities for drift are unlimited:

There are millions of occasions during which delinquency may be committed. Except for occasions covered by surveillance, virtually every moment experienced offers an opportunity for offense. Yet delinquency fails to occur during all but a tiny proportion of those moments. During most of the subcultural delinquent's life he is distracted and restrained by convention from the commission of offenses. Episodically, he is released from the moral bind of conventional order. (P. 69).

Those who are committed to the conventional standards of society utilize neutralizations during such episodes of drift. Hence, "neutralizations allow the individual to remain committed to the conventional moral order even while committing [deviant acts]" (Kramer and Steffensmeier 1979:26).

The neutralization theory locates a specific time ordering between the cognitive neutralization and the deviant act such that the former must precede the latter (Collins 1994:15). Moreover, the technique of neutralization is conceptualized as an *a priori* process regarding behavior rather than as an *a posteriori* rationalization.⁵ The theory maintains that normative commitment is an essential condition for the occurrence of neutralization; if normative commitment is not present, then one need not neutralize at all.

⁵ An *a priori* process is one that takes place *before* the situation of interest.

Sykes and Matza's (1957) notions of neutralization were based on three essential observations (Bynum and Thompson 2002). First, youths expressed guilt over illegal acts. Second, youths often respected and admired law-abiding citizens. And third, most youths were not immune to the demands of conformity. As a result, Sykes and Matza proposed five techniques employed by individuals to neutralize the pending guilt or shame associated with potential acts of deviancy--*denial of responsibility, denial of injury, denial of victim, condemnation of the condemners, and appeal to higher loyalties*. The splendor of neutralization techniques is that they permit individuals, who most often adhere to conventional norms, to occasionally escape the social constraints of society; the guilty feelings are eluded before the deviant act takes place.

The theory of neutralization addresses ten strategies or techniques by which actors may seek to justify or excuse their self-conceptualizations regarding behavioral infractions. Each of these techniques is thought to be conceptually and empirically independent from any of the others (Collins 1994:16). Sykes and Matza (1957) identified the first five techniques in the original construction of the neutralization theory as mentioned above. Klockars (1974) established a sixth technique--*the metaphor of the ledger*. Minor (1981) introduced a seventh technique--*the defense of necessity*. And, Coleman (1985) provided the final three neutralization techniques--*the denial of the justice or necessity of the law, the claim that 'everybody is doing it,' and the claim of entitlement*. Each neutralization technique is systematically presented in the following subsections. Following that, a summary chart of these various techniques accompanied by fundamental quotes regarding their general usage is provided for review (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Techniques of Neutralization and Respective Verbalizations

Neutralization Techniques	Verbalizations
1) Denial of Responsibility	"I didn't mean to do it." "It's not my fault." "I couldn't help it."
2) Denial of Injury	"Nobody got hurt." "I didn't hurt anyone." "It was harmless."
3) Denial of the Victim	"They deserved it." "I was getting back at them." "I'm taking revenge."
4) Condemn the Condemners	"Those who condemn my actions have done worse." "Everyone's picking on me."
5) Appeal to Higher Loyalties	"My friends are depending on me." "I did it for my family."
6) Metaphor of the Ledger	"I'm generally good." "This is a 'one time' thing." "I don't usually do this."
7) Defense of Necessity	"I had to do it to get the job done." "I know this is wrong, but I have to do it so nothing worse happens."
8) Denial of Justice of the Law	"This rule isn't fair." "This law isn't enforceable."
9) Claim that 'Everybody is Doing It'	"Everyone else is doing it." "Nobody gets in trouble for this."
10) Claim of 'Entitlement'	"I have a right to do this." "I'm allowed to do this if I want."

Denial of responsibility (Sykes and Matza 1957). This is a technique employed when the deviant act is perceived to be caused by an external force, "if one believes his actions are due to forces outside of his control, he may believe that he is not responsible--and hence, not culpable--for those actions" (Hindelang 1970:484). This technique goes beyond looking at the defiant act as accidental, for the consequences are real and meaningful. The individual feels that he, or she, is drawn into the situation, ultimately becoming helpless. Such adolescents might claim that their abusive families, bad neighborhoods, and delinquent peers predispose them to deviancy. Common statements used in denial of responsibility are "It was not my fault" or "I cannot help but do this."

Denial of injury (Sykes and Matza 1957). This is a technique employed when the deviant act causes no harm to the victim. For the youth, "wrongfulness may turn on the question of whether, or not, anyone has clearly been hurt by his deviance, and this matter is open to a variety of interpretations" (1957:667). For example, by employing this technique the adolescent might view stealing as merely borrowing and fighting as merely an argument between consenting participants. The use of the technique is reaffirmed in the minds of the deviants when society does not condemn certain acts of deviancy, such as skipping class or engaging in practical jokes, but rather accepts them as harmless activities. A youth interviewed by Coleman (1985:411) made the comment, "I assumed a criminal action meant hurting someone, we did not hurt anyone." A common reply used for denial of injury is "My action is harmless to others."

Denial of victim (Sykes and Matza 1957). This is a technique employed when the deviant act is viewed as revenge towards deserving persons, or "the moral indignation of self and others may be neutralized by an insistence that the injury is not wrong in light

of the circumstances" (1957:668). The deviants take on the roles of avengers and the victims become the wrongdoers. Those who attack marginalized social groups (e.g., homosexuals, ethnic minorities, and suspected crooks) utilize this technique. Ironically, this idea is reified by the character of Robin Hood and his actions of stealing from the rich. A typical reply vis-à-vis denial of victim is "They deserved it."

Condemnation of the condemners (Sykes and Matza 1957). This is a technique employed to shift the attention from the deviant to the authoritative figures who oppose the deviant acts. Or, "the delinquent shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the motives and behavior of those who disapprove of his violations" (1957:668). The deviant perceives the accuser as a hypocrite or a deviant in disguise. This "turning of the tables" is adopted by deviants to put accusers on the defensive (Bynum and Thompson 2002:194). A good example of this is when teenagers are warned not to smoke or drink alcohol for health reasons by parents who do so. Typical responses for condemnation of the condemners are "You were worse than me at this age" and "The authorities are hypocrites."

Appeal to higher loyalties (Sykes and Matza 1957). This is a technique employed by youths who feel obligated to break community norms or laws to preserve the sanctity of the family or peer groups. "The delinquent may see himself as caught up in a dilemma that must be resolved, unfortunately, at the cost of violating the law" (1957:669). The key point is that deviation from particular conventional standards may occur, not because the standards are rejected, but because other norms (e.g., family or peer group) involving higher loyalties are accorded precedence. Hence, conforming to

peer pressure or acting "for the good of the group" neutralizes the negative aspects of deviant acts. A common reply is "My friends (or family) are depending on me."

The Metaphor of Ledger (Klockars 1974). This is a technique employed by individuals who believe that they are unquestionably respectable members of society and who deserve moments of deviancy. The metaphor is that insofar as the deviant perceives good actions to outweigh bad actions, deviance is regarded as something deserved once in a while (Collin 1994:20). Minor (1981:298) added that "this image of good and evil counter-balancing one another is a common one in our society, and it may be that one who feels he has a sufficient supply of good to his credit can indulge in some evil without feeling guilty." A general statement exemplifying the use of the metaphor of ledger is "I am allowed to be bad once in a while, because I always follow the rules." Klockars (1974) summarized this neutralization strategy in the following manner:

A metaphorical ledger is ...useful in evaluating life histories: good in the credit column is balanced against evil in the debit column. Thus, acts of charity and benevolence offset entries of greed or selfishness. It is an attractive metaphor. From the scales of justice to the Great Book of St. Peter, the notion of balancing between good and evil has proven to be a persuasive one for the common comprehension and consideration of penance, indulgence, grace, judgment, atonement, salvation, and contrition. (P. 121).

The Defense of Necessity (Minor 1981). This is a technique employed when deviant acts are deemed unavoidable or necessary in certain circumstances, or when other options do not exist. Minor (1981:296) described it as such, "If an act is perceived as necessary, then one need not feel guilty about its commission, even if it is considered morally wrong in the abstract." The defense of necessity provides the adolescent with a justification which entails the idea that there is no way around committing the deed, which in most other situations it would be defined as deviant (Collins 1994:21). Usually

one might hear the claim, "I know this is wrong, but I have no other choice--it must be done to prevent something worse from happening."

Denial of the Justice of the Law (Coleman 1985). This is a technique employed when the defendant believes the normative expectation or the law to be unnecessary, or unjust. Even though this neutralization technique is questioned among scholars, the underlying issue is that if individuals from the onset define particular standards and laws as unfair, they have then freed themselves from the demands of the expectations (Collins 1994:21). Thereby, they are free to engage in deviant activities without shame. In other words, particular conventional norms and laws are not legitimate in the minds of certain deviants. A response that denies the justice of the law is "That is a stupid rule...I am not going to follow that rule!"

Claim that Everybody is Doing It (Coleman 1985). This is a technique employed by individuals based on the fact that deviant behaviors are differentially sanctioned. This technique furnishes the deviant actor with the justification that "it is not fair to condemn one offender without condemning them all" (Conklin 1989). A common statement claiming that everybody is doing it might sound like "Nobody rarely gets in trouble for this, so why should I?"

Claim of Entitlement (Coleman 1985). This is a technique employed to neutralize the normative constraint based on the reasoning that the deviant actor is entitled to do so (Collins 1994:22). Essentially, the actor believes he or she has earned the right to disregard conventional norms in the quest of goal attainment. For example, popular football players will bully other students, or cheat on exams, because of their

achieved statuses on the team. A phrase connoting a claim of entitlement is "I can do this no matter what anyone says because I am special."

Review of Research

Research in the past, say 20 years ago, tended to include samples of college students and focused on deviant situations commonly committed on college campuses (e.g., cheating, skipping class, drinking, and premarital sex). These research studies were designed primarily with large samples in mind; with the use of surveying instruments, and with the means of statistical analyses (e.g., Mannle and Lewis 1979; Wooten et al. 1979; Minor 1980, 1983; Mitchell and Dodder 1983; Thurman 1984).

Neutralization theory, however, has become popular in qualitative research, particularly for smaller sample sizes. There are numerous studies within criminology and sociology that rely on sample sizes ranging from 25 to 30 subjects, and many of these studies directly address neutralization techniques (e.g., Copes 2003; Forsyth and Evans 1998; Thompson and Harred 1992; Hazani 1991a; Benson 1985). Many of the more recent studies also test neutralization theory for specific deviant behaviors and ethnic groups. For example, recent studies include Medicaid fraud (Evans and Porche 2005), neutralizing corporate crime (Piquero et al. 2005), snitching at the workplace (Pershing 2003), rationalizing shoplifting (Cromwell and Thurman 2003), managing stigma for cannabis use (Hathaway 2004; Peretti-Watel 2003), topless dancing (Thompson et al. 2003), occupational deviancy and veterinary medicine (Gauthier 2001), normalizing behavior at bachelorette parties (Montemurro 2001), and exploring road rage (Herman et al. 1999). Recent, international research with neutralization theory has focused on

deviancy in France (Peretti-Watel 2003), Singapore (Khoo and Oakes 2000), Netherlands (Landsheer 2000; Van San 1996), and Australia (Erez and Laster 1999).

Criticisms

The theory of neutralization was not developed without criticism. In general, a criticism associated with most theories of social control, including the neutralization theory, is the inability to explain how, or why, deviant behaviors are learned in the first place. Also, the theory cannot explain deviant behavior if individuals do not agree with, or maintain, any moral standards; it fails to clarify if/why individuals are committed to deviancy. But most importantly, the neutralization research is incapable of determining whether the verbalized neutralization is a before-the-fact justification or an after-the-fact rationalization (Hirschi 1969:208). Critics also contend that an after-the-fact rationalization in one instance may be a causal neutralization in another instance (Cromwell and Thurman 2003). The rationalizing of guilt, or shame, in the aftermath of deviant acts cannot be explained by neutralization theory. And, a more complicated argument is that even though individuals employ certain neutralization techniques, this employment could not possibly dissolve or eradicate feelings of guilt; what happens is that people learn self-deception (Pfohl 1994). Even so, the theory remains comprehensible and logical; it is a causative approach in examining the occasional drift in-and-out of deviancy. In addition, it continues to be included in contemporary textbooks on deviancy and popularly used in contemporary research.

Section Summary

This investigator is interested in the meanings that the Bahraini youth associate with the notion of deviancy and how these ideas are shaped by the normative standards. If

the youth intellectually understand deviancy, then the researcher is interested in whether they engage in deviant behavior. The neutralization theory argues that the youth believe in the Islamic social norms yet will deviate from time to time because they employ neutralization techniques. To determine whether this takes place among Bahraini youth, the theory of neutralization and its relevant techniques (Sykes and Matza 1957; Klockars 1974; Minor 1981; Coleman 1985) were tested. The following chapter highlights numerous social and cultural aspects of Islamic communities and includes an in-depth discussion regarding the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people.

Chapter Three

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IN BAHRAIN

(Muslims!) The truth is that you are (held) in a greater fear than (these hypocrites hold) of Allah. That is because they are a people who are devoid of (all) reason --Al-Hashr:13 (The Holy Qur'an 2002:631-632).

The Middle East is a region in the world dominated by Islam and inhabited by individuals referred to as Muslims whose mother tongue is primarily Arabic. The principles of Islam are thoroughly enmeshed in the region's laws, political and economic structures, international business relations, and social customs; thus Islamic philosophy is deeply rooted in the minds, attitudes, and behaviors of the indigenous people (Marquadt and Engel 1993; Schneider and Silverman 2003; Weatherby 2003). With that said, it is imperative to *frame* the inquiry, assumptions, theoretical approaches, and discussion and conclusion in accordance with this religious environment.⁶

Five Pillars of Islam

Islam is more than a religion; it is a way of life. Islam demands a belief in only one God called *Allah*. The belief argues that Mohammed is the prophet of God. The word Islam means "submission"; that is, a Muslim is a believer who has submitted to the will of Allah. In so much, Islam does not concern itself with what is the truth (of human

⁶ The notion behind this statement is borrowed from a concept presented in the work of Erving Goffman (1974:21). The term "frame" [alignment] denotes "schemata of interpretations that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large."

nature) because truth is contained in the profession of the faith and in the words of Allah, as revealed through Mohammed in the Qur'an (Weatherby 2003:294). The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam and is translated as "he conveyed or delivered a message of all the truths gathered together from the Divine Messages of all other books and which is meant to be read" (Omar and Mannan 2002:4-A). The pressing questions of Islam are centered on how a good Muslim should live and interact with other members of society. Some pseudo-followers find it easy to make a profession of faith in Islam yet find it difficult to live the life of a devout Muslim. Following is a passage from the Qur'an concerning hypocrisy (Omar and Mannan 2002):

1. When the hypocrites come to you, they say, 'We bear witness that you are in fact the Messenger of Allah.' And Allah knows that you are indeed His Messenger. Yet Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are truly liars. 2. They take shelter behind their oaths (to hide their evil designs). Thus they keep people back from the way of Allah. Surely, evil is the practice they follow. 3. That is because (outwardly) they believed but (inwardly) they disbelieved, so that their hearts are sealed and (now) they do not even understand. 4. When you see them, their (handsome) figures please you, and if they speak (a masked and polished speech), you listen to their speech. (They look) as though they were wooden statues clad in garments. They think every loud cry is one (raised) against them. They themselves are (your) enemies (in reality), so beware of them. May Allah ruin them! To what (perversities) are they being turned away (from the Truth)? (P. 640-41).

As a guide for living, Muslims observe five religious obligations called the Five Pillars of Islam: *professing faith, observing ritual prayer, giving alms, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and making pilgrimage to Mecca* (Lewis 1995:133-244).

Profession of Faith (Shahadah). The implications of the profession of faith are threefold. First, Muslims hold to an uncompromising monotheism, such that there is no other god but Allah. Second, Muslims believe that although other prophets, including Jesus, have received revelations, Allah's words as revealed through the messages of

Mohammed are the final, complete message from the holy to mankind. Third, Muslims believe that this message is contained in the Qur'an.

Prayer (Salat). Muslims pray at five prescribed periods of the day: in the morning prior to sunrise, noontime, afternoon, sunset, and late evening. The prayer is ritualistic--kneeling to the west (in the direction of Mecca) while touching the forehead to the ground. This activity keeps the believers in close spiritual contact with Allah. Muslims believe in maintaining a direct relationship with Allah; they do not utilize mediators (e.g., priests and ministers) as the Christians do in the West.

Alms Giving (Zakat). Muslims believe that they are obliged to pay a percentage of their income to the poor and needy. For this reason, there are few taxes paid in the Middle East. In addition, poverty does not negatively reflect upon an individual's character or that of the family; it is not associated with laziness or worthlessness; and people are not stigmatized for this system of voluntary religious sacrifice.

Fasting (Sawm). During Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, all Muslims are required to observe the fast. This month is reserved for sacrificial activities, which are highly revered in Islam. While fasting individuals are to abstain from food, drink, sex, and other earthly pleasures from dawn until dusk. This month-long fast (longer than anything practiced in Christianity and Judaism) is to teach the Muslims self-denial and moderation.

Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). If the family can afford the travels, Muslims are required to visit the Great Mosque in Mecca at least once. Here, facing the Ka'bah and wearing the ritual white dress, Muslims from every walk of life, from every country in

the world, both male and female, pray as equals before Allah.⁷ Many years of meager savings are poured into the organization of this spiritual obligation.

Holy Struggle (Jihad). Many consider the holy struggle, or jihad, to be a sixth pillar of Islam. Often misunderstood and misused in the West, the duty of jihad has two basic meanings: one internal and one external. The inner meaning calls on Muslims to fight against their own evil inclinations. The external command offers salvation to those Muslims who fight to protect the Islamic doctrine. Stated in the Qur'an (Omar and Mannan 2002:637), "Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in compact ranks (so arrayed) as if they were a solid structure cemented with (molten lead)." The confusion concerning jihad arises because some Islamic leaders, to serve their own purposes, have used the term in a political manner (Khattab 1983). The talk of jihad can be interpreted as a threat to the external world not to interfere with the Islamic lifestyle and as a threat to the Islamic community to resist the temptations of the West.

The Divide: Shi'a and Sunni Muslims

The Muslim community is governed by a hierarchy of principles that serve as prescriptions for all matters of life. These principles are collectively called the Sha'ria or "the path to be followed" (Weatherby 2003:296). However, there are differences in the Muslim community. The great split in Islam began because of a dispute over how the successor (caliph) to Mohammed should be selected. The Shi'a branch of Islam is centered in Iran, and the Shiite belief is that the first caliph was to be Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed and all successors thereafter to be descendents of Ali. On the other hand, the Sunnis, who comprise 80% of the world's population of Muslims, maintain the belief

⁷ The Ka'bah is a cubelike building located in the courtyard of the Great Mosque in Mecca. According to Muslim tradition, it was the first house of worship built by the prophet Abraham (Khattab 1983).

that a council of members of Mohammed's tribe should have been entitled to elect the caliph and succeeding caliphs. Over the centuries, numerous other differences have developed between these two branches, and their disputes even today taint Middle Eastern relations.

Many Middle Eastern societies seem to interpret their communities as collections of families and villages. Collectivism, over individualism, is fostered in the Islamic family, at school, and throughout business relations.⁸ Companionships among the Middle Easterners are active, deep-seated relationships that demand much time and energy. Friendships imply a lifelong commitment. Linked to the Muslim's broad sense of community, family and friendship, and religious obligation are the values placed on patience and sincerity.

The family is the basic unit of society and the center of an individual's daily events. Children are admired and indulged by the entire family and the community; their youthful innocence is a given and supersedes any presumption of malice. What is more, a person's family is the source of reputation and honor, and any personal achievement (or failure) reflects on the entire family. In other words, Bahrainis generally are judged by the reputations of their families and when individuals think about their own personal honor, they are thinking about how their actions will reflect upon their families.⁹ For example, I think "...deviancy is being cruel, bad, or rude by your behaviors and habits

⁸ Collectivism and individualism are dichotomous concepts discussed in the research conducted by Geertz Hofstede. As a psychologist working for IBM, Hofstede collected data on employee attitudes for more than 100,000 individuals from 1967-1973.

⁹ Carol Fluehr-Lobban (1994:52) defines honor as "the pride and dignity that a family possesses due to its longstanding good reputation in the community for producing upright men and women who behave themselves well, marry well, raise proper children, and above all adhere to the principles and practices of the religion of Islam."

around you. You won't go to jail for it, but society won't be happy about it, and [it] will affect your reputation" (Grade 8 male student 2005).

Societies nonetheless are changing around the world. Many Bahrainis today seem to believe that their society must choose between a culture based on Islam and a secular culture imported from the modern West (Schneider and Silverman 2003:195). With the rise of globalization and the dissolution of national boundaries, western popular culture has penetrated the Middle East and has challenged the traditional Islamic standards. Even so in most Middle Eastern nations, a body of religious law--Sha'ria law--continues to stand alongside civil codes and is often the source of resolution of disputes and punishment for crimes. For example, the clergy with the help of the local officials strictly enforce religious beliefs about issues concerning the consumption of alcohol and the possession of sexually explicit material with little consideration given to either cultural differences or ignorance of local standards. I think "deviancy means sexual behavior [and an example of deviancy is] showing your dick to girls or other people you don't know" (Grade 8 male student 2005). UNICEF (2004) summarizes the current Middle East region as follows:

External political interventions and the rise of the oil industry have permanently changed the traditional way of life in the Arab Gulf States in recent decades. The modernization process, which lasted for centuries in the West, has been compressed into decades, putting great stress on the traditional societies. It has also influenced identities like tribal, family and religious loyalties, linguistic and ethnic to be more important than state citizenship. The common bonds of the Gulf peoples are now overshadowed by political differences between the new states. These factors, along with economic disparities, unstable oil prices and politicized religion have all contributed to existing tensions, which have exerted a direct toll on the situation of women and children in the area. (P. 3).

The Kingdom of Bahrain

*"I like to describe Bahrain as the "L.A. of the Middle East"
--the Author (8 April 2005).*

Bahrain is an Islamic country nestled in the Persian Gulf and connected to the east coast of Saudi Arabia by a 26-mile causeway. Bahrain is a small island with a total landmass of approximately 1,070 square miles.¹⁰ Approximately 700,000 people inhabit the island.¹¹ Ethnic groups range from native Bahrainis (63%), Asian (19%), Arabs from neighboring states (10%), and other nationalities identified as expatriates (8%). Of the Islamic population, roughly 70% are Shi'a Muslims and 30% are Sunni Muslims. The dominant languages on the island are Arabic, English, Farsi, and Urdu. Eighty-nine percent of the population is literate. The following figures describe the local age range: 0-14 years (28.8%), 15-64 years (68%), and 65 years and over (3.2%). The population growth rate is estimated at 1.61% with a life expectancy rate at birth of 73.72 years of age. And, only 0.3% of the local population is reported to have HIV/AIDS.

The author collected articles from the primary news source on the island, the *Gulf Daily News* (hereafter referred to as *GDN*), from September 2004 to June 2005. Any articles pertaining to social vices (e.g., drugs, alcohol, prostitution and pimping), crime, lifestyle and leisure, major investments, education, and human rights and welfare were saved, categorized, analyzed, and utilized to recreate the social climate in Bahrain. These recreations are found in the following subsections.

¹⁰ The demographics provided in this section were retrieved from *The World Factbook*, which is updated and maintained by the Central Intelligence Agency, Washington D.C., United States of America.

¹¹ This estimation includes 246,975 non-nationals presently in Bahrain (updated July 2003).

Society and Culture. Many people in the states, when conjuring up thoughts about the Middle East, envision women dressed in black, sand, desert, dull landscape, and violence. Some of this thinking may be accurate for particular regions in the Middle East but not for Bahrain. Bahrain is a hip-hop, gritty, raw society that encourages new adventures and advance thinking, permits the consumption of alcohol, accommodates prostitution-like activities, and ignores the sleaziness of the nightlife.¹²

Drugs and alcohol are popular vices in Bahrain. One newspaper article read as if it was written for the Los Angeles Times.

A moving appeal to young people to steer clear of drugs went out yesterday from a reformed addict. Young people, particularly adolescents, are vulnerable to peer pressure or to professional pushers, he warned. The former addict [from Saudi] is visiting Bahrain to take part in the national anti-drugs campaign. [Mr. Al Saleh stated], "It all started when I was 17 years old and I was feeling that I was neglected by my family as well as under pressure to do well in school. Instead of resolving my problems, I allowed myself to drift with a group of friends at my school who were using mind-altering pills. After the pills, I started smoking hashish and then became addicted to heroin." Mr. Al Saleh was jailed eight times, admitted to hospitals and clinics 18 times and overdosed at least once. (*GDN* Thursday, 28th April 2005).

A series of news articles addressed concerns regarding drug abuse and included:

"Authorities seized 167 kg of hashish and 184 pills that were found tied to a buoy in waters northeast of Bahrain," "[Manama] A Bahraini father, 61, was found dead yesterday of a drug overdose in his bedroom," "More than 26 [percent] of Bahraini youngsters are taking illegal drugs, out of which 27 [percent] are aged 15 to 18, a survey has revealed... a majority of the youngsters take hashish," and "Bahrain police are waging

¹² The researcher is aware of these types of activities particularly of the prostitution for two reasons. First, she lived in an area of the city that was infested with 3-and 4-star hotels that promoted drugs and prostitution. She was walking distance from most any vice one might desire. Second, she befriended a Lebanese man who lived in her apartment/flat building and who frequented such establishments regularly. He quickly became one of her informants of the "under world."

a relentless campaign against drug dealers and users...they arrested 349 people in drug-related cases in the first four months of this year" (*GDN* 2005).

The various ministries responsible for keeping Bahrain safe and healthy are hedging war against drug abuse. For example, "The BD 40,000, 10-day campaign, launched by the General Organization for Youth and Sports (GOYS), features seminars, surveys, sport tournaments and other activities [because] more than 185 million people use illegal drugs in the Arab world [and] they include 400,000 who inject themselves with drugs, said United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime" (*GDN* Monday, 25th April 2005). And finally, "A campaign will be launched...to spread the word against drugs among Bahrain's young people. The long-term aim is to train one group of young people to educate others about the dangers of drug abuse. The national drug campaign [is] under the theme 'It's Your Decision'" (*GDN* Thursday, 21st April 2005).

Sexual promiscuity seemed to be a growing concern for the city-dwellers. One article reads, "Sanabis residents are demanding the demolition of a derelict building which they say has been turned into a sex and drugs den" (*GDN* Saturday, 9th October 2004), while a similar case is brought to the public's attention "Police and residents are joining forces to combat prostitution in Gudaibiya [because] these prostitutes are angering everyone in the area--not just because of what they wear or how they talk, but because they are trying to seduce locals" (*GDN* Saturday, 6th November 2004). Bahrain is the unwitting host to porn film shops, sex racketeering, temporary arrangement of marriages, pimping, and girl trafficking. Some of the more alarming headlines are:

"Woman 'sold to pimp for BD 400'," "Sex racket trio get six months in jail," "Vice women are jailed for a year," and "Bahrain on alert for girl-trafficking rise."¹³

Legal System and Crime. Judicial powers are discussed in Chapter IV of the Bahraini Constitution of 1973, which declares that Sha'ria traditions are to be the principle source of law. Basically, the legal system is based on Islamic law and English common law. The Bahraini judiciary system is organized into two branches: the Civil Law Courts and the Sha'ria Law Courts. The Civil Law Courts are authorized to settle commercial, civil, and criminal cases, and all cases involving disputes related to the non-Muslim population. These courts are structured in a three-tier system, starting with the Courts of Minor Causes, which maintain jurisdiction over civil and commercial matters. The Middle Courts maintain jurisdiction over criminal affairs. At the third level is the High Court of Appeals.

A combination of previous research indicated that many youths (between the ages of 15 and 17) particularly those of the Shi'a villages suspected of deviant activity were dealt with as adults in the Middle Courts for criminal affairs. The age range for youths to be prosecuted as juvenile delinquents appears to be 15 to 17 years; at 18 years of age individuals are recognized as adults.¹⁴ The assumption that youths are considered children up to and including the age of 14 is based on the following statement regarding youths who cannot be held legally responsible for acts of deviancy:

With regard to impediments to criminal responsibility, Article 32 of the Bahraini Penal Code of 1976 stipulates that a person under 15 years of age cannot be held responsible for the commission of an act constituting an offense, being liable solely to the measures provided for in the Juveniles Act. (*Interpol* 2004).

¹³ A total of 38 articles were collected over a ten month timeframe that either had the words sex, prostitution, or pimping in the title. That is approximately one article per week in an Islamic nation.

¹⁴ These legal ages of childhood, juvenile/adolescence, and adulthood are provided in *The World Factbook* (CIA 2004).

The Bahraini people seem to be growing weary of the increased rates of crime. A news article is prefaced with "Scratch beneath the surface of any society and crime will inevitably raise its ugly head" then goes on to say, "The number of crimes is rising rapidly [and] although it is currently under control...urgent preventative action is needed to stop it spiraling further, [yet] it is different to countries like the US, where people are regularly killed and you don't feel safe when you go outside your home" (*GDN* Saturday, 2nd April 2005). A plethora of articles addressed issues about crime and criminal behaviors--behaviors that mimic any modernized society. Some of the headlines read, "*Man charged with raping boy, 14,*" "*Trader cheated of BD 660,000,*" "*Knife gang rob shop in Salmaniya,*" "*Stabbed, beaten and tortured,*" "*Policeman guilty of sex with minor,*" "*'Flasher' is held in knife drama,*" and "*Professor conned out of BD 10,000*" (*GDN* 2005).¹⁵

Rising crime 'is hurting stability': "What Bahrain is witnessing today is saddening, especially with the huge increase in thefts, fraud, gunmen attacking banks and physical assault, [and] most notably rape," said parliament committee chairman Ahmed Bahzad. (*GDN* Sunday, 27th February 2005).

Economic System. The currency in Bahrain is the Bahraini dinar (e.g., BD). The exchange rate for dollars to dinars is approximately \$2.66: BD 1. This exchange rate has remained stable for the past several decades, which illustrates that the Bahraini economy is stable.

Bahrain has become the investment capital of the Middle East because it promotes tourism and investment more so than any of the other Gulf States. In the news it was declared, "Bahrain must gear itself to become a major holiday destination" (*GDN*

¹⁵ Of the total number of articles collected by the researcher, news clips concerning crime and criminal activity outnumbered the other (categories of) articles 3:1.

Wednesday, 26th January 2005). The island is laminated with 5-star hotels, posh resorts and marinas, exquisite compounds with lavish gardens, mega-malls and fine dining. For example, "Meena 7 Towers [are] located towards the south of the breathtakingly beautiful Al Marsa Floating City, on the exotic Amwaj Islands [and] overlooks pristine waters, golden beaches and verdant greenery" (GDN Sunday, 30th January 2005). Much of the shoreline is currently being 'reclaimed' to develop resorts and compounds, which will be shielded from the common community.¹⁶ A tremendous amount of outside money is pouring into Bahrain to assist in the erection of these mini-cities because the forecast is that Bahrain, in the near future, will be a vacationer's dream come true.

The Two Seas project [a \$3 billion waterfront community] will be built in the shape of a sea horse and will include luxury homes, hotels, schools, hospitals, shops, marinas and other facilities. Two Seas is Gulf Finance House's third landmark infrastructure development project in Bahrain. It follows the \$1.3bn Bahrain Financial Harbour House and the \$750 Al Areen Development. (GDN Wednesday, 11th May 2005). And, the Harbour House, which is part of the \$270m Financial Centre, was sold to Saudi company Abdulrahman Saleh Al Rajhi & Partners [and] the deal underscores the strong investor confidence in the project and Bahrain's economy. The Harbour House, connected to the Financial Mall through a suspended bridge, will be located in the centre of the Harbour Row amidst seafront walkways, shopping boulevards, promenades, marina, and water pathways with water taxis. (GDN Monday, 9th May 2005).

With the increased investment, Bahrain is witnessing an increase in spending. Banks in Bahrain are cashing in as personal debts sour; loans have become an important aspect in the lives of the Bahraini consumers. Concern regarding excess spending was expressed in this article, "Bahrain's population stood at 707,160 at the end of last year, according to officials. So, BD 1 billion outstanding in personal loans from the country's

¹⁶ Reclaiming of the shoreline involves buying and transporting sand from Saudi Arabia into Bahrain and depositing it along the water's edge. What is more, the value of sand has risen and one can be fined for stealing it! An article in the *GDN* (Friday, 4th March 2005) disclosed, "Three Bahraini youths were jailed for a week after they were caught stealing sand from a farm in Dimistan... they were caught red-handed by police as they were loading the sand on to a six-wheel truck at around 3:30 pm."

banks works out at BD 1,414 for every man, woman, and child" (*GDN* Wednesday, 8th June 2005). In the same article, the Bahrain University Economic Research Department stated, "Bahrain lacked the necessary studies to explain why people were borrowing so much [and] there is a great need for studies to be conducted to learn about the behavior and trends that cause this social phenomenon."

Education, Rights of Women, and Social Welfare. Bahrain has a reputation as the most liberal and pluralistic state in the region and this is reflected in the education system and its progressive development (*Bahrain Brief* 2001). To date, the Ministry of Education provides free education to Bahraini youths between the ages of six and 16 in public schools or government schools. There are also numerous private and ethnic-specific schools throughout the island.¹⁷ A majority of the public and private schools continue to practice gender segregation. The traditional way of life according to Islam is a primary determinant for the segregation and the structure of the curriculum.¹⁸ Also, private schools are highly regulated by the ministry. For example, a recent news article sent a warning to the many private schools on the island:

Bahrain's private schools were yesterday warned against flouting Islamic and traditional Arab values. It follows complaints from parents who claimed some schools were allowing activities that conflict with Bahraini traditions. Education Minister Dr. Majid Al Nuaimi said schools should consult relevant officials at the ministry before staging activities that may go against its rules. He warned in a statement that action would be taken against schools that do not respect traditional Arab and Islamic values. (*GDN* Thursday, 13th October 2005).

The owners of the school practice gender segregation for two reasons. One, in general boys are granted more social liberties than girls; and as a result young boys tend

¹⁷ This author-middle school principal was informed during successive administrative meetings that Bahrain hosts 132 private schools ranging in yearly tuition fees of roughly \$3,500 to \$13,500.

¹⁸ Many of the local establishments including café's, beauty salons, spas, bank departments, police stations, and vehicle registration maintain separate offices or facilities for the opposite sex.

to be outgoing and gregarious while young girls tend to be shy and inhibited. If put into classrooms with males, the expectations are that females' academic performance will decline because of reduced participation and/or motivation. Second, the parents (particularly those of female students) do not want boys and girls schooled together; it is too complicated and distressful are the terms parents and school officials use often. Gender segregation in the school system is the norm and when children are integrated they seem to behave defensively almost as a result of fear of the opposite sex.¹⁹

It was mentioned earlier that a distinct adolescent subculture is not apparent among the youth on the island. Instead, youth seemingly begin to recognize and conform to the adult value system relatively early in adolescence bypassing the idle stages where youth have the opportunity to develop a subculture value system. This process of socializing to the adult normative standards early in life is fostered by the involvement of the family. The youth are socialized on a track to complete high school, attend college or gain employment, get married, raise a family, and remain in Bahrain.

The international discourse regarding women's rights, child welfare, and immigrant labor is affecting the mindset in Bahrain. Law-makers, human rights activists, and educators of all disciplines are sweeping the nation looking for cases of domestic violence, spousal abuse, child neglect, inequality, and discrimination. One article began with the following insight, "Domestic violence has long been a taboo subject in Bahrain. The privacy of the family has historically been guarded, no matter what horrors may take place behind closed doors" (*GDN* Saturday, 28th August 2004). The present estimation

¹⁹ The researcher makes this statement based on her experiences as the middle school principal. Supervision during episodes when all students were assembled together was problematic; students ignored the requests of the teaching staff and focused only on the opposite sex.

is that 30% of Bahraini women suffer abuse at the hands of their husbands, and this rate is affected by levels of unemployment, education, and alcohol and drug use.

Her Highness Shaikha Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of the King and chairwoman of the Supreme Council for Women, plays a lead role in advancing the status of women in Bahrain. However, it will be a long, unglamorous struggle if she cannot gain support from the kingdom's official bodies (e.g., various ministries, Shura Council, courts, and defense force [police]), the private sector, and the civil society.

Criminal justice systems in the GCC countries must be reformed to ensure that police take complaints seriously, that women who have been subjected to violence are treated with understanding and respect and that perpetrators are effectively prosecuted. [The legal systems] do not contain specific provisions on assault or violence against women, but treat such cases as general assault. The prevailing perception of violence against women in the family is that it is a "family issue" or "normal." (*GDN* Monday, 30th May 2005).

The Bahrain Human Rights Society challenges the local protocol regarding the welfare of migrant workers and labor laws, laws on freedom of speech (or lack of), conditions in local jails, and child welfare. However, too often these activists find themselves incarcerated as a result of their efforts. It was not uncommon to read about organized marches, rallies, protests, hunger strikes, and road blocks.

Section Summary

In this section the social climate in Bahrain was described in detail. As one can conclude, Bahrain is the home to roughly 700,000 people with diverse needs, expectations, and ideals who continue to struggle to work together for the better good of the nation. As with most modern societies, the desire to obtain power, prestige, and wealth at the expense of others is a growing burden in Bahrain. The researcher utilized newspaper articles from one reliable source to recreate the intensity and fervor of the

social environment. In the next section, the methodological approaches are discussed. In particular, the private school at which the research was conducted including the student sample is elucidated. Moreover, this school and student sample may not be representative of other private schools or the general social environment in Bahrain.

Chapter Four

METHODOLOGY

"The idea that dissertations are not expected to be special is peculiarly modern--and was a persistent source of discomfort during my teaching career. Too many of my students got jobs before they had made headway on their dissertations, and used the job as an excuse for decidedly unspecial dissertations. Once upon a time, the dissertation was the major obstacle to achievement of a Ph.D. and was seen as the only chance one had to do something worthwhile before being overwhelmed by the demands of teaching and administration"

--Travis Hirschi (interviewed by John Laub 2002).

This empirical study is concerned with the social construction of deviancy and the affirmation of the normative standards in relation to expressing support for neutralization techniques while committing deviant acts. The study takes place in the Middle East with a sample (N=227) of Bahraini middle school students; the primary investigator was their principal. Based on the research questions, the study was designed to employ both qualitative and quantitative methods.

To discover how the students understand and attach meaning to the notion of deviancy, the researcher involved the sample in focus groups. In addition, the investigator maintained a daily log of events and monitored newspaper articles. To test the theory of neutralization, a survey was administered to the students, which included questions about demographics and previous acts of deviancy. In this section the research questions and design, the school setting, the characteristics of the sample, the survey instrument including reliability, validity, and generalizability, the procedures, and the

limitations of the design are described. The characteristics of the sample (including frequencies and means) are found in Table 1. The retest reliability data are found in Table 4.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address three key research questions. One question involved the social construction of deviancy and the remaining two questions tested the theory of neutralization. The following are the three research questions guiding this investigation of deviancy among adolescents in Bahrain.

Research Question #1: How do the Bahraini students identify and interpret deviancy?

Research Question #2: To what extent do the students endorse the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five more recent neutralization techniques?

Research Question #3: To what extent do the students endorse the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five more recent neutralization techniques in relation to the students committing the seven acts of deviancy?

Moreover, the investigator unearthed a plethora of information regarding the local culture and lifestyles merely by living and working on the island but particularly by interacting on a daily basis as the head of the middle school; this information is used throughout the report when relevant to the question.

Research Design

The research design was based on the integration of qualitative methods and quantitative methods. The qualitative component merged social constructivism with naturalistic inquiry. The quantitative component of the study consisted of conducting descriptive and correlational research. The qualitative aspect of the research design was

an ongoing process; focus groups were held throughout the school year. The surveys were administered when it was convenient for the staff.

The qualitative component was based on the social constructivism paradigm (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Denzin and Lincoln 1998) and naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Unlike the directiveness of quantitative questioning, the constructivist's fundamental outlook on interpreting and on understanding the social world includes relativism, transactional and subjectivism, and hermeneutics and dialecticalism.²⁰ The social world exists in the meanings constructed by actors amidst interaction--"the final aim is to distill a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the predecessor constructions...including the etic construction of the investigator" (Denzin and Lincoln 1998:207). The researcher focused on her relationship with the students (i.e., the sample), the meanings they associated with deviant acts, and the effects that their interpretations had on her interpretations of wrongdoing; daily observations and time aided in this definition building.

Quantitative studies are carried out to obtain information about the "preferences, attitudes, practices, concerns, or interests" of a group of individuals (Gay and Airasian 2000:11). Correlational studies seek to identify a correspondence or relationship between two or more variables. The quantitative component of this research was characterized by descriptive and correlational strategies.

²⁰ The form and nature of reality (ontological question) is rooted in intangible mental constructions that are socially and experientially based. When discussing the relationship between the knower or would-be knower [researcher] and that to be known [social world] (also referred to as the epistemological question), the process is interactive, ongoing, and continuously recreated. Finally, the tactics by which this interaction is investigated or temporarily understood (methodological question) rests upon the construction of meaning (via dialect, discourse, symbolism, emotion, affect, etc.) and consensus between the investigator and the respondents (see Chapters 6 and 7 in Denzin and Lincoln 1998).

School Setting

It is necessary to discuss the school setting, because it was on the school grounds, in the classrooms, during breaks and passing periods, and in the principal's office where much of the data for this study were collected.²¹ The youth who apply (for admission) to the school are from families with moderate financial means. The demographic information revealed that almost half (47%) of the mothers do not work, but 24% are either business owners or managers. Almost 65% of the fathers are either business owners or managers with about 20% being professionals (e.g., doctor, lawyer, engineer, and professor) and 20% being either in a ministry position (e.g., King's Court) or the military. From a previous survey conducted at the school by this principal, results revealed that approximately 72% of the parent community had obtained at least a four-year college degree.

The yearly tuition upon placement in the middle school is BD 1400 (\$3,725); this is an average cost for private education in Bahrain. All students (KG-12) are required to wear the school uniform and purchase the textbooks (roughly an additional BD 100). The school is owned and operated by a Bahraini couple who have strong roots in the government education system. It is a closed campus; once the students arrive the gates are closed and guarded. Extending beyond the eight-foot concrete walls surrounding the campus is an additional eight-foot of chain linked fence with barbed wire. The classroom windows are protected by bars, which gives one the feeling of being in a prison, and this likely affects the morale of the student body and staff. Moreover, the school is poorly

²¹ The data that the researcher is referring to is the information that is necessary to answer the primary research questions. Yet, one should not underestimate the value of the information collected outside of the school setting.

managed, and as a result discipline is problematic from year to year.²² Many of the students and parents describe the school as being disorganized and chaotic. Staff turnover has been as high as 65%, yet the school continues to expand (e.g., student enrollment and facilities) each year.

Two students got into a fight yesterday after school (Grade 6). The tension and aggression runs rapid during Ramadan because--I think--they are fasting, tired, and trying to be "good Muslims." What happened? A paper fight erupted during Arabic class and one boy told another boy to "put this [pencil] up your mother's ass!" The bottom line is that when the student became angry he attacked the reputation of the attacker's mother. This is common. The mother is the family member typically disgraced during heated arguments. And, the kids are extremely offended by this form of verbal discrimination...they become belligerent and crazed...like wild animals fighting in a pack. (*Journal* Tuesday, 26 October 2004:8).

The behaviors of the students made it a challenging, difficult place to work. In particular, the surly attitudes of the high school students at times transcended the middle school. Many of the high school students were brash, disorderly, and belligerent; they frequently challenged the authority of the faculty and staff. The non-Bahraini staff had to learn to deal with and, for the most part, tolerate sexual harassment, fighting, skipping class, loitering and littering, cheating, argumentativeness, and physical threats.²³ It was a stressful place to work no matter what one's role or ethnicity was at the school.

The teaching staff also had to learn to deal with the dilemma of passing students who *should* not be passed for various reasons.²⁴ Too many of the students were not performing at grade level, but possibly because the tuition was high, or the parents were

²² Again, this is the perception of the investigator-principal. Frequently, parents visited her office to discuss the mismanagement of school. It was a daunting task maintaining organization and structure in the middle school.

²³ These behaviors were typical of approximately two-thirds of the high school student body. The school had a reputation on the island for taking in "rough" kids that were not wanted at other private schools.

²⁴ The author can make such statements because she was advised by higher administration to "help teachers be creative in their classrooms and with distribution of grades."

influential, the teachers were pressured to manipulate scores so that students did not fail. Also, it appears that this idea of passing students along is a cultural pressure and/or expectation throughout the island. Nevertheless, it was an ethical dilemma for most of the American and Canadian teaching staff, including this administrator. The students knew this took place at the school; and this affected student motivation, morale, and discipline. Basically, the teachers were powerless--they had no leverage over the students--and the discipline in the classrooms was horrendous for the most part.

Participants

The study was based on a nonprobability sample design; the participants were not randomly selected.²⁵ Each student in the middle school was granted the opportunity to be included in the sample frame. A script was prepared, which outlined the purpose of the study and expectations of the volunteering participants; this script was presented to the students by the primary investigator along with the two consent forms. Of the 238 students enrolled in the middle school, a total of N=227 returned the parental and participant letter of consent forms with the appropriate signatures. Copies of these forms are found in Appendix A, B, and C.

General Characteristics. To describe the sample a combination of frequency distributions and mean scores was computed and can be found in Table 1a and 1b, respectively. Of the N=227, 56% were males and 44% females. The

²⁵ A nonprobability sample design based on convenience hinders the ability to make inferences about the larger population "because researchers have no way of estimating how representative of the population the convenience sample is, they cannot estimate the population's parameters from the values of the characteristics obtained from the sample" (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2000:168). Not every youth on the island had an equal chance of participating in this study.

Table 1a. Characteristics of the Sample by Percentages

Characteristics		Percentages
Sex	Male	55.5% (126)
	Female	44.5% (101)
Grade	6th	35.7% (81)
	7th	28.2% (64)
	8th	36.1% (82)
Nationality	Bahraini	86.8% (197)
	Non-Bahraini	13.2% (30)
Religion	Muslim	98.2% (223)
	Non-Muslim	1.8% (4)
Mother's Occupation	Professional	9.3% (21)
	Business owner/manager	23.5% (53)
	Education	17.3% (39)
	Ministry/military	2.7% (6)
	Not employed	47.4% (107)
Father's Occupation	Professional	14.6% (33)
	Business owner/manager	64.6% (146)
	Education	2.7% (6)
	Ministry/military	16.4% (37)
	Not employed	0.9% (2)
	Deceased	0.9% (2)
Been to the USA	Yes	26.1% (59)
	No	74.9% (167)
Why in the USA	Vacation	62.7% (37)
	Parent's work	23.7% (14)
	Relatives	13.6% (8)

Table 1b. Characteristics of the Sample by Mean Frequencies

Characteristics [N=227]	Mean	Standard Deviation	Range
Academic Performance	2.20	1.00	1-5
Number of Kids in the Family	3.32	1.09	1-5
Average Age	12.28	1.08	10-15
Moral Absolutes			
General Agreement	4.05	1.27	1-5
Cheating	1.76	1.12	1-5
Dating	2.34	1.46	1-5
Fighting	2.28	1.44	1-5
Vandalizing	1.86	1.34	1-5
Stealing	1.65	1.24	1-5
Drinking	1.70	1.29	1-5
Bullying	1.58	1.12	1-5
Reported Deviancy			
Cheat	0.63	0.90	0-3
Date	0.50	0.97	0-3
Fight	1.15	1.22	0-3
Vandal	0.79	1.08	0-3
Steal	0.58	0.96	0-3
Drink	0.26	0.79	0-3
Bully	0.56	0.99	0-3
Average total deviancy	0.67	0.74	0-3
Social Bonds			
I want to go to college.	4.70	0.85	1-5
We break rules, but don't get caught.	2.24	1.38	1-5
I belong to a gang.	2.91	1.71	1-5
Don't trust people who aren't Muslims.	1.92	1.19	1-5
It's important to choose who you want to marry.	3.93	1.28	1-5
It's okay to get a divorce.	2.60	1.41	1-5
My faith is more important than a good job.	4.30	1.17	1-5
Family is most important.	4.74	0.71	1-5
Being successful depends on who you know.	2.86	1.37	1-5
I get into trouble a lot.	2.31	1.34	1-5

breakdown across grade levels was approximately equal but showed fewer in the 7th grade. An overwhelming number (N>90%) of the students were Bahraini and Muslim; and, only four students in the sample were non-Muslims. Twenty-six percent had visited the United States, and of this percentage 63% were there for vacation.²⁶ The average age of the sample was 12.3 years. The average number of children in the family (including the respondent) was 3.32, while the average level of academic performance was a "B."

Moral Absolutes. The beginning statements for the seven deviant situations including the agreement to general neutralizations involved the acceptance of *moral absolutes*. Moral absolutes refer to the belief that no matter what the circumstance, it is wrong to engage in deviant activity (Dodder and Hughes 1987). In this neutralization survey, the first statement addressed the agreement to general neutralization and was worded differently than the situational moral absolutes, for it read, "Generally it is wrong to violate / break a law or rule" (see Figure 3). The average response was 4.05 indicating strong agreement.²⁷

The first statement per each situation read, "It is okay to do this (deviant act), whatever the reason." Responses ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The researcher anticipated that the students would disagree with these seven statements. The breakdown of mean scores for each act was the following: cheating (1.76), dating (2.34), fighting (2.28), vandalizing (1.86), stealing (1.65), drinking (1.70), and bullying (1.58). The average mean response for the mean scores across the seven

²⁶ The researcher regrets not asking 'for how long' was the subject in the states. The length of time in the states might be related to their interpretation of deviancy.

²⁷ Responses of 4 and 5 were collapsed to represent agreement to the statement. Any response of 3 represented 'undecided or do not know.'

deviant acts was 1.89, which indicated disagreement. The students agreed that it is wrong to engage in deviancy in the general sense and also in terms of the seven deviant situations--no matter what the reason. The students supported the moral absolutes.

Reported Deviancy. The students surveyed were asked about their past involvement in deviant activity. After being presented with various deviant situations in the neutralization survey, the researcher questioned whether and how often the respondents had engaged in such acts in the past year. Responses could vary from 1 (Never) to 3 (five or more times). The results in Table 1b reveal that the mean responses ranged from 0.63 (cheating) to 1.15 (fighting); and, the average total deviancy was only 0.67 (i.e., less than twice in the last year). Basically, the respondents reported that they 'never committed that act' or 'once or twice' in the past year. In reference to the situations presented, the sample reported very low rates of deviant involvement.

Social Bonds. The student sample completed a questionnaire regarding social bonds, because the researcher initially set out to investigate and test the theory of social bonds in addition to the neutralization theory.²⁸ The primary researcher and advisor selected 11 statements from that survey to assist in describing the sample (see Table 1b: Mean Scores). Statements asked about a variety of attachments to family, to school, and to peers. Statement responses could vary from 5 (Completely Agree) to 1 (Completely Disagree). Most interestingly, an overwhelming number of respondents want to go to college (4.70), want to choose who they will marry (3.93), believe their faith in Islam is more important than getting a good job (4.30), and feel that family is most important to them (4.74). The respondents disagreed with the following statements, which supported

²⁸ The researcher down-sized her dissertation project from five research questions (three theoretical perspectives) to three research questions (two perspectives). As a result, testing the theory of social bonding was deleted from the project.

the low level of reported deviancy, "I get into trouble a lot" (2.31), "We break rules, but do not get caught" (2.24), and "I belong to a gang" (2.91).

Instruments

Orientation, Observation, and Exploration. The technique of naturalistic inquiry became a central aspect of this investigation because it was imperative to grasp a better understanding of their complex culture, volatile environment. To do this, the "instrument of choice in naturalistic inquiry is the human" (Lincoln and Guba 1985:236). And, the inquiry was divided into basic successive phases: 1) orientation and overview, 2) focused exploration, and 3) member check.²⁹ The investigator maintained a personal log that contained descriptions of her social exchanges and experiences with students, parents, subordinates, supervisors, and locals. However, in contrast to the constructivist perspective, she did not share these personal notes with the individuals whom she wrote about for fear that they would be overly sensitive to behaving naturally knowing that she was documenting their daily behaviors. Instead, she continually followed up on her developing meanings of the social climate occasionally asking non-intrusive questions to clarify her interpretations of their behaviors, particularly that of deviant activities. Any social exchanges--specifically complaints, questions, directions, conversations, and suggestions--were valuable tactics for acquiring and monitoring constructions.

Focus groups. Focus groups are techniques used by qualitative researchers in obtaining consensual interpretations or meanings for unclear constructs among small, informal group environments. And usually, the participants are united because they share

²⁹ Lincoln and Guba (1985:235) state that "in contrast to the conventional inquirer, who usually approaches a study "knowing what is not known," the naturalist adopts the posture of "not knowing what is not known." Hence the study goes through several phases in order, first, to get some handle on what is salient (e.g., what one needs to find out about); second, to find out about it; and third, to check the findings in accordance with trustworthiness procedures and gaining closure."

a common relationship to the issue. For the purpose of this project, a script or "worksheet" was developed by the primary investigator; it was the instrument used to guide or direct the group conversations involving the topic of deviancy (see Appendix F).

The research proposal initially involved audio-taping and video-taping interviews with the student participants; then, these interviews would have been transcribed and analyzed for repeating themes, etc. However, at the discretion of the school officials, the request to audiotape and videotape was denied. The request was denied based on the sensitive nature of photographing young, Islamic girls. Therefore, the investigator had to discern other more creative and less intrusive methods of obtaining the participants' constructed meanings of deviancy; thus, the informal discussion worksheet was prepared.

Journaling. The author accumulated approximately ten month's worth of notes (151 pages of single-spaced documentation). The journaling served several purposes for this research. Primarily, she was forced to resocialize herself; she had to find her place in this new social environment. The note-taking was a product of her daily scrutinization of the culture and the people practicing the culture. She tracked her developing relationship with the research setting; and, this process of detailed journaling became a means of releasing daily frustrations and anger. Much of the introspection involved her emotional responses to everyday dilemmas; a review of the journal entries reveals a dark, distraught, unhappy person struggling to make sense of the people and events surrounding her. These notes have helped the author emotionally return to Bahrain, which has assisted in the retelling of life in Bahrain.

The notes also reveal her in her role as the middle school principal. A great deal of information was exchanged between students, parents, and staff behind closed doors in

the principal's office. This information involved problematic behaviors, poor academics, poor social relationships, personal problems, family problems, fears and anxieties, sexual misconduct, and neglect and abuse of students. What she discovered was that they sought out her advice, insight, and trust regarding delicate issues, and this strengthened her rapport with the students, parents, and staff. Through this process of sharing and social growth, the researcher developed the image as a firm but compassionate principal, and this master status may have overshadowed the research. What is more, the students' responses to the survey may have been tainted by the fact that the principal was a young, white female with blonde hair and blue eyes. A male researcher would likely have stimulated different responses from the female and male respondents.

The students viewed the author as their principal and *not* as a researcher--*not* as someone who would collect the surveys and then go away as in many cases when conducting quantitative research. Because of this, some students feared that she might share the information with their parents, even though she reassured them that she was bound by the issue of confidentiality. She even made certain that each section observed her placing their completed surveys into a large envelope and sealing it. But, the students knew that as a principal she maintained strong relations with the parents. Therefore, some students clearly were apprehensive about revealing too much information and, therefore, may have been less than honest. This was a limitation of the study.

Finally, the journal served as a useful instrument by helping the author humanize the statistical data. It assisted in making connections between the percentages, mean frequencies, and correlation coefficients with the tangible human qualities described in the journal and observed during the focus groups. However, some of the personal

turmoil, which was shared with the author throughout the school year, will remain confidential because she grew to admire and respect the students and their families tremendously and wishes not to discredit them in any way by disclosing sensitive information. It would be unethical to reveal such information in this report. What she will say is that many of the problems that trouble children and parents in the states also plague the families and children at that school.

Survey. A Likert Scale, which is a five point scale, was selected for the surveying instrument. Each response was associated with a point value; the larger the value the more the student agreed to the statement. The levels of agreement to the 88 items were ordered accordingly: 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided / do not know, 4=agree, and 5=strongly agree.³⁰ Mimicking the strategy of Matza (1964), the researcher *clustered* responses "1" and "2" to indicate disagreement to items and clustered responses "4" and "5" to indicate agreement. A response of "3" indicated that the respondent either did not know or was undecided at that time.

The study was designed with several variables in mind. The nominal variables or sample descriptors included age, sex, grade level, nationality, religion, number of children in the family, and parent's occupation.³¹ The independent variables were representative of the combination of agreement to the moral absolutes and neutralization techniques. The dependent variables were the seven acts of deviancy and were measured by the degree of involvement. Subsequently, the researcher was interested in those

³⁰ According to Fowler (2002:92), "There is a dimension assumed by the researcher that goes from the most negative feelings possible to the most positive feelings possible. The way survey researchers get respondents into ordered categories is to put designations or labels on such a continuum."

³¹ Some of these variables are also referred to as *organismic variables*. It is not possible to manipulate organismic variables, such as sex, age, height, and race because they are already established. Organismic variables differentiate the groups from the onset of the study.

students who endorsed the moral absolutes and neutralization, and who committed deviant acts.

Procedure

The primary investigator was required to receive permission to conduct this study from the owners of the school prior to engaging in this project. Permission was granted as long as the investigator did not impede the learning environment. This was not an obstacle because the investigator supervised and maintained routine daily events. As mentioned earlier, the research could not include audio-taping or video-taping the student participants.

The data collecting procedures for this empirical study were distinctly different. The qualitative component was characterized by non-participant and participant observation, journaling, and focus groups. The quantitative component was characterized by the anonymous collection of surveys in a controlled testing environment.

Qualitative Component. The collection of qualitative data took place throughout the entire school year and stay in Bahrain. The researcher was always presented with opportunities to record information, reflect with the locals, converse with the students, phone the parents, observe group dynamics, and participate in the daily joys and struggles of the community. Newspaper articles were valuable in recreating the social and cultural environment (see Chapter Three). Social involvements both at the school and in the community were important for understanding the local discourse. The role of the principal enabled the researcher to maintain "inside" access to problematic youth, their families, and circumstance; she was privy to confidential information concerning every

child in the middle school. But, for this project, the social construction of deviancy evolved from the focus groups.

There were three objectives that shaped the focus group environment. A script or worksheet was prepared to guide the group discussion. Each student was provided with a worksheet (see Appendix F). First, the investigator asked the group to think about the meaning(s) of the word 'deviancy'. The group was allowed approximately five to ten minutes to write down his, or her, thoughts. The students were not permitted to share ideas, and the investigator was not willing to offer clues or hints. Second, when the investigator sensed that the students were growing weary and frustrated with the task, she opened the floor for discussion in search of concepts and definitions that matched our notion of deviancy. She guided the conversations from general notions to more specific, concrete interpretations until members of the group felt they understood what it meant to be deviant. Meanwhile, the participants noted their developing thoughts on the worksheet. Finally, after the group and the investigator felt that the notion of deviance was adequately defined--that meaning was attached to the word--the participants outlined examples of deviant behaviors or activities. At this time, the students were granted the remainder of the session to share ideas, examples, stories, and questions. The investigator collected the worksheets; to preserve anonymity the students were asked to provide only their grade and section.³²

The focus groups involving the aforementioned worksheet took place in May and June 2005. This was at the closing of the study and the participants likely were familiar with ideas of deviancy. Yet, there does not appear to be a translation for the word deviancy in the Arabic language because no youth proffered an Arabic word. The

³² The section code identified the youth as male or female (e.g., A and B = boys; C and D = girls).

investigator analyzed, counted, and categorized the meanings according to repeating themes.

The focus group should have been arranged for two settings: a pretest and a posttest meeting. In other words, using the same worksheet the researcher could have scheduled groups at the beginning of the school year and at the end of the school year. The information gathered at the beginning of the school year during these focus groups could have been utilized in revising the language of the neutralization survey. And, the student pretest descriptions and posttest descriptions concerning deviancy could have been contrasted and compared; any changes over time in the students' perceptions and meanings could have been addressed and documented in the posttest setting.

Quantitative Component. The investigator prepared a master list of the students that volunteered to participate in the study. Each student was assigned an identification number. The neutralization survey and demographic information page were stapled together, numbered, and counted into appropriate stacks according to the number of participating students per section. Each stack was placed in a manila envelope and labeled with the section code, which totaled 12 stacks (e.g., 6A, 6B, 6C, 6D, etc.). These envelopes were stored in the principal's office until administered to the identified section.

At the time of administering the survey, each participant received his, or her, assigned copy. The directions were clearly read and interpreted by the researcher at the onset. The students were granted 80 minutes to complete the survey. Any questions regarding unclear, or confusing, words were clarified by the investigator; the participants were not allowed to share ideas. The investigator permitted no outside interruptions during the administration of the survey. At the completion, the surveys were collected in

an anonymous drop box, then placed in an envelope and sealed to preserve anonymity. The contents of the survey (i.e., thereafter) or results of any one or more surveys were not discussed by the administrator with any person in Bahrain. The seals on the envelopes were not broken until the researcher deployed the island and returned to the states; they were stored at her villa during the meanwhile. Once the information was inputted and errors corrected, the surveys were destroyed.

Reliability

Reliability is the degree to which an instrument consistently measures whatever it is intended to measure. Reliability also refers to the ability to replicate a study methodologically and receive similar results. A small group of 20 students were retested using the neutralization survey. The time intervening between the two tests was about six months but ranged from three weeks to nine months. The results of this test appear in Table 2.

The test-retest data reveal the correspondence between the initial survey responses and the retest survey responses across the sample demographic, moral absolute, and deviant behavior items. In this case, strong correlations are preferred if one is going to conclude that the testing instrument is reliable (Collins 1994). The results in Table 2 show that the retest responses for the demographic information (e.g., sex, grade, age, nationality, religion, parent's occupation, number of children in the family, and travels to the United States) are correlated perfectly ($1.00; p < .001$) with the slight exception of academic performance ($0.97; p < .001$). The students provided the exact same responses on the initial survey as they did on the retest survey--except one student reported "B" average on the first test but a "C" average on the second.

Table 2. Retest Reliability Correlation Coefficients for Sample Characteristics, Moral Absolutes, and Reported Deviancy

Variables [N=20]	Correlations
Sample Characteristics	
Sex	1.00 ***
Grade	1.00 ***
Nationality	1.00 ***
Religion	1.00 ***
Mother's occupation	1.00 ***
Father's occupation	1.00 ***
Been to the USA	1.00 ***
Why in the USA (<i>n</i> =6)	1.00 ***
Academic performance	0.97 ***
Number of kids in the family	1.00 ***
Age	1.00 ***
Moral Absolutes	
General Agreement	-0.31
Cheating	0.78 ***
Dating	0.51 *
Fighting	0.13
Vandalizing	0.61 **
Stealing	1.00 ***
Drinking	-0.17
Bullying	-0.05
Reported Deviancy	
Cheat	0.62 **
Date	0.35
Fight	0.73 ***
Vandalize	-0.04
Steal	0.00
Drink	1.00 ***
Bully	0.46 *

Note: Coefficients in bold reveal no variation due to perfect correlation.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

The correlation coefficients for the seven deviant behaviors are less significant than the correlations for the demographic information. For example, the correlation for drinking was 1.00 ($p < .001$), which means that the students provided the exact same responses for this deviant activity during both surveys. Following this, however, only three of the remaining six correlations were significant: fighting (0.73; $p < .001$); cheating (0.62; $p < .05$); and bullying (0.46; $p < .05$).

The correlations concerning the moral absolutes for the initial survey and the retest survey are even less significant. With that said, three of the eight coefficients were insignificant and negative. These results imply that students who basically agreed to these moral absolutes (e.g., drinking, bullying, and in general circumstances) during one survey setting would disagree during the other setting. However, the correlations for cheating (0.78; $p < .001$), vandalizing (0.61; $p < .05$), and dating (0.51; $p < .05$) are significant and indicate consistency in the participants' responses from test to retest.

Critics may argue that this was a poor test of reliability. However, there are some explanations for the weak correlations between the initial survey results and the retest results. First, the initial neutralization survey was administered to all sections during the month of November (2004). The retest was not administered until June (2005); this was approximately a six month lapse of time. The retest survey should have been administered approximately two weeks after the initial survey in order to accurately assess the reliability of the testing instrument. The demographic information (e.g., sex, grade, age, etc.), however, was perfectly correlated (1.00; $p < .001$), but there was much variation in the responses across the reports of deviant behaviors and agreement to moral absolutes. These variations could be due to changes in attitudes and opinions concerning

the items during this six month timeframe. Also, the testing conditions were very different. The random retesting of 20 students took place at the end of the school year after taking a final exam; these students were probably tired and eager to be finished with school.

Validity

The survey used in this study was selected primarily based on face validity (Collins 1994). The language and situations were modified to fit the characteristics of the Islamic youth population.³³ First, to assess the validity of the survey, the investigator consulted with professors and colleagues and organized a cognitive laboratory interview with a small group of university graduate students from the Middle East (Fowler 2002:108-110).³⁴ Questionable items were discussed in detail and rephrased according to the consensus of the group. In addition, when the primary investigator arrived in Bahrain, she met informally with several high school students and discussed issues concerning misconduct. She did not present these students with the survey, but rather asked general questions about deviant activities that took place at the school (or on the island) in the past.³⁵ With this information, the investigator made final adjustments to the surveying instrument.³⁶ These processes resulted in enhancing the readability and the understandability of the testing instrument.

³³ The statements concerning religious activities and behaviors, employment, juvenile court involvement, and sexual relations required modification.

³⁴ Cognitive laboratory interviews are in-depth discussions with focus groups or with individuals having similar characteristics to the population under investigation. The purpose of these discussions is to critically analyze the wording of the statements or difficulty in responding to the questions.

³⁵ It took the researcher at least a month or so before she questioned any students about episodes of wrongdoing, or misbehaving, etc. She was a new face on campus and the students were leery of her motives.

³⁶ Adjustments were made to the deviant situations: cheating, drinking, vandalizing, and bullying. Also, certain English words were removed because the researcher felt they would be too difficult to comprehend for the middle school aged youth.

Criterion-related validity (e.g., concurrent or predictive) refers to the correlation between two similar tests administered at different times. The findings from the current study will be compared to the findings of previous neutralization research to determine which techniques, if any, are more or less endorsed and to see if the results for the various studies are compatible. Construct validity is concerned with the non-observable traits (e.g., endorsement of neutralization) invented by the researcher to explain behavior (2000:168-69). Again, the investigator used a previously established survey, which paralleled the constructs described in this study. Content validity means that the instrument covers all the attributes of the concept being measured; it is often determined by expert judgment (2000:164). The instrument was revised several times with the assistance of experts in the theory of neutralization, natives of the Middle East, and Bahraini youth. But, only one verbalization was offered for each type of neutralization; so, it is possible that students might accept a particular neutralization technique but not accept the example (e.g., verbal neutralizing statement) offered on the survey.

Cook and Campbell (1979) identified eight main threats to internal validity; three of which were potential concerns for this research--*history*, *maturation*, and *mortality*. History refers to the occurrence of events that are not a part of the testing treatments but which occur during the study and affect the dependent variable. The effects of the war in Iraq were not underestimated, yet the researcher felt this had a minute affect on the students' responses due to their mental age. Of greater concern were the effects of the Internet, digital phones, and electronics. With these devices the students accessed pornography, gang related activity, violence, and illegal trading of goods. The author believed the participants were afraid to respond honestly to certain statements for fear

that their parents may learn of their deviant interests. Maturation refers to natural physical, intellectual, and emotional changes that occur in the participants over a period of time. This probably affected the retest reliability data, but was less of a concern for the initial survey. The investigator maintained control over the testing environments at all times and implemented the survey when the participants were not experiencing a difficult school day.³⁷ Mortality would be problematic if participants dropped out of the study. No student dropped out of the study, yet it was always a concern for the investigator.

Threats to the external validity limit generalization of the research results to other populations--*selection-treatment interaction, specificity of variables, treatment diffusion, experimenter effects, and reactive arrangements*. Selection-treatment interaction was a problem because the researcher was unable to randomly select the sample from the population of adolescents on the island. Specificity of variables was less of a threat because the testing instrument underwent numerous revisions to enhance its clarity and readability; the testing instrument was representative of the research variables. As mentioned before, the researcher utilized expert resources to better conceptualize the variables. Treatment diffusion is a problem when groups of participants communicate about the survey between the administrations of the surveys. For this study, it was not possible to administer the survey to the entire sample at the same time because the school officials requested that the surveys be administered when it did not impede classwork time. Therefore, treatment diffusion was a threat to external validity because knowledge

³⁷ What the author is implying is that if the students seemed weary, frustrated, or discontent she would postpone the administration of the survey until the class seemed more enthused about being questioned. She did this because the survey was long and daunting; it was important for the students to be focused, willing participants.

about the statements and situations likely was shared among the students during breaks and passing periods. For some of the students, this probably elicited atypical responses. Finally, experimenter effects and reactive arrangements are threats due to expectations of and interactions between the researcher and the participants. This was a problem as well because some of the students were intimidated by the principal asking personal questions about previous wrongdoing.

And last, the survey data were debugged prior to conducting the statistical analyses. The purpose for debugging the data is to make certain that the inputted response codes match the survey responses.³⁸ *Two errors* outside of the range of possible responses were found out of 165 variables and 227 observations, which equates to 37,455 possible errors. This is an error rate of less than 0.005%. The two input mistakes were found and corrected. Also, five surveys were selected at random and the students' responses were checked against the corresponding inputted data. No errors were found.

Generalizability

The ability to take the results of a single study and make generalizations about a larger population refers to generalizability. And, generalizability is affected by the reliability and validity of the testing instrument and the study design. For this study, the investigator was sensitive to the effects of maturation, treatment diffusion, and experimenter effects. To curb these problems, only she administered the surveys at times which the students were not mentally or emotionally exhausted or strained and when they would have the least contact with participants who not yet were exposed to the survey. The boys and girls were separated by buildings, so the exchange of information between

³⁸ Errors can occur when inputting the data which include impossible codes and codes in the inappropriate columns.

the genders was minimal. However, talk about the survey occurred among the students because, up until that point, most of the students had never participated in a study. The investigator could not control for selection-treatment interaction; thus, the student profile at this private school might not be representative of the youth in Bahrain and particularly in the Middle East; this was a downfall of convenient sampling. Moreover, the investigator could not control for history effects, yet this likely benefited the generalizability of the findings because the island was technologically saturated; most youth throughout the Bahrain (rich or poor) were influenced by the imaging and information available in technological devices. In addition, characteristics of the sample have been presented earlier. Readers can therefore know something about the sample studied in Bahrain and can make their own judgments regarding its application to areas of interest to them.

Limitations

Whether the results of a study are valid and generalizable depend on the instrument used to collect the information regarding the participants' attitudes, perceptions, and actions. The directions, questions, and statements must be clear and understandable to the participants. This posed a challenge for the researcher because there was not a study of the sort in the literature that had administered an agreement to neutralization survey to a Middle Eastern sample. But, it was necessary to select a survey, so the researcher chose a survey at the advice of the research advisor who had utilized it in the past (Collins 1994). Yet, this previous survey was designed to identify delinquent behavior among undergraduate college students in the mid-west. That is why the researcher made numerous revisions based on expert input.

The results of test for reliability were marginal and this was another limitation of the study. However, explanations for the marginal results were provided; better results would be expected if the retest was administered sooner and during similar testing conditions.

Critics also are likely to question the generalizability of the results. But, the ability to make general statements regarding adolescent deviancy throughout the Arab world or among all Muslim youth is an erroneous expectation of the study because there exists a great deal of diversity among the Arabs including tribalism, social and economic status, language, and among schools. Again, the study was designed to assess the social construction of deviancy and the endorsement of neutralization techniques among a convenient sample of middle school students at one private school on a relatively small island in the Middle East. At this time, this is a one-of-a-kind study. However, the investigator feels that the findings of the study probably can be generalized to other youths who are enrolled and attend a similar style of school.³⁹

Section Summary

This was an exploration and examination of adolescents' perceptions and attitudes regarding social controls, deviant behaviors, and agreement to neutralizing guilt or shame, which are thought to allow engaging in deviant activity with a clear conscience. A primary purpose for conducting this research was to test neutralization theory on a sample of Bahraini youth and see if the results are similar to those collected in the states. The testing instrument was selected based on face validity but was modified after

³⁹ The author makes this statement because families of certain socio-economic standing seek out private schools in Bahrain including other Gulf nations. Seventy-five percent or better of the parents have earned a four-year degree at a college or university. And, the social atmospheres between public and private schools are quite different, and each attract and subsequently produce distinctly different youth.

consultation with experts and local students. There were concerns regarding internal and external validity, which affect the generalizability of the results. The researcher made attempts to control for such threats.

Chapter Five

FINDINGS

"Deviancy means having fun and disobeying stupid laws or rules that shouldn't have been written...and, what is deviant to one person means having fun to someone else"
--Grade 8 male student

A dissertation research project of this nature is uncommon in the sociological discipline. The student researcher was not certain what she might discover, whether or not the data would support the theory, or what would be concluded from this lengthy project. Nonetheless, the data were collected and analyzed according to the approved procedures. In this chapter, the results of the data analyses for the three research questions will be discussed, and these results can be found in Tables 3, 4, and 5, respectively.

Research Question #1

For this research question, data were obtained by conducting focus groups at the middle school where the investigator was employed (see the qualitative section in Chapter Four for details). The data consisted of narratives, descriptions, examples, and unstructured responses. A total of 196 students participated in this portion of the study (N(Grade 6)=64; N(Grade 7)=57; and N(Grade 8)=75). The results for this research question are found in Table 3.

How do the Bahraini students identify and interpret deviancy?

Table 3. Response Percentages for the Social Construction of Deviancy and Examples of Deviant Behaviors

Questions / Responses	Percentages
What do you think deviancy means? [N=196]	
Bad person / not normal	66.8% (131)
Breaking rules	14.8% (29)
Interacting with other people	4.6% (9)
Bad attitude	2.6% (5)
Do not know	11.2% (22)
Examples of deviancy? [N=702]	
At school	34.0% (239)
Skipping class	1.4% (10)
Running away	0.6% (4)
Disrespecting teachers, parents, friends	12.8% (89)
Cheating	4.0% (28)
Low grades / not studying	0.7% (5)
Chewing gum	3.7% (26)
Lying / dishonesty	4.8% (30)
Swearing	6.0% (42)
Pranks	0.7% (5)
Against people or property	35.3% (248)
Spitting	0.6% (4)
Stealing	7.5% (53)
Littering	0.9% (6)
Vandalizing / graffiti	6.6% (46)
Bullying / name calling	3.1% (22)
Hurting animals	1.1% (8)
Hitting / fighting / abuse	8.7% (61)
Killing / war / guns	6.8% (48)
Against oneself	17.8% (125)
Not praying	0.4% (3)
Smoking	5.0% (35)
Drinking alcohol	6.1% (43)
Drugs	5.3% (37)
Suicide	1.0% (7)
Sex Related	11.0% (77)
Watching pornography / nudity	5.0% (35)
Dating	1.0% (7)
Sexual affairs	4.3% (30)
Homosexuality	0.7% (5)

The worksheet that guided the discussions were collected and coded according to grade and section. The range of responses for the meaning construction of deviancy and examples were counted, coded, and categorized by the investigator; percentages are presented in Table 3. When the students were presented with the question, "What do you think deviancy means?" they responded with a variety of interpretations, which were organized into five basic categories. The data in Table 3 reveal that 66.8% (or N=131) of the respondents provided definitions that included the following descriptors: bad person, bad behavior, doing bad things, and not normal. One Grade 8 male student made the comment, "Deviancy is behavior and habits that are inappropriate--doing things that you should not do--society does not like these things--such as smoking weed." Typical responses included the following word combinations: deviancy is like being a bad person and doing bad things; deviancy means things that are legal but are wrong; behavior that is not normal; terrible social behavior; and acting in a way against the norm of society. These descriptors were the most prevalent used among the middle school students, but other interpretations were identified to describe deviancy.

The other categories and percentages were breaking rules (14.8%), do not know (11.2%), interacting with other people (4.6%), and bad attitude (2.6%). Surprisingly, only a small percentage of participants did not know or did not have an idea about the concept of deviancy (11.2%). Finally, 'bad attitude' was placed in a separate category because either the students offered it as the only response to defining deviancy or the students separated this descriptor from bad behaviors because it involved thoughts, ideas, and perceptions--not actions.

Critics may argue that the descriptor 'not normal' deserves a separate category. However, this notion of not normal was used in conjunction with either notions of 'bad person' or 'bad behavior' during the discussions; and, it was not presented as the sole response in any worksheet. In other words, the researcher felt that the students were using not normal to help describe the other descriptors such as bad person and behavior.

The students who participated in this portion of the study (N=196) provided a very large number of examples of deviant behaviors (N=702). These examples were representative of how these youth identified deviancy. The number of examples per participant ranged from 2 to 23 identified behaviors. It was difficult deciding how to categorize the examples due to the diversity of the responses; but ultimately four basic categories emerged after thorough review of the worksheets: at school (34%), against people and property (37%), against oneself (18%), and sex related (11%).

The first category, at school, contained nine subcategories of deviant behaviors. The purpose of denoting subcategories is because they contain examples that were semantically similar. Said another way, the words provided by the participants varied throughout a subcategory but had the same intended meaning (e.g., robbery and stealing; murder and killing; having sex and sexual affairs). The most identified example of deviant behavior (i.e., across all subcategories) was disrespecting teachers, parents, or friends (12.8%). The terms "disrespect" or "disrespecting" were noted in all 89 examples; the object that was disrespected was where the respondents varied. Swearing (6.0%), lying or dishonesty (4.8%), and cheating (4.0%) were relatively prevalent examples. And, only a few students provided examples of running away and poor grades.

The students seemed to associate deviancy with those behaviors that broke school rules (e.g., as shown above) and insulted, harmed other people. Thirty-seven percent of the examples provided by the students are in the next category, against people or property (see Table 3). Four subcategories were identified by a large number of respondents: fighting or abuse (8.7%), stealing (7.5%), killing or wars (6.8%), and vandalizing (6.6%). Of these four, three were deviant situations and behaviors presented in the neutralization survey.⁴⁰ Some of the examples were quite insightful for such young respondents; for instance, "...picking a fight without a reason with someone you don't know" (Grade 6 male student), "...defacing school property" (Grade 6 male student), "...forcing people to do something they don't want to do" (Grade 8 female student), and "...kidnapping other cultural people and raping them" (Grade 8 female student). Other examples, which were identified by only 18 students, were hurting animals (1.1%), littering (0.9%), and spitting (0.6%).

Deviancy that involved acts against one's own self was reported at 18.8%. What this included was activities that were harmful to the body and the social image (e.g., reputation). The weakest percentage across all subcategories was not praying (0.4%); only three students offered this as an example. A number of students reported that drinking alcohol (6.1%), using drugs (5.3%), and smoking (5.0%) were examples of deviancy. As a note, seven of the participants recognized suicide as an act of deviant behavior.

The final category, sex related, was the least reported (11.0%). Only 77 examples of sex related behaviors or acts were recognized by the sample. The examples that best

⁴⁰ The author is taking note that a degree of agreement seems to exist between these Bahraini youths' interpretation of deviant acts and our own westernized interpretation of deviancy.

represent this category are watching pornography and nudity (5.0%) and engaging in sexual affairs (4.3%). The terms that the students used are considered socially inappropriate and foul in both our culture and their culture, such as "...fucking someone" (Grade 8 male student), "...having sex from the ass, masturbating a lot, and fingering your girlfriend" (Grade 8 male student), and "...telling people to suck your dick" (Grade 8 male student). The number of examples regarding homosexuality (0.7%) or dating (1.0%) was extremely low.

Research Question #2

Frequencies for each item in the neutralization survey were calculated and the percentages of agreement were compared between the five original neutralizations and the five recent neutralizations. As a reminder, responses of 4 and 5 (agree and strongly agree) are identified as agreement, and only the respondents who agreed or strongly agreed to the general and situational moral absolutes were considered in the following question.

To what extent do the students endorse the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five more recent neutralization techniques?

The data to address this question came from the surveys administered to the students (N=227). Percentages were calculated for each of the original neutralizations and for the five recent neutralizations for each of the seven situations as well as for the general situation (see Tables 4a and 4b). These percentages were calculated by selecting those participants who agreed with the situational moral absolute and who also agreed with the neutralization technique. Thus, the first entry in Table 4a, 51.5%, is the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the General Situation

Table 4a. Percentage of Sample that Agrees with the Moral Absolute and Agrees to Neutralize the Deviant Situation for the Original Neutralizations

Deviant Situation	Original Neutralization Techniques				
	Denial of Responsibility	Denial of Injury	Denial of Victim	Condemn the Condemners	Appeal to Higher Loyalties
General [N=169] 74.4%	51.5%	18.5%	42.8%	30.2%	54.2%
Cheat [N=178] 78.4%	53.3%	6.2%	14.6%	34.1%	14.1%
Date [N=138] 60.8%	24.7%	13.8%	21.7%	23.9%	37.0%
Fight [N=137] 60.4%	55.5%	14.3%	31.4%	4.4%	39.4%
Vandalize [N=167] 73.6%	29.3%	3.6%	8.4%	16.9%	11.4%
Steal [N=180] 79.3%	38.0%	5.7%	7.8%	8.9%	7.2%
Drink [N=177] 78.0%	7.4%	6.2%	4.5%	5.7%	5.7%
Bully [N=185] 81.5%	12.0%	6.5%	5.4%	7.5%	13.4%
Average Percent per Technique	34.4%	9.4%	17.1%	16.5%	22.8%
Total Average for Original			19.9%		

Table 4b. Percentage of Sample that Agrees with the Moral Absolute and Agrees to Neutralize the Deviant Situation for the Recent Neutralizations

Deviant Situation	Recent Neutralization Techniques				
	Metaphor of Ledger	Defense of Necessity	Denial of Necessity of Law	Everybody's Doing It	Entitlement
General [N=169] 74.4%	33.1%	49.4%	41.6%	23.1%	22.3%
Cheat [N=178] 78.4%	15.3%	14.8%	28.1%	20.8%	23.0%
Date [N=138] 60.8%	29.7%	21.7%	12.3%	7.2%	18.1%
Fight [N=137] 60.4%	11.7%	32.9%	16.8%	8.0%	6.6%
Vandalize [N=167] 73.6%	10.2%	13.3%	10.2%	9.6%	6.6%
Steal [N=180] 79.3%	3.9%	6.7%	5.0%	7.2%	7.2%
Drink [N=177] 78.0%	2.8%	6.8%	5.1%	4.0%	6.2%
Bully [N=185] 81.5%	8.1%	14.5%	8.1%	6.5%	7.6%
Average Percent per Technique	14.4%	20.0%	15.9%	10.8%	12.2%
Total Average for Recent			14.7%		

(“generally, it is wrong to violate a law or rule”) and who also agreed or strongly agreed with the Denial of Responsibility (“it is okay to break a rule if the person does not understand the rule”).

The five original neutralization techniques will be examined first. The data in Table 4a suggest that the Denial of Responsibility is primarily used for fighting (55.5%), cheating (53.3%), and in general (51.5%); these percentages are quite strong. But, this neutralization technique was seldom used for drinking (7.4%) and bullying (12%).

The second neutralization, Denial of Injury, was the least endorsed of all ten techniques. Only 18.5% used the Denial of Injury to neutralize in general situations followed by 14.3% for fighting and 13.8% for dating. All remaining percentages of endorsement were extremely small (< 7%).

The students responded more favorably to Denial of Victim than Denial of Injury indicating that the participants were more apt to neutralize for revenge--particularly in circumstances of fighting (31.4%) and dating (21.7%) but even more so in general (42.8%). The respondents were less likely to endorse this technique in situations of vandalizing (8.4%), stealing (7.8%), bullying (5.4%), and drinking (4.5%).

The fourth neutralization, Condemn the Condemners, was supported in situations of cheating (34.1%), general circumstances (30.2%), dating (23.9%), and vandalizing (16.9%). The average of the percentages of endorsement of the four remaining situations was only 6.6%.

The data for the final original technique of neutralization, Appeal to Higher Loyalty, suggested a varying range of support from 54.2 % in general, which is very strong, down to only 5.7% for drinking. Also, the respondents strongly agree to

employing this technique in situations of fighting (39.4%) and dating (37%) but not so for stealing (7.2%).

The first more recent neutralization technique, Metaphor of Ledger, was supported in general (33.1%) and in the situation of dating (29.7%). The data in Table 4b showed moderate support for this technique in the remaining situations except for stealing (3.9%) and drinking (2.8%), which were marginally supported.

The second recent technique, Defense of Necessity, was the strongest supported technique of the five more recent neutralizations (20%). Forty-nine percent endorsed neutralizing out of necessity in general situations and for fighting (32.9%) but agreed far less in situations of stealing (6.7%) and drinking (6.8%).

The next technique, Denial of Necessity of Law, was less endorsed than Defense of Necessity. Only 5% of those students who agreed that stealing and drinking were wrong endorsed Denial of Necessity of Law, but 41.6% supported the technique in general.

The students reported low support for Everybody's Doing It in comparison to the other four recent techniques of neutralizations. For example, except for cheating (20.8%) and in general situations (23.1%), the support for using this technique in any of the remaining situations was very low (< 9.6%). Also, the strength of support for this technique was weak compared to the other neutralizations.

The last technique, Entitlement, was only slightly more endorsed than Everybody's Doing It, which was very low. In general situations or cheating, approximately 23% of the respondents agreed to neutralize due to the belief that the

students have the right to do so; and, except for dating, the respondents' support across the remaining situations was very low (< 7%).

The percentages for the original techniques (19.9% average percentage) were stronger than the percentages for the recent techniques (14.7% average percentage). Also, among the original neutralizations the Denial of Responsibility (34%) was the most accepted by the students and the Denial of Injury (9.4%) was the least accepted. Looking at the more recent neutralization techniques, the Denial of Necessity (20%) was supported the most and the neutralization of Everybody's Doing It (10.8%) was the least supported.

Turning to the percentage of respondents who agreed to the moral absolutes, there was considerable variation among the number of students who believed each of the seven situations was wrong. Again, the moral absolutes are representative of the normative standards or what society advocates as good social behavior. For example, students were most likely to agree that bullying (N=185 or 81.5%) and stealing (N=180 or 79.3%) in general were wrong but least likely to believe that dating (N=138 or 60.8%) and fighting (N=137 or 60.4%) were wrong. It should be noted, here, that a large percent of students believed bullying was wrong in general, but only a small percent of students (3.1% in Table 3) provided it as an example of deviant behavior.

The data in Tables 4a and 4b showed considerable differences overall in neutralization across the various situations. For instance, students were most likely to neutralize in general situations (36.7%) as well as in situations of cheating (22.4%), fighting (22%), and dating (21%). The average support for neutralizing in the situation of drinking was extremely low (5.4%).

Research Question #3

In order to relate neutralization to the commission of deviant acts, correlations were calculated between each technique of neutralization and committed deviant acts for each situation. A significant (and positive) correlation would indicate that the more individuals committed a deviant act the more they neutralized. These correlations, then, imply the existence of a relationship between two variables, which are found in Tables 5a and 5b, and would support the implications of neutralization theory.

To what extent do the students endorse the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five more recent neutralization techniques in relation to the students committing the seven acts of deviancy?

For this research question only the students who agreed with the moral situations were considered in the analysis, and correlations were calculated between endorsement of the neutralizations and commission of deviant acts. For example, among those who thought cheating was wrong correlations were calculated between neutralizing cheating and reported cheating.

The various correlations are represented in Tables 5a and 5b, and the five original techniques will be analyzed first. The first original neutralization, Denial of Responsibility, was negatively correlated with committing deviancy in general, which was an undesirable relationship. A -0.08 correlation is not significant (0.05); and what is more, the negative sign is contrary to the expectations of neutralization theory because this negative correlation suggests that *more* neutralization is accompanied by *less* deviancy. However, the Denial of Responsibility was correlated significantly and positively with committing acts of bullying (0.24) and drinking (0.23)

Table 5a. Correlation Coefficients Between the Original Neutralization Techniques and Committed Acts of Deviancy

Deviant Acts	Original Neutralization Techniques				
	Denial of Responsibility	Denial of Injury	Denial of Victim	Condemn the Condemners	Appeal to Higher Loyalties
General [N=169]	-.08	.08	.31***	.08	.10
Cheat [N=178]	.10	.16*	.26***	.32***	.23**
Date [N=138]	.03	.13	.10	-.10	.09
Fight [N=138]	.12	.28***	.23**	.17*	.14
Vandalize [N=167]	.14	.12	.24**	.30***	.13
Steal [N=179]	.12	.15*	.22**	.11	.14*
Drink [N=177]	.23**	.16*	.11	.15*	.19**
Bully [N=185]	.24**	.29***	.36***	.16*	.18**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 5b. Correlation Coefficients Between the Recent Neutralization Techniques and Committed Acts of Deviancy

Deviant Acts	Recent Neutralization Techniques				
	Metaphor of Ledger	Defense of Necessity	Denial of Necessity of Law	Everybody's Doing It	Entitlement
General [N=169]	.21**	.18*	.07	.15	.07
Cheat [N=178]	.26**	.21**	.26***	.20**	.28***
Date [N=138]	.18*	.18*	.31***	.23**	.07
Fight [N=138]	.28***	.18*	.27**	.22**	.12
Vandalize [N=167]	.11	.26***	.15	.16*	.19**
Steal [N=179]	.26***	.22**	.16*	.23**	.18*
Drink [N=177]	.16*	.18**	.20**	.26***	-.01
Bully [N=185]	.15*	.13	.25***	.26***	.15*

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

but not significantly with the remaining six behaviors. This technique correlated the least with committing acts of deviancy.

As shown in Table 5a, there was more correlation for Denial of Injury than Denial of Responsibility (5 out of 8 possible relationships were significantly correlated). The Denial of Injury was significantly correlated with committing acts of bullying (0.29), fighting (0.28), cheating (0.16), drinking (0.16), and stealing (0.15). Therefore, as students commit more of these deviant acts the more they will neutralize based on the justification that nobody was hurt or injured during the acts.

The next neutralization, Denial of Victim, was even more correlated with the commission of deviant acts than the previous two neutralizations. This neutralization, Denial of Victim, which was used when individuals are seeking revenge, was positively and significantly correlated with bullying (0.36), in general circumstances (0.31), cheating (0.26), vandalizing (0.24), fighting (0.23), and stealing (0.22).

Condemn the Condemners, a technique employed out of spite for those individuals who advocate the wrongfulness of certain acts but commit them nonetheless, was positively correlated with cheating (0.32), vandalizing (0.30), fighting (0.17), bullying (0.16), and drinking (0.15) but not correlated with the remaining acts.

The final original technique, Appeal to Higher Loyalty, did not correlate well with these deviant acts. Appeal to Higher Loyalty correlated significantly only with cheating (0.23), drinking (0.19), bullying (0.18), and stealing (0.14), and these correlations or strengths of significance were very low.

The first of the recent techniques presented in Table 5b, Metaphor of Ledger, positively and significantly correlated with seven out of the eight possible deviant

situations (0.15-0.26). The students neutralized such behaviors based on the notion that most often they adhere to social rules. The only insignificant correlation was with vandalizing.

As with Metaphor of Ledger, the next technique, Defense of Necessity, correlated significantly with seven out of the eight possible acts. The participants reported that the more they are presented with the following deviant situations the more they would neutralize out of the need to accomplish goals (because alternative options were lacking): vandalizing (0.26), stealing (0.22), cheating (0.21), drinking (0.19), fighting (0.18), dating (0.18), and in general circumstances (0.18). Yet, these correlations, although significant and positive, were low in magnitude.

The following technique in Table 5b, Denial of Necessity of Law, positively and significantly correlated with dating (0.31), fighting (0.27), cheating (0.26), bullying (0.25), drinking (0.20), and stealing (0.16). The remaining situations did not correlate with the use of this neutralization. This technique is employed when individuals believe that the rule or law is unfair or unenforceable.

The technique, Everybody's Doing It, correlated significantly with all but one deviant situation. The significant relationships were bullying (0.26), drinking (0.26), stealing (0.23), fighting (0.22), dating (0.22), cheating (0.20), and vandalizing (0.16). The more students reported engaging in these acts the more they neutralized based on the notion that many other people were participating in the deviant acts as well.

The last recent neutralization, Entitlement, correlated the least with the deviant situations. And, a negative relationship appeared between Entitlement and drinking; this negative correlation suggests that the *more* students drank alcohol the *less* likely they

neutralized the act according to this technique (see Figure 1 and Tables 5a and 5b for details). However, the claim to Entitlement positively and significantly correlated with cheating (0.28), vandalizing (0.19), stealing (0.18), and bullying (0.15); the remaining four correlations were insignificant.

From the many correlations discussed above, attention can now focus on the second research question of whether the original or the more recently formulated neutralization techniques relate more strongly to committing deviancy. It appears that these students endorse more the recent neutralizations than the original techniques in relation to committing the deviant acts. Of the 40 possible correlations between the five recent neutralizations and the commission of the deviant acts, 31 were positive and significant, which resulted in 77.8% of the correlations being significant compared to 55% of the correlations involving the five original techniques. However, four of the five strongest correlations for all ten techniques are from the original groups of neutralizations--these are found between Denial of Victim and bullying (0.36) and in general circumstances (0.31) as well as between Condemn the Condemners and cheating (0.32) and vandalizing (0.30). Also, Tables 5a and 5b showed that nine out of the ten techniques were employed to neutralize cheating and bullying; more neutralization occurred for cheating and bullying and the least for general circumstances (three out of ten were significant). Overall, 66.4% of the correlations were significant suggesting that students increase the usage of neutralizations as they engage in more deviant behaviors. Thus, the results support neutralization theory; however, this support is not strong.

Section Summary

In this section the data analyses for the three research questions were presented in Tables 3, 4, and 5. The findings in Table 3 indicated that 66% of the youth who participated in this portion of the study (N=196) recognize and understand deviancy to mean people who are bad and behave badly or abnormally (i.e., against social norms). And, among the many examples identified during the focus groups, the most prevalent example of deviant behavior was disrespecting people. Tables 4a and 4b revealed that 19.9% of the students who agreed to the moral absolutes endorsed more the original neutralization techniques than the recent techniques, in particular Denial of Responsibility (34%). In Tables 5a and 5b, it appeared that the students endorsed more the recent neutralizations (77.8% significant correlation) than the original techniques (55% significant correlation) in relation to committing the deviant acts. In the final chapter, the findings will be discussed in relation to the three research questions and research in current literature. Implications of the neutralization theory will be addressed including empirical support, application, and shortcomings. Finally, the author will conclude with some thoughts about further research in this area of interest.

Chapter Six

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

*"I leave in two days. This has been a long school year. I have collected a lot of data, have observed many things, and have listened to countless stories. Yet, I am afraid that I won't be able to make sense of it all--of anything--when I return home. Connecting these experiences to the notion of neutralizing will be a daunting task...I have seen and heard the students neutralizing--making excuses to ward off the shame, embarrassment, and confusion--but, I worry that this is not revealed in the surveys. I ask myself, "Did I do this for nothing?"
--the Author (26 June 2005)*

In this final chapter the three research questions will be discussed in conjunction with the findings. Then the findings from the current research will be discussed relative to previous findings reported in the research literature. Next, consideration will be given to what we think we know about neutralization theory, including its empirical supports, its domain of application, and its shortcomings. Limitations of the study were presented in an earlier chapter; but with these limitations in mind, the author will present what she thinks the results of this study mean. After that, an appraisal of neutralization theory will be made followed by some practical applications of the theory. Finally, some suggestions for improving research methodology regarding the constructivist approach, neutralization theory, and cross-cultural investigations will complete this final chapter.

The Research Questions

Many points could be highlighted in this section regarding the three research questions and findings; and subsequently, the findings that interest the researcher may not

be of merit to other social scientists and readers. Nonetheless, the researcher encourages readers to draw their own conclusions as she discusses some key revelations for each question while relating them to her daily observations and insights.

Research Question #1: How do the Bahraini students identify and interpret deviancy?

The researcher found that the social construction of deviancy exists in Bahrain among many of the youth. The notion that deviance is interpreted or identified as a bad person doing something that is socially bad, wrong, or not normal is consistent among the student participants (e.g., almost 67%). In our westernized culture, we tend to think of deviancy along similar lines, such as "...behavior that departs from the norm, but is not criminal" (Siegel 2002:383). What is more, the examples provided by the Bahraini youth are not unusual or atypical for adolescents outside of Bahrain; they felt that disrespecting people, stealing, vandalizing, fighting, and drinking alcohol were wrong or deviant.

A problem with the social construction approach, particularly in this research project, is identifying definitively the meanings the students maintain for the concept of deviancy. For instance, very few students used the word "bullying" in describing deviance (3.1%); and, the students reported to seldom engage in bullying. Yet, 81.5% of the students said that bullying was wrong. It would appear that more investigation is needed in regards to identifying comparative, equivalent meanings for social constructs, rather than imposing meanings of words as understood by the researcher. What is more, the students failed to use the word bullying often, but they frequently used words such as 'disrespecting.' What this may suggest is that the students interpret bullying and disrespecting to be very similar, if not the same.

The researcher anticipated more deviant examples that defied Islamic standards, such as not praying, not fasting, and not giving to the poor. A possible explanation for this is that Ramadan, or the Holy Month, was several months away and these self-sacrificial behaviors consistent with Ramadan were not cognizant at the time. And, not surprisingly, the students were sensitive to sexual deviancy because they became squeamish and bashful whenever the topic was mentioned. At their age (i.e., around 12 and 13 years old), they seem to know little about courtship, sexual issues, and human reproduction.⁴¹

Research Question #2: To what extent do the students endorse the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five more recent neutralization technique?

The percentage of students that agree to the moral absolutes--*it is socially wrong to participate in particular deviant acts no matter the circumstances*--can be determined by comparing Tables 4a and 4b (i.e., original neutralizations to recent neutralizations). Knowing the percentage of students per deviant situation who agreed that it is wrong to engage in such activity is essential information when making comparisons across the deviant situations and between the techniques because, when testing neutralization theory, *one cannot include those individuals who believe in and promote wrongdoing or are committed to deviancy*. Keeping in mind, the independent variable is the combination of the moral absolute and neutralizing, the dependent variable is measured by the potential deviant behavior and/or rate of reported deviancy. So, the more informative percentages regarding question #2 are those that are strong, and which are

⁴¹ The researcher often observed embarrassment among the students at the mention of sexual issues. In addition, most schools including this private school are not permitted to teach human reproduction in conjunction with any course or at any grade level; such discourse is dealt with by the parents and/or immediate family members.

representative of a larger proportion of students who adhere to the moral absolutes. For example, of the 227 participants in this study, 178 (or 78.4%) students reported that cheating is wrong whereas only 137 (or 60.4%) felt that fighting was wrong; yet, approximately 54% of the respondents across both categories support the neutralization, Denial of Responsibility. What this means basically is that more than half of the respondents agree that making the claim, "It's not my fault," is okay for situations of cheating and fighting, but a larger number of the sample agree that cheating is wrong. Therefore, a greater percentage of the students might occasionally cheat and claim that it is not their fault. Analogous to this situation are some other interesting percentages between the ten techniques, such as stealing and denying one's responsibility, cheating and claiming that others (i.e., teachers and parents) have done worse, and cheating because the rules against cheating are worthless. Subsequently, it seems that a majority of the students believe cheating is wrong and support neutralizing this deviant behavior by means of any of the ten techniques, but particularly by the original neutralizations.

It is clear from Tables 4a and 4b that the students are more supportive of the original neutralizations than the recent neutralizations (20% versus less than 15%). Of the seven deviant behaviors presented in the survey, the students appear to support neutralizing cheating, fighting, and dating by means of three of the original neutralizations--Denial of Responsibility, Denial of Victim, and Appeal to Higher Loyalty.⁴² What this implies is that these Bahraini students feel that it is okay to occasionally cheat or fight because they are not really at fault (e.g., Denial of Responsibility). Or, they believe it is okay to date because they are doing it for a friend

⁴² Tables 4a and 4b reveal that the student participants express strong support between all ten neutralizations across these three deviant situations; but the stronger percentages are present throughout the original techniques.

or family member (e.g., Appeal to Higher Loyalties). Unfortunately, these percentages, which express support for the original neutralizations across the seven deviant situations and specifically for cheating, fighting, and dating, are somewhat illogical even for this population of youth. It does not make sense to engage in cheating with the thought in mind that it is not your fault; or better yet, that you did not know or were not aware. But, if they define cheating differently than we in the West do or even to a lesser degree, they may do it inadvertently. And, adolescents at this young age would not likely excuse dating by making statements that they were doing it for friends or family. If and when they do date without parental consent, it makes more sense for them to justify this behavior by saying that 'everybody else is dating', or 'once in awhile it is okay to date,' or even 'it is a stupid rule in our culture that kids shouldn't date.' Subsequently, what the students think they may do or say to neutralize a situation may not be what they consciously do to negate the social consequences.

The weakest support was related to verbalizations such as "Nobody was hurt, so it's okay" (i.e., Denial of Injury), which happens to be an original neutralization. All the percentages for this technique were quite low but very marginal for vandalizing and stealing, possibly because these are deviant acts involving property more so than people. Referring to Table 5, one can see that the youth are most sensitive to acts of deviance directed against people. And not surprising, a large proportion (78%) of the middle school students agreed that drinking alcohol is morally wrong and also failed to show support for any of the original or for any of the recent neutralizations; they seem to believe drinking is wrong and do not support neutralizing the behavior.

Little, so far, has been discussed about bullying, even though the largest percentage of students agree that bullying others is morally wrong (almost 82%), no matter the circumstances. The support for neutralizing this behavior is weak, as is the reported number of incidents in the past year. This is a peculiar outcome particularly when analyzing and speculating about the female respondents because the more mature, outgoing girls bullied, antagonized, and bossed around other female classmates on a regular basis. This principal often received phone calls and visits from parents concerned about the social dynamics in the girls' sections.⁴³ Name-calling, intimidation, or ignoring other female students were serious problems throughout the middle school girls, but little endorsement is revealed for neutralizing this form of deviancy. There are two possible explanations for this: 1) comparisons were not made between male and female responses, and therefore, the meager percentages that were determined may be strong support from only the female students, and 2) respondents may have supported neutralizing bullying but identified it as something other than bullying.

Research Question #3: To what extent do the students endorse the five original neutralization techniques compared to the five more recent neutralization techniques in relation to the students committing the seven acts of deviancy?

Tables 5a and 5b reveal several important pieces of information regarding the behaviors of the student participants. The correlations are reflections of the relationships between committing deviant acts and agreeing to neutralize the situations; or, the more the adolescent engages in deviant act "X" the more he or she neutralizes that particular behavior with a particular technique. In general, there is much diversity in the

⁴³ The principal rarely received complaints about bullying among the boys' sections--fighting was more problematic.

correlations throughout Tables 5a and 5b (e.g., original versus recent neutralizations), yet the recent neutralizations are more correlated (almost 78% are significant correlations compared to 55% with $p < .05$) with the deviant situations than the original neutralizations--the opposite of what was found for the percentage of students who support the various neutralizations (see Tables 4a and 4b). Therefore, what are the percentages, and particularly the correlations, telling us about these Bahraini youth?

Keeping in the mind that the average respondent's age is 12 years, which is fairly young to be subjected to the testing of neutralization, we see that the various situations the youth perceive as being okay to neutralize (Tables 4a and 4b) are not necessarily the situations they actually neutralize (Tables 5a and 5b). Or, what the youth think they will do is not quite what the study discovered them doing. Looking at Table 5b (i.e., recent neutralizations), five of the five possible correlations are positive and significant for cheating and stealing (i.e., for those respondents who agree that cheating and bullying are morally wrong, which are two of largest proportions of students). This seems to imply that these Bahraini adolescents are apt to employ any of the five recent neutralizations to justify activities involving cheating or stealing. What is more, four of the five correlations for the recent neutralizations regarding situations of dating, fighting, drinking, and bullying are positive and significant; however, a smaller proportion of students agree to the moral absolutes concerning dating and fighting.

The weakest correlations, overall, appeared for dating and vandalizing (only 4 and 5 out of ten possible correlations, respectively). What this may be suggesting is that these Bahraini adolescents do not date or vandalize property, do not agree to neutralization, and believe that dating and vandalizing are morally wrong. Low rates of

correlation, such as these, tell us little about neutralizing behaviors among the student sample. This may be due to the poor selection of deviant situations; possibly, these are young adolescents who think little about dating and destroying property at their age.

Klockars, Minor, and Coleman basically argued that the five original neutralizations were not enough and there are more useful, applicable techniques for neutralizing the occasional deviance. And, the findings for research question #3 could be interpreted as supporting their arguments, particularly for the neutralization Everybody's Doing It. Every deviant situation correlated positively and significantly with this neutralization. What is more, it seems more sensible to minimize cheating, dating, fighting, vandalizing, stealing, drinking, and bullying by declaring that 'other people also are doing it', rather than professing that it was 'not your fault.' It is difficult to conceptualize that one is not aware he or she is cheating, fighting, dating, or stealing. Along with Everybody's Doing It, the neutralizations, Denial of Necessity of Law, Metaphor of Ledger, and Defense of Necessity were correlated significantly across the seven deviant acts (i.e., six out of the seven). In support of these findings, the researcher would typically hear the students making comments about the rules being stupid, about how they are always good, and about doing certain 'things' out of necessity--she observed and heard the students employing recent neutralizations far more often than the original neutralizations.

The reliability table suggests that the most reliable measures, drinking, fighting, cheating, and bullying are most supportive of neutralization theory (i.e., relating to Research Question #3). When we look at the deviant acts that are most supportive of neutralizing, they are cheating and bullying (nine out of ten significant correlations) with

drinking and fighting having eight of ten and seven of ten correlations, respectively. In other words, the deviant behaviors, which displayed the highest reliabilities, also had the most significant correlations for neutralizing. So, the deviant behaviors that did not display as much support, for example dating and vandalizing, may have been due to inadequate research methodology, rather than thinking that the theory is at fault. What is being said, if we had been able to measure dating as reliably as drinking perhaps dating would have been correlated more with neutralizing. The survey concentrated on deviant acts that were comparative between the two cultures (e.g., cheating, fighting, stealing, and vandalizing). But, the neutralization survey should have been more representative of the deviant acts unique to Bahraini adolescents (e.g., disrespecting others and dating without parental consent).

Present Findings and Existing Literature

Past studies reveal that neutralizing deviant behavior remains a common feature of our society. And, what is more, studies are showing that neutralization techniques are being employed by professional people to justify occasional wrongdoing at the workplace; that is, some studies are including less the stereotypical delinquent or deviant behaviors. For example, several studies conducted in the last several years include Medicare/Medicaid fraud among speech, occupational, and physical therapists (Evans and Porche 2005); corporate offending in the promotion/sales of pharmaceutical drugs (Piquero et al. 2005); reporting (or lack of) occupational misconduct among military personnel (Pershing 2003); and occupational deviance among veterinary medical practice (Gauthier 2001).

Another interesting revelation about recent research concerning neutralization theory is the inclusion of qualitative methods. The theory of neutralization traditionally was tested by standard, quantitative methodology including statistical analyses, but lately many social scientists are leaning towards in-depth, semi-structured interviews among deviant subcultures (Hathaway 2004; Copes 2003; Cromwell and Thurman 2003; Thompson et al. 2003; Peretti-Watel 2003; Montemurro 2001). This methodological style seems to allow the researchers to tap into or discover new, different versions of verbalizations for the same neutralization technique. As was mentioned briefly before, a problem with the weak support for neutralizing in the present study may be due to the participants not identifying with the one verbalization per technique.

Several interesting studies were conducted in the past few years, which empirically tested neutralization theory in regards to criminal behavior by means of qualitative methodology (Cromwell and Thurman 2003; and Copes 2003). Shoplifters and auto thieves have been found to neutralize their criminal activities predominantly with the five techniques presented by Sykes and Matza (1957) and to some extent with Defense of Necessity and Everybody's Doing It (Coleman 1994). Both studies, here, conducted lengthy interviews with respondents in an attempt to identify and isolate those neutralizations they--the criminals--agreed were most helpful in minimizing their criminal behavior. Cromwell and Thurman (2003:542) pointed out, "Thus, attributing behavior to poor parenting, bad companions, or internal forces (the devil made me do it) allows the offender to avoid disapproval of self or others, which in turn, diminishes those influences as mechanisms of social control." Most respondents were adult, white males from blue-collar, working-class families with minimal education.

Neutralization also has been found to take place in various professional arenas, such as pharmaceutical companies (Piquero et al. 2005), veterinary medicine (Gauthier 2001), and therapeutic fields (Evans and Porche 2005). First off, influence from coworkers and friends including that of the perceived attitudes of the board of directors directly related to the use of neutralizations--Denial of Injury and Appeal to Higher Loyalty--amidst the corporate climate (Piquero et al. 2005); and, this social influence at the work place seems to resonate with the correlations found in the present study for Everybody's Doing It. The studies including veterinary medicine (Gauthier 2001) and therapeutic professionals (Evans and Porche 2005) involved billing fraud and neutralizing behaviors. Again, strong support was found for Everybody's Doing It but also for Denial of Injury and Defense of Necessity. The respondents in these studies possessed four-year college degrees including professional degrees, and the data were collected via in-depth interviews.

The employment of neutralization techniques has helped individuals cope with social stigmas as well (Thompson et al. 2003; Montemurro 2001). Topless dancers and bachelorette party-goers have learned to normalize and neutralize their deviant behaviors according to recent research involving young, middle-class women. Even though neither study specifies the frequency of using neutralizations, both found that traditional or original neutralizations are employed to manage negative social stereotypes and stigmas associated with various sexually oriented activities.

Norris and Dodder (1979), many years back, found among high school students in Oklahoma the presence of neutralizing for speeding, driving without a license, drunkenness, and truancy. And, an important finding in their study was also found in the

present study, for they state, “We did find that the percentages in each normative category varied considerably from one behavior to another” (Norris and Dodder 1979:553). What this implies, from this study and the others mentioned, is that the type of deviant or criminal behavior is important in relation to whether or not they neutralize.

It is difficult to pinpoint findings throughout the research literature that argue certain neutralizations are more valuable or useful than other neutralizations. What is important to remember, here, is that neutralizations appear to be an intricate part of our daily lives, from those individuals who minimize daily behaviors that are not problematic and typically overlooked to those individuals that lead risky, non-conventional, and even scandalous lifestyles. All the studies reviewed support the idea of neutralizing certain deviant and criminal behaviors for certain groups of individuals in certain situations.

Each aforementioned study found support for neutralization theory. The outstanding difference between the studies and endorsements of the original and more recent neutralizations was dependent on the deviant or criminal behavior being investigated. As stated earlier, different neutralizations will be employed for different circumstances--neutralizations are situational. Unfortunately, none of the recent studies involved adolescents; however, many of the earlier studies focused on youth including Norris and Dodder (1979:554); and, they conclude in their article, “Our findings...encourage us to do further research of this orientation.”

Interpretations of the Present Study

The student sample, in general, can be described as morally sensitive, marginally deviant, and supportive of the social standards in Bahrain. This was anticipated primarily because of the age of the sample. These adolescents are young, immature, naïve, very

family oriented, and predominantly Muslim. What is more, a feature, which many Western people overlook regarding these adolescents, is that they face more challenges in their education than most students in the states. These students should be commended for their daily efforts and mental stamina; for, they are expected to master the English language and Arabic language including various social, cultural, and historical aspects of both disciplines in conjunction with mathematics and sciences.⁴⁴ Too often, the researcher overheard the teaching staff complaining about the lack of effort displayed by many students--the teachers rarely took notice of how much these youth have accomplished in their short lifetime. Even though it was mentioned earlier that the students' behaviors were often problematic, the researcher is convinced they are good-natured, sincere, and innocent.

It was to the researcher's surprise that, for those students who believed in moral absolutes, a greater percentage of the student participants supported or endorsed the five original neutralizations, yet in relation to neutralizing and committing deviant acts, the correlations were stronger for the five recent neutralizations. On average, 34% of the students agreed that it was okay to employ the neutralization, Denial of Responsibility or "It's not my fault", across the seven deviant situations, particularly for acts of fighting (55.5%) and cheating (53.3%). Whereas, when considering the relationship between neutralizing and committing deviancy, 31 of the 40 possible correlations--between employing neutralizations and the commission of deviant acts--were positive and significant ($p < .05$) for the recent techniques. Even though the correlations are not strong, they seem to signify that the more these adolescents engage in these deviant behaviors the more likely they are to verbalize the recent neutralizations, particularly

⁴⁴ The students begin learning English and Arabic in the first grade.

Metaphor of Ledger (e.g., "I can do this because usually I play by the rules!"), Defense of Necessity (e.g., "I had to do it!"), and Everybody's Doing It (e.g., "Everyone else is doing it, too!"). Each of these correlated significantly and positively for seven out of the eight possible relationships.

The researcher frequently observed aggressive behaviors and physical altercations among the male students. But, the data do not explain adequately why this was taking place. For instance, the students seem to report "indifference" about whether or not it is morally wrong to engage in fighting; and, the highest average for reported deviancy in the past year is for fighting. The students support neutralizing fights by stating justifications such as "It's not my fault," "My friend needed help," "I had to fight to save my reputation," or "It's no big deal because nobody got hurt." But, the problem here is that the students do not believe that fighting in general is wrong; therefore, these excuses that the students reportedly support and possibly use in their defense may be actually learned after-the-fact rationalizations. So, when considering fighting among Bahraini youth, neutralization theory appears to not explain effectively this form of deviancy.

The student sample is most consistent when providing responses for situations of cheating whether it is acknowledging support, endorsement, involvement, belief in moral absolute, or in general. In other words, the idea of cheating is persistent throughout this study and therefore merits further review. I, the researcher, want to make the generalization that Bahraini youth and adults agree that cheating is wrong (and they will tell you this is unacceptable behavior) but admit amongst themselves that it is necessary to do this to get ahead academically. It appeared to the researcher that there were more students at this school who cheated than there were students who strived to earn good

grades on their own; and I think this was an island wide problem. Speculating, because of social and economic pressures, they likely find cheating acceptable and even vital in many cases. Critics may complain that this idea is merely hear say; but it entails plagiarizing, cheating on exams, having family members complete assignments, and paying tutors to do homework and write papers.⁴⁵ In addition, the data (Table 1b) reveal that a large majority of high school graduates will attend college and to do this they will need strong grade point averages, because many of them anticipate doing below average work on entrance exams (e.g., ACT and SAT exams).⁴⁶

The new theorists believed that original neutralization theory was of value, yet felt Sykes and Matza overlooked the more relevant neutralizations which people use. This study revealed the newer techniques relating more to what the student sample did rather than what the sample believed or supported. I, the researcher, can remember conversations with groups of students arguing "It's not my fault" (e.g., Denial of Responsibility), but in the privacy of my office, they would admit "Everyone else was doing it." They were sincere and believed they should not receive punishment; if they were to receive punishment, they argued everyone should be punished. What may be concluded from this is, on individual levels, students seem to use the recent neutralizations, yet in group environments they seem to resort to original neutralizations.

Critical review. One of the more challenging aspects of conducting this research is deciding what the results really tell us about Bahraini youth and deviant behavior. As mentioned earlier, there are limitations to the study, which should not be overlooked when making generalizations or concluding remarks about this population of adolescents.

⁴⁵ Cheating was one of the primary discipline problems at this school, and it took on many different forms.

⁴⁶ Many of these students fear they will perform poorly on entrance exams because they have cheated their way through high school including middle school. This is why they strive for strong high school GPAs.

Foremost, the author is concerned about the language barrier and the limitations of the testing instrument due to the possible misinterpretation of the directions, situations, or statements. The Agreement to Neutralization Survey is not a simple, straightforward testing instrument; if participants fail to understand the directions then responding to the situations and statements is very difficult--individuals can become confused very quickly. This type of survey might be more appropriate for adults, not youth around the age of 12 or 13 years old, particularly those grappling with the English language. The author feels strongly about this point because she also administered a social bonding survey, which consisted of very simple statements about family, school, friends, religion, activities, and hobbies that required responses of agree or disagree--yes or no. The students had fewer questions about the directions, fewer responses of "3" or "do not know," and more comments to the researcher and notes on the surveys explaining why they chose particular responses. Essentially, the author thinks as if the students overall comprehended the social bonding survey better than the neutralization survey. If she was to write this dissertation report again, the author would analyze and discuss the results from the social bonding survey because the responses may be more valid.

An Appraisal of Neutralization Theory

Neutralization theory has received a great deal of attention in sociological research over the past 40 years. There continues to be support for the theory, particularly for certain deviant acts and certain neutralization techniques. Yet, it appears that neutralization theory continues to compete with the idea of rationalization. It remains difficult tapping into whether individuals minimize the foreseeing guilt related to deviant behaviors *before* they engage in the activity or excuse away the guilt *after* they

committed the deed. In addition, for any individual who has completed a neutralization survey, one likely will admit that it is not easy isolating and interpreting his or her thought processes as he or she considers engaging in deviant behaviors. It is easier to comprehend rationalizing behaviors--excuses and justifications that have been learned and found to be useful over time. Also, neutralization theory seems to support the notion that deviant individuals are conscientious actors, and that they are fully aware of the deviant endeavors they plan to embark on. Yet, a valid dispute, here, is we do not know how individuals learn neutralizations in the first place; and when they learn neutralizations. We are not certain they are employing them to relinquish the guilt beforehand. Nonetheless, studies have shown, including the present study, that individuals of varying ages, professions, and ethnicities neutralize in a wide range of deviant situations. Lastly, I would argue that neutralizing is or may be a personal necessity resulting from the stress and strain of social expectations; for neutralizations help us deal with our flaws and imperfections.

Applications of Neutralization Theory

There may be some implications for practical use when considering neutralization theory. Adults frequently teach youth moral absolutes, such as “always be honest” or “never take anything that does not belong to you” but fail to stress the importance of situational ethics. Situational ethics "...represent socially acceptable exceptions to norms which are held as [or understood to be] moral absolutes" (Norris and Dodder 1979:547). Subsequently, neutralization theory suggests that most people are embedded in a normative fabric of situational ethics. For example, many societies profess it is wrong to kill, yet it is expected during times of war. Likewise, depending on the situation, certain

socially defined acts of deviancy are anticipated and necessary in certain circumstances. And what is more, our society expects the greater majority of people to accept moral absolutes along with situational ethics. However, adolescents and young people often have difficulty understanding and maintaining the differences--*the timing*--between these two social conditions. Not surprisingly, many youth may utilize inappropriately or abuse neutralizations amid social dilemmas, which might result in charges of criminal offending.

Since we live in a world of situational ethics, authority figures--teachers, coaches, mentors, parents, and police officers--could discuss with youth ways that individuals are expected to connect situational ethics and moral absolutes with various social situations. In other words, people essentially are required to grapple with situational ethics, not moral absolutes. But often, adolescents cross the boundaries that separate ethics of situations and moral absolutes; that is, they assume based on the situational circumstance that the deviant act is okay or justifiable when it is not. And, what they most likely are doing is engaging in a serious offense or even breaking the law (and attempting to neutralize the act). Therefore, what educators could try to teach our youth is how to apply situational ethics within the limits of the law (i.e., in the context of how the law is enforced), because youth typically are unclear about many of the social expectations in conjunction with various situations.

If we take what we know about neutralizing behaviors, then we might be able to predict future misdeeds. Said another way, equipped with the knowledge of knowing that when a particular group of students engage in a distinct deviant activity they display the propensity to use distinct neutralizations, authority figures could detect and deter

potential negative consequences, harm, or even danger. For example, imagine that a small group of senior boys on a high school football team enjoy rough-housing or hazing other members of the team and typically justify these acts by making comments such as, "...but, nobody ever gets hurt" or "...I can do this because I am a senior." Because of the possibility of team members getting seriously injured during this type of activity, coaches and teachers could be on the look-out for neutralizing behaviors, which are associated with observed deviant activities. As Sykes and Matza stressed, individuals of all ages neutralize deviant behavior from time-to-time, but occasionally people cross the boundaries between social deviance and crime. Thus, with this insight, authority figures could be sensitive to the use of certain neutralizations in relation to the commission of particular deviant acts and possibly ward off illegal activities--or, before youth cross those invisible boundaries between situational ethics and criminal behavior.

Improving the Study

When I embarked on this study I predicted with certainty that there would be bumps in the road ahead, and while in Bahrain, I grappled with the methodological glitches to the best of my ability. The communication between the dissertation team and I was difficult to maintain at times due to the distance, and therefore I often had to make last minute decisions on my own. Therefore, I will be the first to admit that several things could have been done differently to enhance the rigor and replicability of this study.

The researcher should not play a dual role in a research study. From day one, I was a principal at this school--*not a researcher*--and I was very committed to my administrative responsibilities; I strived to excel and be commended for my efforts.

There were two primary reasons for my devotion to this job: 1) the school was paying me an excellent salary, and 2) it was a valuable learning experience that could boost my professional development. Therefore, my time and energy was directed more toward the administrative duties and less to collecting data. Nevertheless, I was able to conduct the study at the school because of my role as the principal.

Language barriers are very problematic when conducting research with samples that have not mastered the English tongue. I prepared the survey with simple words, phrases, and situations that I felt the students could understand. Yet, when I administered the surveys I could see they were struggling with the directions and various statements. Next time, we would work through the survey as a group; I would allow the students to share out loud their misunderstandings about words, situations, and statements in hopes of providing clarity before they respond. This would not be a group project, for I would be advising that each student respond according to what he or she thinks. Basically, future investigators should assess the surveying situation and make necessary modifications to minimize any misconceptions due to language barriers.

Another aspect to consider, particularly when testing a theory such as neutralization, is the age of the sample. As we have seen, conceptualizing the notion of neutralization is challenging, even for many seasoned theorists and researchers. For instance, trying to identify whether or not you make excuses before or after doing something you believe to be wrong, can be exacerbating. And, your insights might vacillate between slightly agree, slightly disagree, and do not know from one survey to the next. The high school students in reference to this study likely would have been a more reliable sample to survey due to the complexity of testing neutralization theory. I

believe the students in the middle school were too young to respond adequately to the neutralization survey. Of course, utilizing a different theoretical perspective also might reveal different results. Labeling theory, for example, would seem worthwhile pursuing because, if what or who is labeled deviant could be identified via a less complex survey or a more mature sample, then possibly, the issue of defining deviancy in the Bahraini culture might be resolved.

The unexpected insights, which are obtained by conducting qualitative research, should have been exploited more in this study. For instance, many of the recent sociological studies testing neutralization have done so via qualitative measures; they focused on the construction and use of different verbalizations for particular neutralizations. However, engaging in conversations and activities with the students, particularly at school, which involved deviant behaviors, conflicted with my role as the principal. I was expected to prevent and stop deviant, problematic behaviors, not observe them. On too many occasions, I had to intervene and diffuse situations that would have resulted in valuable research data. Future researchers should avoid placing themselves in conflicting roles.

A possible advantage gained from the depth of this study is that any one of the deviant situations could be isolated, probed, and further investigated among most any population of youth or adults. The findings presented here provide researchers with a framework or foundation--a base rate of neutralizing and deviant behavior--for developing and implementing future cross-cultural empirical studies. More studies of this type should be conducted; studies that integrate qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For, a lot of diverse data can be collected in a single study when working

back-and-forth between these two methodological approaches. And, neutralization theory continues to be of value in sociological research, particularly when trying to explain why groups of individuals deviate in certain situations. What is more, even with the completion of this study, we still have much to learn about the people of the Middle East, particularly the young people. The world is changing rapidly, and groups of people everywhere are affected in one way or another by these changes. I speculate the adolescents in the Middle East will become more like the adolescents in Western nations due to the Internet, Hollywood, and mass media. Yet, one will not know unless research of this nature continues.

Section Summary

In this final chapter the findings were discussed in relation to each research question. It was determined that the Bahraini adolescents understand the concept of deviancy and deviant behaviors. A large percentage of students believed in the moral absolutes and supported neutralization techniques, particularly the five original neutralizations. However, the relationship or correlation between committing deviant acts and neutralizing was more prevalent for the five recent neutralizations. I argued that a reason for this surprising finding might be do to the participants' actual behaviors differing from their perceived, anticipated--*future*--behaviors. And, a review of the most recent sociological research revealed that neutralization theory remains an important perspective when analyzing and understanding deviancy. In addition, the social constructivist perspective was an essential approach in this study and will continue to be imperative when conducting research among groups of people that are not well understood. I discussed several limitations of this research study, and they involved the

complexity of the neutralization survey, language barriers, age of sample, and researcher role conflicts. Finally, I discussed how the study could be improved. Admitting the problems with one's methodologies and authenticity of the findings are the least exciting aspects of conducting research; however, I found a great deal of value in this obligation as a researcher. I realize I would rather disclose the holes in the research study and allow readers to make their own conclusions than defend invalid, erroneous generalizations about the research.

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Appendix A

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

Dear Parents,

Greetings to you and your family! I sincerely hope that everyone enjoyed a wonderful summer break. A fantastic school year is planned and many challenging, exciting academic endeavors lie ahead.

With that said, Dr. Richard Dodder and myself would like to invite your child(ren) to participate in a sociological research study. This particular study is concerned with the opinions and attitudes of youth in Bahrain regarding deviancy. Deviancy can be described as behaviors and activities that break "social and/or cultural rules." For example, in the United States the act of body piercing is considered by many to be deviant behavior (for it can hinder employment opportunities). The point of this study is to discover how your child(ren) identifies and defines deviant behavior in his or her society.

Dr. Richard Dodder is a distinguished Professor of Sociology at the Oklahoma State University. Dr. Dodder has published over 115 articles in professional journals and assisted with the publication of nine books. As a reminder, I am the acting Head of Middle School and am available at any time to discuss further the details of this proposed study. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate at the Oklahoma State University and the results of this project will be reported in my doctoral dissertation.

Your child(ren) will be asked to volunteer for participation in this study. I will be sending home with the students a "Letter of Consent", which must be signed by the parents for the child(ren) to be eligible for participation. In addition, it is very important for you and your child(ren) to understand that they (e.g., the participants) may withdraw from this study at any time. Furthermore, each participant will be assigned a numerical code. Numerical codes will be used on the surveys such that the child(ren)s' responses cannot be identified with any particular participant. In other words, the participants will remain "anonymous." The students will be asked to place their completed surveys in sealed boxes (in the classroom) whereupon I will retrieve them; no other staff member will have access to these surveys. Once I have reviewed the responses, the surveys will be destroyed.

At a later date in the school year--possibly in the spring--I plan to interview randomly selected students. Your son or daughter may or may not be selected to participate in the interview process. If your child is selected to be interviewed and you agree to permit him or her to participate, please sign on the appropriate line of the consent form. The purpose of the one-on-one interviews is to gain a better understanding of the students' perceptions and interpretations of "bad behaviors." The information gathered during these informal interviews will be used to clarify or to reinforce the responses provided in the two surveys. The identities of the students participating in the interviews, which will be conducted by me, will remain confidential.

I want to take this moment to express to you that I will understand if you do not wish for your child(ren) to participate in this study. I do not want any child (or family) to feel as if they "must" participate in this project. It may seem that the topic of deviant behavior is too sensitive

of an issue for your child to understand and identify. However, I believe that your child(ren) opinions and beliefs are very important. Your child(ren)'s feelings and ideas can help my society better understand your society.

I wish to thank you for considering your child(ren) as a participant in this research study. Again, I am available at any time to discuss this project with you in more detail. Please feel free to stop by my office when it is convenient for you.

Kindly,

Ms. Brooke Ayars
Head of Middle School

Appendix B

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear Parents,

Greetings! I hope the school year is going well for you and your family. I am certainly enjoying my position as Head of Middle School. It is very rewarding working with the students and the faculty.

The purpose of this letter is to request permission from you for the participation of your child in a sociological research study, which in its entirety consists of two surveys and informal interviews. The study is being supervised by Dr. Richard Dodder and conducted by me. The information gathered in this project will be reported in my doctoral dissertation. I recently sent home with the students a description of this study, however if you failed to receive one, please contact me or the administration for a copy of the letter.

Basically, the study is concerned with how your child feels about the social and cultural expectations and rules in Bahrain. Many of the questions and statements in the two surveys and one-on-one interviews address issues regarding deviant behaviors and activities--those acts that break social rules. More specifically, the participants will be asked whether or not he or she "agrees" or "disagrees" with certain behaviors, activities, rules, beliefs, etc. In addition, some of the questions are related to family, friend, and school relations. It is important to note that there are no right or wrong responses; the participants are asked to disclose their "opinions" and "understandings" of social rules.

The students will be asked to volunteer for participation in this study. In other words, any participant who agrees to participate can "withdraw" from the study at any time. I am coordinating with the school administration regarding the dispersement of the surveys. We do not want to schedule a day or a class period that may hinder regular class schedules. The participants will be asked to *not* provide their names on the surveys and will be asked to place them upon completion in a sealed box at the end of the class period. The surveys will be administered to every participant at the same time. I personally will collect these boxes. The completed surveys will remain in my possession until the responses have been review. Once this is finished, I will destroy the surveys.

I will be conducting informal interviews at a later date. Again, your son or daughter may or may not be selected to participate in this portion of the study. If so, your permission is necessary before the interviews may be arranged. The identities of the students participating in the informal interviews will remain confidential. I am not interested in "who" provides the information, but rather "what" is discussed during the interview process. If you agree to allow your child to be audio taped; the tapes will be destroyed after I have transcribed the conversations. Please remember, your child's identity will not be revealed in the final report.

If you have any concerns regarding the participatory obligations or research intentions for this study, please contact me at school. If you wish to speak with Dr. Richard Dodder, he may be reached at 01-405-744-6105 or at rdodder@okstate.edu. If you have concerns regarding the obligations of the researchers, please contact Dr. Carol Olson, Institutional Review Board Chairwoman, 415 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078. Dr.

Olson also may be contacted at 01-405-744-1676 or at colson@okstate.edu.

I wish to thank you for your consideration regarding your son's or daughter's participation in this study.

Kindly,

Ms. Brooke Ayars
Head of Middle School

PARENT CONSENT FORM [Please return to Ms. Brooke]

Student Name (Print) _____

Parent Name (Print) _____

_____ Yes, I permit my child to participate in the survey portion of the study.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

_____ Yes, I permit my child to participate in the informal interviews and discussion groups.

Parent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

STUDENT PARTICIPATION SCRIPT / ASSENT FORM

Dear Students,

Greetings and welcome back to school! If you are a new student, then allow me to personally welcome you to our American School by answering any questions you may have regarding the upcoming school year. Please stop by my office or give me a call if you, your friends, or your family has any concerns.

As many of you know, I am the Head of Middle School, or the Middle School Principal. But, I am also a doctoral candidate at Oklahoma State University. What this means is that I am very close to earning a Doctor of Philosophy (also called Ph.D.) in Sociology. My final academic obstacle is to conduct a scientific research study. And, the study I have selected to conduct involves questioning, surveying, and interviewing Bahraini youth regarding their opinions, perceptions, and beliefs about "deviancy."

We typically define "deviancy" as behaviors and activities that break social rules. Deviant acts are not necessarily identified by illegal behaviors, or doing "something" that breaks the law. But more importantly, they are acts that you or I might consider as socially unacceptable or wrong. The Islamic way-of-life is very interesting, and it maintains unique social and cultural rules. These rules become important if the people of Bahrain wish to get along with one another. For my research project, I am interested in how the youth in Bahrain feel about these social and cultural rules. More specifically, I want to better understand the differences between "good" behaviors and "bad" behaviors. I want to better understand the social rules and the various activities, which are identified as inappropriate or unacceptable by the Bahraini youth. Your opinions and beliefs are the backbone of this project.

With that said, I want to ask each student in grades 6 - 12 to participate in my research project. I do not want any student to feel as if he or she must participate; your involvement in this research study is voluntary. Keep in mind that you may withdraw at any time during the study. Furthermore, you will not be asked to provide your name on any of the survey pages. No one will know the content of your responses. If you agree to participate in this study, it is important that you sign your name at the bottom of this letter. I also need your parent's permission, yet a separate letter and consent form will be sent home at a later date. Please come see me if you have any questions at any time during this project; I will be happy to talk to you about my academic interests and research.

You will complete two different surveys in the first portion of the study. These surveys will ask you whether or not you agree with particular statements concerning a wide range of topics such as family and school rules, after school activities, academic performance and expectations, friendships and social relations, community rules, and hobbies and aspirations. I also will ask you some general questions about yourself (e.g., age, gender, grade level, etc.). I will not ask you for your name. Each participant will be assigned a numerical code because I do not want you to worry about whether or not someone will find out what your responses were on the surveys. Social scientists call this process "maintaining participant *anonymity*."

Each survey will be distributed to all participants at the same time. I am working with your teachers and the high school principal to arrange an appropriate day and time. When you

have finished with the survey, please place it in the sealed box at the front of the classroom. I will pick up these boxes at the end of the class period. After I have reviewed the surveys, they will be destroyed.

The second portion of the study involves participating in one-on-one interviews. I will conduct these interviews. You may or may not be randomly selected to participate in the interview process. If so, I will have a general list of questions regarding identifying characteristics of "naughty" students, identifying social rules and after school activities, identifying social activities on the island, etc. Unlike the survey portion of the research project where your responses are somewhat restricted, you can freely express what you know and understand about local deviant behavior.

I hope you will discuss this research project with your parents and make the decision to participate. Please note that no one will be allowed to participate without signing the consent forms. I want to encourage each student and his or her parent's to ask me questions about my project because I am following the "scientific method" for conducting research. You and your classmates will be witnessing the actual scientific process take place. And, you will enjoy the unique title of "participant." I bet that many youth in Bahrain likely have never had the opportunity to be involved in such a project. That is unfortunate because I think your opinions and ideas are very important to the social science communities across the world.

Kindly,

Ms. Brooke Ayars
Head of Middle School

Student Name [Print]: _____

_____ Yes, I wish to participate in Ms. Brooke's research study (please check).

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E

NEUTRALIZATION AGREEMENT SURVEY

This questionnaire is designed for dissertation research purposes. As a participant, you will be asked to respond to questions regarding certain behaviors and to indicate your attitudes toward those behaviors. Your responses will remain anonymous, which implies that they (the responses) cannot in any manner be identified as yours. With that said, please do not write your name anywhere on the questionnaire. Please be honest in your responses because *your opinions are very important*. Thank you very much for volunteering to participate in this study.

DIRECTIONS: Following are a series of general statements. For each statement please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree by circling the number corresponding to your response.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

- | | [NO.....YES] |
|---|--------------|
| 1) Generally it is wrong to violate / break a law or rule | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2) It is okay to break a law or rule if a person does not know what the law or rule | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3) It is okay to break a law or rule if nobody gets injured or hurt | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4) It is okay to break a law or rule if it is unjust or unfair | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5) It is okay to break a law or rule if it seems as if there was no other choice | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 6) It is okay to break a law or rule when the "victim" involved deserved it | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 7) It is okay to break a law or rule if it is done to help a good friend | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 8) It is okay to break a law or rule if those people who support the rule have broken it also | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 9) Certain people are entitled to break the law or rule | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 10) It is okay to break the law or rule once in awhile if the person is "good" most of the time | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 11) It is okay to break a law or rule if everyone else is doing it | 1 2 3 4 5 |

DIRECTIONS: Now you will be presented with a series of situations representing particular behaviors. For the comments following each situation concerning a behavior, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that behavior by circling the number associated with your response. *Please remember there are no right or wrong answers and your responses will remain anonymous.*

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

SITUATION # 1: Two students are text messaging answers to exam questions (to each other) while taking the exam.

- | | [NO.....YES] |
|---|---------------------|
| 12) It is okay for the student to do this, whatever the reason | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 13) It is okay for the student to do this if other people are not injured or harmed by the act | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 14) It is okay for the student to do this if the teacher is not watching the students during the exam | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 15) It is okay for the student to do this if the teacher did not adequately prepare the student for the exam | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 16) It is okay for the student to do this if the teacher did not announce to the class that there was going to be an exam | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 17) It is okay for the student to do this if the student's best friend let him or her cheat | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 18) It is okay for the student to do this if the student must maintain good grades | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 19) It is okay for the student to do this as long as he or she is a good person the rest of the time | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 20) It is okay for the student to do this if rules against cheating are not enforced | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 21) It is okay for the student to do this if all the other students are doing it too | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 22) It is okay for the student to do this if the teacher graded the last exam poorly | 1 2 3 4 5 |

SITUATION # 2: Two students go on a date without their parents' permission.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

- | | [NO.....YES] |
|--|---------------------|
| 23) It is okay to do this, whatever the reason | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 24) It is okay to do this if other students are dating without their parents permission | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 25) It is okay to do this if the students are generally very responsible and good | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 26) It is okay to do this if the students have no other way to see each other | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 27) It is okay to do this if the students' parents secretly dated when they were young | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 28) It is okay to do this if the students feel they have a right to date one another | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 29) It is okay for these students to date without their parents permission because the rule is old fashion and unnecessary | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 30) It is okay to do this if their parents never let them do anything or go anywhere anyhow | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 31) It is okay to do this if one of the students was needing help with a personal problem | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 32) It is okay to do this if neither student gets hurt nor injured | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 33) It is okay to do this if the students do not really consider it a "real" date | 1 2 3 4 5 |

SITUATION # 3: A student punches another student in the face during an argument.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

[NO.....YES]

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 34) It is okay for the student to do this, whatever the reasons | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 35) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she really did not mean to punch the student | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 36) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she is the toughest person at school | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 37) It is okay for the student to do this if the other student is a bad person anyhow | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 38) It is okay to do this because everybody at school fights all the time anyhow | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 39) It is okay for the student to do this if it was the only way to stop the argument | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 40) It is okay for the student to do this if the other student was not hurt | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 41) It is okay for the student to do this because most adults have done worse things than this | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 42) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she was protecting a friend during the argument | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 43) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she rarely fight with other students | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 44) It is okay for the student to do this because the rules cannot really stop students from fighting | 1 2 3 4 5 |

SITUATION #4: A student damages the car of a teacher they do not like.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

	[NO.....YES]
45) It is okay to do this for whatever reasons	1 2 3 4 5
46) It is okay for the student to do this as long as no one was hurt or injured	1 2 3 4 5
47) It is okay for the student to do this if some of the teachers have done it or even worse	1 2 3 4 5
48) It is okay for the student to do this because his or her parents pay a lot of money to send them to that school	1 2 3 4 5
49) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she did these things accidentally	1 2 3 4 5
50) It is okay for the student to do these things if everyone else in the class is doing it too	1 2 3 4 5
51) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she is usually good and rarely does these kinds of things	1 2 3 4 5
52) It is okay for the student to does this if his or her best friend ask them to do it because their friendship is very important	1 2 3 4 5
53) It is okay for the student to do this because the teacher was not around supervising when they were suppose to be	1 2 3 4 5
54) It is okay for the student to do this because the rules against doing these things are unfair	1 2 3 4 5
55) It is okay for students to do this if they have no other way to relieve their frustrations.	1 2 3 4 5

SITUATION # 5: A student takes an expensive watch from a classmate's book bag during break.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

[NO.....YES]

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 56) It is okay for the student to do this, whatever the reason | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 57) It is okay for the student to do this if those who oppose this behavior have done worse | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 58) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she accidentally thought it belonged to them | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 59) It is okay for the student to do this because the student who owned the watch is rich anyhow...he or she probably has many other expensive watches | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 60) It is okay to do this because taking things that you want should not be against the rules | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 61) It is okay to take the watch because nobody was hurt or injured | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 62) It is okay to do this if the student's best friend really needed or wanted the watch | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 63) It is okay to do this because the student who took the watch is usually a good person | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 64) It is okay for the student to take the watch because he or she has given other classmates many things in the past | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 65) It is okay to take the watch because other students take things at school anyhow | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 66) It is okay for the student to do this if it is the only way to get certain things for friends or family members | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

SITUATION # 6: A student is drinking at a nightclub.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

[NO.....YES]

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 67) It is okay for the student to do this, whatever the reasons | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 68) It is okay for the student to do this if those people who oppose drinking are drinkers themselves | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 69) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she typically follows the rules | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 70) It is okay for the student to do this if other students or people were not harmed by this act | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 71) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she wants to appear like an adult | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 72) It is okay for the student to do this if the student did not get drunk | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 73) It is okay to do this because the laws against teenage drinking are unfair | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 74) It is okay for the student to do this because many other students drink at nightclubs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 75) It is okay for the student to do this because the student's best friend wanted him or her to drink | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 76) It is okay for the student to do this because it is the student's right to drink if they wish to | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 77) It is okay for the student to do this if he or she knew it would make someone angry if they knew he or she was drinking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

SITUATION # 7: A student says very bad things about another student's mother.

- (1) Strongly Disagree...[NO]
- (2) Disagree
- (3) Undecided / Do Not Know
- (4) Agree
- (5) Strongly Agree...[YES]

	[NO.....YES]
78) It is okay to do this for whatever the reasons	1 2 3 4 5
79) It is okay for the student to do this if no one was injured as a result to the bad words	1 2 3 4 5
80) It is okay to do this if the name calling accidentally "slips out" of the student's mouth	1 2 3 4 5
81) It is okay for the student to make fun of the other student's mother because the other student deserved it	1 2 3 4 5
82) It is okay for the student to do this because people who do not like saying bad things make fun of people's parents a lot	1 2 3 4 5
83) It is okay for the student to do this because he or she was defending a good friend who fought with this other student in the past	1 2 3 4 5
84) It is okay to do this if the student had to say bad things about another students mother to save their own reputation	1 2 3 4 5
85) It is okay to do this if the student who was making fun of the other student's mother is usually a good person	1 2 3 4 5
86) It is okay to do this because the rules against name calling are stupid	1 2 3 4 5
87) It is okay to do this because other students are always making fun of people at school	1 2 3 4 5
88) It is okay to do this because the student has a right under any condition to do this	1 2 3 4 5

Directions: Research has found that everyone breaks some rules during their lifetime. Some break rules regularly while others less often. Below is a list of several rule-breaking behaviors. Please specify the number of times you have done each behavior **within the past year** by circling the number that corresponds to your response.

	Never	1-2 times	3-4 times	5 or more times
89) Cheated on an exam	0	1	2	3
90) Made fun of someone's mother	0	1	2	3
91) Went on a "date" without your parents permission	0	1	2	3
92) Drank alcohol	0	1	2	3
93) Took something that did not belong to you	0	1	2	3
94) Hit a person during a fight	0	1	2	3
95) Destroyed something that was not yours to destroy	0	1	2	3

Thank You for participating in this survey!

Appendix F

FOCUS GROUP

Grade/Section: _____

What do you think deviancy means?

Give examples of deviancy.

Appendix G

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: Tuesday, November 16, 2004

IRB Application No: AS0492

Proposal Title: Social Bonding and Neutralization: A Study of Deviant Behavior Among Adolescents in the Middle East

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited (Spec Pop)

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 11/15/2005

Principal Investigator(s):

Brooke A. Ayars 10000 E. Yost Road Glencoe, OK 74032	Richard A. Dodder 006 CLB Stillwater, OK 74078
--	--

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

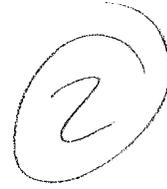
Signature: _____ Date: _____
Chair of Institutional Review Board

VITA

Brooke A. Ayars

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy



Thesis: NEUTRALIZING DEVIANCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN
BAHRAIN

Major Field: Sociology

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born April 8, 1971 in Springfield, Ohio; daughter of
William H. and Betty L. (Kite) Ayars.

Education: Graduated from Mechanicsburg High School, Mechanicsburg,
Ohio in May 1989; received a Bachelor of Science degree in
Behavioral Sciences, which included pre-medicine requirements,
from Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio in June 1994;
received a Master of Arts degree in Psychology at the University
of Houston, Clear Lake, Texas in May 1997; and, completed the
requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, which included
the Certification in International Studies, at Oklahoma State
University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December 2005.

Experience: Raised on a beef cattle and grain farm in Mechanicsburg,
Ohio; actively participated in 4-H throughout youth; employed as a
constituent aid at Ohio Senate while attending Ohio State
University (1990-1994); worked as a teacher-trainer for autistic
children during master degree program (1995-1996); lived and
worked as an educator in Bahrain (Middle East) from 1996 to 1999;
worked as a middle school principal in Bahrain (2004-2005
academic year); and employed as a graduate student teaching
assistant at Oklahoma State University from 2002 to 2005.

Professional Membership: Psi Chi National Honor Society for
Psychology; Alpha Kappa Delta Honor Society for Sociology; and
Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Studies

Name: Brooke A. Ayars

Date of Degree: December, 2005

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: NEUTRALIZING DEVIANCY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN
BAHRAIN

Pages in Study: 135

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: Sociology

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this one-year research study was to discover how Bahraini youth interpret and identify the meaning of deviancy and to test empirically the theory of neutralization. Two of the three research questions focused on comparing the original neutralizations (Sykes and Matza 1957) to the recent neutralizations (Klockars 1979; Minor 1981; and Coleman 1981). The 227 students who participated in the study were conveniently sampled at a private school in Bahrain (Middle East) where the primary investigator was employed as the middle school principal. Each participant completed the Agreement to Neutralization Survey and 196 students participated in informal discussion groups. The investigator was interested in the social construction of deviancy, agreement to moral absolutes and neutralizations, and reported deviant behaviors.

Findings and Conclusions: It was discovered that Bahraini youth identify deviance as those individuals who are socially bad, do bad things and break social rules, and are abnormal. They provided the following as primary examples of deviant behaviors: disrespecting people, fighting, stealing, drinking alcohol, and vandalizing. And, when comparing the original neutralizations to the recent neutralizations, the research revealed that a greater percentage of students who adhere to moral absolutes reported endorsing the original neutralizations, particularly Denial of Responsibility (34%), more than the recent neutralizations. On the other hand, the findings showed a significant relationship existed between the employment of recent neutralizations, particularly Entitlement, and the commission of deviant acts for those students who agreed to the moral absolutes. And finally, the reliability test found the most reliable measures, drinking, fighting, cheating, and bullying, are most supportive of neutralization theory.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL:

