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# Advice and Help-seeking Intentions Among Youth in Israel: Ethnic and Gender Differences

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*This study addresses intentions to seek advice and help among Jewish and Arab youths in Israel. The sample included 805 Jewish, 159 Moslem, 42 Christian, and 43 Druze youths. Two instruments were used: a demographic questionnaire and a questionnaire on help-seeking intentions. Results indicated that members of the ethnic groups preferred using different sources for advice and help. Compared to Moslem and Druze youths, Jewish youths preferred to turn to fathers, siblings, school counselors, and social workers; Compared to Arab youths, Jewish youths expressed less intention to seek assistance from their mothers; and compared to Moslem youths, Jewish youths expressed more intention to apply to relatives, supervisors, and clergy than did Moslem youths. Druze youths were more willing than Jews or Christians to ask for advice and help from school counselors and social workers and more willing to ask help from clergy than were Moslem youths. All four ethnic groups expressed a greater intention to seek help from informal rather than formal sources of assistance. Significant gender differences were also found. The implications of the findings for the development of appropriate services for different ethnic groups are discussed.*

**Keywords:** *help-seeking, youth, Israel, ethnic difference, gender difference, Moslem youth, Christian youth*

Although adolescence is not necessarily a problematic period for everyone (Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996), it

is regarded as an intense period of change in which people need advice and help (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Nadler, 1990; Simmons, Burgeson, Carlton-Ford, & Blyth, 1987). Adolescents who do not receive any help in dealing with the multiple life changes they encounter are considered to be at risk of making wrong decisions (Simmons et al., 1987). Although help-seeking is a universal human activity, like many endeavors, it exhibits cross-cultural differences (Garland & Zigler, 1994). Most of the studies mentioned below involved European and American populations. The present study focuses on the effect of ethno-cultural differences on help-seeking behavior, and examines the intentions to seek advice and help among Jewish and Arab male and female adolescents in Israel.

### Help-Seeking

Help is sought to alleviate distress by using one's informal (e.g., family and friends) and formal (teachers, psychologists, etc.) environmental sources of support (Broadhurst, 2003; Nadler, 1990; Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992; Rickwood, 1995).

Seeking help enhance solving the problem but may be perceived as personal weakness and an inability to cope on one's own (Al-Krenawi, Graham, & Kandah, 2000). The "psychological cost" of help seeking, in the form of admission to incompetence and feelings of worthlessness, may threaten the adolescent's self-esteem (Broadhurst, 2003; Nadler, 1986, 1991; Vogel & Wester, 2003). Both admitting to a need or challenge and actually seeking help can be embarrassing; both underscore the social side of help-seeking, which is influenced by culture and youth culture.

Studies have shown that adolescents tend not to seek help when dealing with problems (Boldero & Fallon, 1995) and prefer solving their problems on their own (Ciarrochi, Deane, & Wilson, 2003). This resistance is attributed to self-reliance (Frydenberg & Lewis, 1993) or the developing sense of autonomy (Richwood, 1995). It has been found that when adolescents do turn to others for help, they rarely use formal sources of help (Whitaker et al., 1990) and prefer to rely on informal sources of support, such as friends (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Rickwood, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994). Some studies indicated that youths prefer to turn for advice and help first to friends

and than to their mothers, while others indicated that the first support system was the family (Ashley & Foshee, 2005; Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2004).

### *Intentions to seek help*

Many everyday behaviors are thought to be mainly volitional, that is, people can either exhibit a certain behavior, if they have a positive intention and attitude toward it, or refrain from it if they oppose it (Ajzen, 1988). These intentions remain within the realm of behavioral dispositions until an appropriate occasion emerges, when the intentions are translated into actual behavior. The intention to perform a specific action under certain conditions is considered to be highly predictive of volitional behavior, as demonstrated in a multitude of settings, study populations, and behaviors (Ajzen, 1988; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Intentions to seek advice and help reflect a subjective appreciation of the severity of the problem, one's perceived abilities to solve problem, and the perceived social restrictions that might prohibit seeking help in a state of need. Nonetheless, the actual help-seeking behavior of individuals may differ from their declared intentions to apply for advice and help. Cognitive development has been offered as an alternative explanation for the decision to seek or avoid seeking help (Broadhurst, 2003). Such cost-benefit analysis will prevent youths from seeking help if they believe that the social consequences and loss of control resulting from help-seeking behavior, outweigh the potential contribution.

Factors, such as age, cognitive development, gender, socioeconomic status, and culture are related to adolescents' help-seeking intentions and behavior (Broadhurst, 2003). With reference to informal support systems, younger adolescents have been found to turn more to their family members for help, and older adolescents to their friends (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). Although consulting with friends increases during adolescence, the family is still valued and used for consultation (Wintre, Hicks, McVey, & Fox, 1988). The literature indicates that older adolescents are also more likely than younger ones to seek help from professionals (Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996).

Females were found to have more positive attitudes toward

seeking help than males do (Garland & Zigler, 1994) and report fewer barriers to doing so (Kuhl, Jarkon-Horlic, & Morrissey, 1997). In general, females were found to exhibit more help-seeking behavior than males from all available sources (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Hunter et al., 2004; Kaukinen, 2004; McCarthy & Holliday, 2004; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996). Although research findings clearly show that females tend to seek help from informal support systems more than males do, the findings about formal support systems are more controversial (Rickwood, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994). Some researchers found that females were more likely to identify a need for help, but that no gender differences were manifest in actual help-seeking after an emotional problem was identified or indicated (Saunders, Resnick, Hoberman, & Blum, 1994). Other researchers claim that gender differences in help-seeking vary according to social context and problem type (Boldero & Fallon, 1995). Sex-role stereotyping studies indicate that females exhibit more help-seeking behavior than males do because they are more dependent than males (Garland & Zigler, 1994), and that females view help-seeking as a legitimate behavior whereas males see it as an indication of weakness and inferiority (Fischer, Winer, & Abramowitz, 1983).

Such stereotyping highlights the importance of family and cultural values, norms, and lifestyles in understanding help-seeking attitudes and behavior. Indeed, different ethnic and social groups vary in the degree of stress attributed to a given situation (Seiffbe-Krenke & Shulman, 1990). Moreover, every culture has its own coping attitudes and norms, resulting in different repertoires of adaptive help-seeking behaviors (Kuhl et al., 1997; Seiffbe-Krenke & Shulman, 1990). Cultural and family values also affect children's and adolescents' perceptions about seeking help in general (Garland & Zigler, 1994), about seeking help for mental health problems in particular (Furnhan & Andrew, 1996), as well as the actual likelihood of using formal services (Stanton-Salazar, Chavez, & Tai, 2001). Because adolescents are affected by the cultural context in which they are raised, the cultural differences between the Jewish sector and three Arab sectors (Druze, Christian and Moslem Arabs) in Israel produce a unique setting for research on help-seeking behavior.

Israel is a Western democracy, established as an independent state in 1948. Today, despite some evidence of unique differences among Jewish cultural groups, Israeli Jewish culture supports the country's development toward a Western democracy. The Arab population, the largest minority group (Abu-Saad, 1999, Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2004), has occupied the territory of Israel for many generations. They represented the majority of the citizens of Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, but today they comprise about 19.39% of the total population of Israel, with Arab youths aged 15-19 accounting for 22.01% of this age group (Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2005, 56, Tables 2.18). Although Arabs reside within the Jewish communities in some cities, they differ from the Jews in significant social characteristics—national identity, religion, culture, and language (Amara & Schnell, 2004; Tzuriel, 1992).

The Arab population in Israel is divided into three main subgroups: Moslems, Christians, and Druze. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2005, Table 1 of Israel Population), the population of Israel in 2004 was comprised of 5,237,600 Jews, 1,107,400 Moslems, 144,000 Christians (117,300 Arab Christians and 27,100 others), 113,000 Druze, and 264,600 individuals of unclassified religion. Despite exposure to the Western-oriented Jewish culture, all three subgroups of the Israeli-Arab society have maintained a traditional and conservative society with distinct, well-defined systems of values and customs (Amara & Schnell, 2004; Lev-Wiesel & Al-Krenawi, 1999; Smootha, 1989; Tzuriel, 1992).

As part of the Palestinian-Arab community in Israel, Moslems, Christians, and Druze They share similar social, historical, and political conditions, but differ somewhat in their religious, cultural, and ethnic identity (Amara & Schnell, 2004; Brenton, 1988; Firro, 1999; Lev-Wiesel & Al-Krenawi, 1999; Khattab, 2002; Seginer & Halabi-Kheir, 1998). The identities of the three Arab subgroups are formed by their religion, national and pan-Arab aspirations, and ecological, cultural, and kinship identities. Some of these identities unite them as a whole, and some subdivide them into separate communities (Amara & Schnell, 2004). Thus, while a deeply religious community, the Druze, maintain a close relationship with the Israeli Jewish society (Firro, 1999) seek to incorporate some aspects of

modernity into Druze traditionalism (Seginer & Halabi-Kheir, 1998). Amara and Schnell (2004) found three variables that significantly divide the three Arab subgroups into separate identities: the ecological-cultural environment, religion, and religious attitudes—religion being the most influential. The main contribution of this study is the examination of cultural differences among the three Arab subgroups with respect to their help seeking behavior, and a comparison to the help-seeking behaviors of Jewish youths.

The Arab minority, regarded as an underprivileged group in Israel, is undergoing a rapid process of social change (Amara & Schnell, 2004; Or, 2003; State Comptroller, 2000, 51b). While all three subgroups have accepted some Western behaviors, such as friendship with the opposite sex, Western types of entertainment, and employment in the free market, these groups continue to impose restrictions on various aspects of Arab life, particularly for females (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). The transition of Arab society from a traditional to a modern one has caused a dismantling of family ties, accompanied by changes in the family structure and social control (Hassin, 1997). Haj-Yahia (1994) claims that the primary reliance of Arabs on the nuclear and extended family and other informal sources for coping follows from the closely-knit nature of family relationships within the Arab culture compared to Western cultures; in other words, the attachment level in the Arab family is higher.

The help-seeking intentions and behaviors of Israeli Arabs have not been widely investigated (Grinstein-Weiss, Fishman, & Eisikovits, in press; Sherer, in press; Sherer & Karnieli-Miller, 2004), especially with regard to adolescents, and no study offers a separate analysis of the three subgroups of Arab youths. Recent research indicates a change in the intentions of using traditional family support in stressful situations by Arab youths.

Studies have found differences in help-seeking intentions and behaviors between Jewish and Arab populations in general, although these differences have not remained without change in the previous two decades. Grinstein-Weiss et al., (in press) and Sherer and Karnieli-Miller (2004) indicated that Arab youths intend to resort to both formal and informal help systems, whereas the Jewish youths are more inclined to turn

to friends for advice and help. Ben-Ari (2004) indicated that Arab students intended to seek advice and help more than Jewish youths.

Ethnic minority members tend to turn to culturally accepted sources for help, many of which are informal support networks, including the nuclear and extended family, friends, clergy, and physicians (Akutsu et al., 1996). Scholars who have studied the issue among older populations found that mental health services and marital and family clinic services were underutilized by the Arab population (Feinson, Popper, & Handelsman, 1992; Savaya & Spiro, 1990). Arabs appear reluctant to ask for professional help in mental health because of the attendant stigma (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000). Another barrier to help seeking may be the normative rule against disclosing private family affairs to strangers (Savaya, 1998). When family sources fail to help, individuals may turn to other members of the community or to religious authorities (Savaya, 1997; 1998). Savaya (1994) found that Arab women were more wary of discrediting the family name by seeking professional help than of damaging the family by failing to receive necessary help. In addition to Arab patriarchal limits on women's help-seeking, the low mobility of Arab women reduces their access to help providers (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 1999). Language differences constitute yet another barrier to utilization, with Arab women found to be afraid of not being understood by Jewish counselors (Savaya & Spiro, 1990).

In general, lower SES populations and minorities turn less to formal support systems because they mistrust the nature and quality of the help offered by the majority as a result of poor experiences with other public services (Nickerson, Helms, & Teller, 1994). The scarcity of professional services, and the limited access to social services in the Arab population (Or, 2003; State Comptroller, 2000, 51b), aggravate the situation given the Arab youths' help seeking intentions to look for professional help (Al-Haj, 1995). The availability of help and acquaintance with the roles of help providers increases the probability of help seeking. Thus, we expect Arab youths to apply less than their Jewish counterparts for advice and help from formal support systems (Al-Krenawi, Graham, Dean, & Eltaiba, 2004).



The literature review indicates that many factors influence help-seeking intentions and actual help-seeking behaviors among adolescents. It has been proposed that cultural characteristics and nationality can be used to predict willingness to seek help (Cohen, et al., 1998). Studies about Western youths suggest that adolescents prefer the advice of friends over that of professionals (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Rickwood, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994), but the situation among youths in the three Arab subgroups in Israel has not been studied and needs further investigation. This study is based on the same sample used by Sherer (in press), but focuses on the intentions of the four ethnic Israeli groups to seek advice and help.

Based on earlier findings concerning help-seeking among youths and minorities, we hypothesized the following:

1. We will find significant differences in the intentions of members of the various ethnic groups to seek advice and help:
  - a. Arab youths will be more willing than Jewish youths to seek advice and help from informal sources.
  - b. Jewish youths will be more willing than Arab youths to seek advice and help from formal sources.
2. Males will have lower intentions to seek advice and help than females.
3. We will find interaction effects between ethnic group and gender, with Jewish females exhibiting the greatest intentions to seek advice and help.

## Method

The study is based on a longitudinal national survey conducted by the Minerva Center for Youth Studies in Israel since 1997. The survey measures adolescent attitudes and behaviors in a wide array of personal and social subjects. The sample was originally based on 68 neighborhoods (56 Jewish and 12 Arab), randomly selected by means of a special computer software from the list of the Central Bureau of Statistics. The probability of a neighborhood being included in the sample depended on the number of adolescents in the age group of

13-18. Two ultra-orthodox neighborhoods were eliminated from the sample because of the youths' unwillingness to cooperate. Thus, the final sample consisted of 54 Jewish and 12 Arab neighborhoods, in which a random sampling of streets and house numbers was performed for each neighborhood. The final sample consisted of 1,055 participants. Six questionnaires were excluded due to partial completion, and therefore were excluded, leaving 1,049 participants. About 15 adolescents in each Jewish neighborhood and 20 in each Arab neighborhood completed questionnaires.

### *Measures*

The instrument used in the longitudinal national survey was a structured self-report questionnaire. It was initially prepared in Hebrew, translated into Arabic by three independent translators, then translated back into Hebrew to verify its accuracy. The original questionnaire included 422 questions. We used two scales from the battery of questions: one contained 14 demographic questions (nationality, age, gender, employment, family status, father's and mother's years of education, profession and employment; number of siblings, income, and religiosity), the other explored help-seeking intentions (11 items). The subjects responded to items such as: "Suppose you were under mental distress and felt that you would like to get some help. What are the chances that you would ask for help from each of the following: good friend, father, mother, brother/sister, relative, teacher, school counselor, psychologist, social worker, supervisor at work, or clergy?" The question was based on similar tools used in the field (Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2001; Raviv, Sills, Raviv, & Wilensky, 2000; Rule & Gandy, 1994), and on information collected during the last four years of the longitudinal study about possible help systems. Responses were rated on a four-point scale: 1 = "definitely not," 2 = "somewhat unlikely," 3 = "probably," and 4 = "certainly." Cronbach alpha was .74.

### *Procedure*

Jewish undergraduate research assistants distributed the questionnaire in the Jewish neighborhoods, and an Arab undergraduate research assistant in the Arab sector. The research

assistants remained with the respondents and offered assistance whenever the youths encountered difficulties in completing the questionnaire. Only a few of the youths refused to participate in the study due to their unwillingness to complete a long questionnaire. The study was conducted over a period of three months.

## Results

The final sample included 805 (76.7%) Jews, 159 (15.1%) Moslems, 42 (4%) Christians, and 43 (4.1%) Druze. The ratios correspond closely to the percentages of these groups in the Israeli population (Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2004). The average age was 15.52 years ( $SD=1.69$ ). Other socio-economic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

The Jewish and Arab groups differed in their socio-economic characteristics. Unemployment rates were higher among Arab parents, and separation and divorce rates were higher among Jews. Arab families were larger than the Jewish ones. Arab youths were found to be more religious than the Jewish youths (see Table 1).

Hypotheses 1 and 2 addressed expected differences between ethnic groups and gender on advice and help-seeking intentions. To identify differences among the four ethnic groups we employed a 4x2 MANCOVA test (Ethnic group: Jews, Moslems, Christians, Druze; Gender: male, female) controlling for the effects of educational attainments of father and mother, family income and religiosity on the 11 potential sources for advice and help.

The MANCOVA test showed a significant overall effect, with Wilks' Lambda = .85,  $(11,746)=110.43$ ;  $p<.0005$ ,  $\eta^2=.62$ . We found a significant univariate main effect of ethnic group, with Wilks' Lambda = .82,  $(33,2198)=4.52$ ;  $p<.005$ ,  $\eta^2=.06$ . Univariate differences surfaced for gender as well, with Wilks' Lambda = .94,  $(11,746)=4.49$ ;  $p<.0005$ ,  $\eta^2=.06$ . We found no significant interaction effects, and therefore hypothesis 3 must be rejected (see Table 2).

The MANCOVA test revealed some expected differences by ethnic group ( $F(3,756)$  ranged from 3.85 to 20.87;  $p<.05$ , partial  $\eta^2$  ranged from .015 to .077). We found differences

Table 1. Socio-economic characteristics of the sample.

Variables	Jews (n=805)	Moslems (n=159)	Christians (n=42)	Druze (n=43)
<i>Age</i>				
Years	15.49	15.57	15.88	15.55
Standard Deviation	1.68	1.74	1.81	1.70
<i>Employment*</i>				
Full- or part-time job	25.9%	14.5%	9.5%	14.0%
Few hours	23.1%	11.9%	21.4%	14.0%
Did not work	51.0%	73.6%	69.0%	72.1%
<i>Participant's religiosity*</i>				
Most religious	11.8%	3.3%	.0%	.0%
Observant	13.1%	27.2%	2.6%	12.8%
Moderately observant	24.6%	62.9%	73.7%	79.5%
Secular	50.5%	6.6%	23.7%	7.7%
<i>Father's employment*</i>				
Employed	82.6%	77.1%	87.8%	95.3%
Unemployed	9.5%	20.4%	9.8%	2.3%
Don't know	3.6%	1.9%	2.4%	2.3%
Died	4.4%	0.6%	.0%	.0%
<i>Father's years of Education*</i>				
Mean	12.79	10.85	13.09	12.76
Standard Deviation	3.37	3.85	4.15	3.70
<i>Mother's employment*</i>				
Employed	82.6%	77.1%	87.8%	95.3%
Unemployed	9.5%	20.4%	9.8%	2.3%
Don't know	3.6%	1.9%	2.4%	2.3%
Died	4.4%	.6%	0.0%	0.0%
<i>Mother's years of education*</i>				
Mean	12.93	11.07	12.20	10.72
Standard Deviation	3.04	2.75	2.89	3.08
<i>Family status (parents are alive)*</i>				
Parents live together	88.0%	99.3%	97.4%	90.6%
Parents separated	12.0%	.7%	2.6%	2.5%
<i>Family income<sup>a</sup>*</i>				
Mean	3.23	2.75	2.80	2.97
Standard Deviation	.79	.61	.67	.74
<i>Siblings*</i>				
Mean	2.70	5.03	3.54	4.57
Standard Deviation	1.72	2.01	1.54	1.36

<sup>a</sup> 4= above average, 3=average, 2=lower than average, 1= no income

\*p<.05

among the groups in the youths' intentions to seek advice and help from fathers, mothers, siblings, school counselors, social workers ethnic and the clergy. *Post hoc* analysis revealed that the Jewish youths showed less intention to seek advice and help from fathers, mothers, siblings, than did Moslem, Christians and Druze youths, less intention to seek advice and help from school counselors and social workers than did Moslem and Druze youths; and greater intention to seek advice and help from relatives ( $p < .061$ ), supervisors and clergy than did Moslem youths.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of intentions to seek advice and help by ethnic group and gender.

	Ethnic groups								Gender	
	Jewish		Moslem		Christians		Druze		Male	Female
	Male (n=398)	Female (n=407)	Male (n=75)	Female (n=84)	Male (n=24)	Female (n=18)	Male (n=24)	Female (n=19)	(n=521)	(n=528)
Friends	3.45 <sup>a</sup> *	3.67	3.48	3.53	3.38	3.82	3.76	3.62	3.47	3.64
	.71 <sup>b</sup>	.56	.88	.81	.80	.39	.53	.71	.75	.62
Father	3.06	2.78	3.37	2.98	3.00	3.23	3.61	3.00	3.14	2.85
	.91	.94	.85	1.12	1.04	.83	.86	1.03	.92	.98
Mother	3.13*	3.23*	3.64	3.74	3.33	3.76	3.61	3.94	3.26*	3.39
	.92	.86	.72	.61	.79	.56	.66	.25	.88	.82
Sibling	2.94*	2.97	3.24	3.62	3.09	3.35	3.42	3.43	3.03	3.14
	1.01	.94	.87	.64	1.04	.78	.67	.89	.98	.92
Relative	2.31	2.40	2.08	2.20	1.66	2.58	2.14	2.06	2.22	2.35
	1.03	.98	1.05	1.06	.96	1.12	1.01	1.12	1.04	1.01
Teacher	1.66	1.77	1.87	1.84	1.33	1.94	1.66	1.94	1.67	1.80
	.79	.81	.99	.93	.57	1.14	.73	.99	.82	.86
Counselor	1.64*	1.81	1.84	2.05	1.38	2.29	2.09	2.37	1.69*	1.90
	.84	.88	1.01	.98	.80	1.26	.88	1.14	.88	.94
Psychologist	1.66	1.89	1.51	1.77	1.28	1.82	1.52	1.87	1.61*	1.86
	.88	.97	.81	.96	.71	1.01	.60	.96	.85	.96
Social worker	1.56*	1.77	1.85	2.16	1.42	1.94	2.09	2.12	1.64*	1.87
	.79	.88	.93	.99	.74	.96	.83	.80	.83	.92
Supervisor	1.53	1.49	1.43	1.35	1.19	1.70	1.33	1.44	1.48	1.47
	.79	.73	.87	.71	.65	.84	.57	.89	.80	.74
Clergy	1.72*	1.60	1.70	1.34	1.57	1.76	1.86	2.00	1.72	1.57
	1.00	.83	1.05	.74	1.07	1.20	1.19	1.09	1.02	.86

<sup>a</sup> = Mean, <sup>b</sup> = Standard Deviation, \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .002$ , \*\*\*  $p < .0005$

The Druze were more willing than the Jews and Moslems to seek advice and help from school counselors, more willing than the Jews and Christians to seek advice and help from social workers, and more willing to seek advice and help from clergy than were Moslem youths. We found no differences among the

ethnic groups in seeking advice and help from friends, teachers, and psychologists (see Table 2). Hypothesis 1a has therefore been partially supported and 1b has been mostly rejected.

Regarding hypothesis 2, the MANCOVA test indicated significant differences by gender in all sources of help other than friends, siblings, relatives, teachers, supervisors and clergy:  $F(1,756)$  ranged from 4.17 to 8.89;  $p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2$  ranged from .006 to .012. Males had a higher mean score on seeking advice and help from fathers, whereas females scored higher on mothers, school counselors, psychologists, and social workers (see Table 2). Therefore, hypothesis 2 received partially support.

## Discussion

The findings of the study show that ethnicity and gender play a role in the youths' help-seeking intentions. Although the results indicate some significant differences among ethnic groups, the size of the effects is generally small. It seems that treating the three Arab subgroups as a single group is not justified in reference to help-seeking intentions, and future studies should examine the three ethnic groups separately when studying the Arab population.

In general, both Jewish and Arab youths preferred friends as the main source of advice and help. Jewish and Arab youths had higher mean scores ("most probably") for intentions to seek advice and help from friends and the extended family, and lower mean scores ("somewhat unlikely") for their intentions to seek advice and help from formal sources. These findings are consistent with many studies about Western youths, indicating that adolescents prefer the advice of friends over that of family members or professionals (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Rickwood, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994). Our findings emphasize the similarities between the Jewish and Arab youths in these respects (Pines & Zaidman, 2003), and support findings pointing to a departure from traditional family support by Arab respondents (Ben-Ari, 2004; Grinstein-Weiss et al., in press; Sherer & Karniely-Miller, 2004).

The cultural effect identified supports the findings of some studies (Cohen et al., 1998; Grinstein-Weiss et al., in press)

but contradicts others (Sheike & Furnham, 2000). Moreover, it contradicts previous research that has found a lower tendency among minorities to seek professional help (e.g., Abu-Saad, 1999; Feinson et al., 1992; Nickerson et al., 1994; Windle et al., 1991). At the same time, it supports some studies that found Arab youths intend to seek advice and help from formal figures to a greater extent than do Jewish youths (Ben-Ari, 2004; Grinstein-Weiss, et al., in press; Sherer & Karnieli-Miller, 2004). Although such positive attitudes toward help seeking from formal sources are surprising, they can be viewed in light of the greater social openness in the Arab sectors toward Western norms. Although many Arab youths in Israel live in separate communities, some live in mixed cities and most of them have opportunities to interact with Jewish youths and with the broader Israeli society, which exposes them to Western norms (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004). Nevertheless, the result is surprising given the cultural restrictions on help seeking from professional figures, the scarcity of professional services in the Arab sector, and the lower accessibility of social services by the Arab population (Or, 2003; State Comptroller, 2000, 51b).

Jewish youths, in addition to showing greater intention to seek advice and help from relatives, supervisors, and clergies than did Moslem youths, expressed more limited intentions to seek advice and help than members of the other three ethnic groups. The individualistic values on which Jewish youths are raised encourage independence (Ben-Ari & Azaiza, 1995) and support self-reliance or turning to friends in case of need. These positive attitudes toward self-reliance, which are further reinforced by the perceived psychological costs and feelings of worthlessness associated with admitting incompetence (Nadler, 1986), reduce intentions of seeking professional help (Tata & Leong, 1994).

However, the fact that Jewish youths intend to apply for advice and help from their relatives is somewhat surprising, and indicates that the extended family is meaningful for Jewish youths and a source of support that may not be available in the nuclear family. On the other hand, Moslem youths seem reluctant to seek advice and help or share secrets with relatives, which is surprising given the central role of the extended family in the socialization process of Moslem youths.

In the Arab Moslem world, all adults in the extended family, including older brothers and sisters, carry responsibilities of child-rearing and socialization (Dwairy, 2004). It seems that the fact the relatives have responsibilities with regard to younger family members does not ensure that they are necessarily perceived as appropriate sources of assistance. Jewish youths may find relatives caring yet less-emotionally involved or judgmental than their parents, and may therefore be more open to receive advice and help from them.

The greater Jewish intention to seek advice from supervisors can be explained by the higher percentage of Jewish youths in the job market (Table 1), where they appear to have positive experiences. The fact that Jewish youths named clergy as a potential source for advice and help, and that their mean score on applying to religious authority is higher than that of the Moslem youths, is surprising given that the Moslem youths are more religious (Table 1). Apparently, religiosity does not necessarily involve seeking help from clergy, and Moslem youths prefer to turn to friends, family, and other professionals rather than to clergy. This again may reflect the social changes taking place in the Arab sector, as we would expect Arab youths, coming from a more traditional society, being more religious, and being members of a minority group, to be more open to potential help-seeking from traditional sources like clergy.

In light of the importance of receiving support during the adolescent years (Boldero & Fallon, 1995; Simmons et al., 1987), our findings raise an important dilemma. It may be that the same Western cultural norms that reinforce independence and self-reliance also discourage help-seeking when needed and may even result in harmful behavior (Wilson, Deane & Ciarrochi, 2005). At the same time, Jewish youths may have less faith than do Arab youths in the potential help available from family and professional figures. Another possibility is that the psychological cost involved in applying for professional help has different meanings among the four ethnic groups, which might have affected the declared intentions of seeking advice and help.

The picture emerging from this study is not entirely clear. We expect Arab youths, as members of a minority and a traditional group, to be less open to possible professional



assistance and rely to a greater extent on the family for advice and help (Abu-Saad, 1999; Windle et al., 1991). But this is not the case, as Arab youths seem to be more open than their Jewish counterparts to receive help from their families and from professionals.

Druze youths preferred school counselors more than Jews and Moslems, were more willing to apply to social workers as a source for help than were Jewish and Christian Arab youths, and were more willing to seek advice and help from clergy than were Moslem youths. There was no difference in help-seeking intentions from other professionals such as psychologists, which may indicate a growing recognition of the role of formal help-providers in the Arab sector. School counselors are present in the school system in Israel and available to students who seek advice and help on a variety of issues. It seems that this service has two main benefits for Arab students. First, counselors can be approached ostensibly for educational matters, eliminating some of the psychological and cultural costs associated with reaching out for professional help. Second, they can provide advice and help on a wide range of needs. Intentions to approach social workers for advice and help reflect the growing availability of social work services in the Arab sector in recent years, and the trust in the abilities of social workers to provide advice and help in case of need. Given the lesser accessibility of professional services in the Arab sector (Or, 2003; State Comptroller, 2000, 51b), the injustice of the situation is underscored even further (Al-Haj, 1995).

The intentions of Christian youths to seek advice and help are the most similar ones to those of Jewish youths, consistent with the general similarity between these two ethnic groups.

The differences in help-seeking intentions between the Arab subgroups deserve attention on their own right. It seems that the intentions of Druze youths to seek advice and help from formal figures are greater than those of Christian youths (for school counselor and social worker) and of Moslem youths (for clergy). This also implies that no significant differences exist between the three Arab ethnic groups in their intentions to seek advice and help from informal sources.

It is possible that different reasons shape the intentions of help-seeking among our Jewish and Arab participants. We

may attribute the greater intentions of Arab youths to seek professional help to the shortcomings of traditional help-seeking systems (Al-Haj, 1988, 1995; Hofman, Beit-Hallahmi, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1982; Savaya, 1997; Sherer & Karniely-Miller, 2004; Toledano, 1984), which might influence their greater intentions of obtaining professional help. In contrast, Jewish youths may be more sensitive to the psychological cost of turning to professional help (Nadler, 1986), a fear that may govern their preferences in help seeking.

In many cases, the Arab family may serve as the main source of support and emotional ties, but may fall short in complicated situations where professional advice is perceived to be required. The spectrum of situations that conflict with traditional expectations may include love affairs, the desire to live in an open Western society, and personal difficulties with adjustment to society. Schonert-Reichl and Muller (1996) claim that seeking help and advice from individuals in one's social support network is associated with better adjustment, but does not mean this advice is better than the advice of professional. Our Arab subjects are probably caught between their traditional way of life and their desire to behave in a more open Western manner.

The results show major gender differences, except for friends, siblings, relatives, teachers, supervisors at work and clergy where we found no difference. Males indicated higher intentions to seek advice and help from fathers, whereas females showed an inclination to seek advice and help from all other potential sources. However, the effect sizes of the significant differences found are low and their real meaning should be interpreted with caution. The literature supports the finding that females are more open than males to seeking help (Berndt, 1981; Garland & Zigler, 1994; Hunter et al., 2004; Kuhl et al., 1997). As far as specific sources are concerned, our results contribute to the inconclusiveness already present in the literature. Contrary to other findings (Hunter et al., 2004; Rickwood, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994), our study shows that females intend to seek help from both formal and informal sources. Our results also support studies indicating greater intentions among females to seek support from the formal support systems than among males (Barker & Adelman, 1994).

The main reason for the controversial findings (Rickwood, 1995; Rule & Gandy, 1994; Saunders et al., 1994) may lie with cultural differences, the different age of the participants, and differences in measurement tools.

### Study Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

This study is based on adolescents' self-reports. Despite some limitations of this approach, the validity of self-reporting for measuring conditions of emotional distress among adolescents has been previously established (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1987; Offer & Schonert-Reichl, 1992). We have not studied subgroups within the Jewish sector, such as Sephardim and Ashkenazim, or secular/religious/Hared youths. Another problematic issue requiring further study concerns the reasons for seeking help and advice, taking into account the fact that adolescents have been found to turn to different sources of help according to the type of problem presented (Wintre & Crowley, 1993; Wintre et al., 1988). It could prove beneficial to investigate differences between Jewish and Arab youths in their interpretations of various situations and in their perceived need to seek advice and help in certain cases. If such situations can be identified, more appropriate professional services can be offered to members of the two cultures.

In general, although intentions are known to be important in predicting actual behavior (Ajzen, 1988), discrepancies have been found between intentions or attitudes and actual behavior (Sherer, *in press*; Savaya, 1998). Although the Arab youths showed greater intentions to seek help from formal support systems, these intentions may not always translate into behavior. Therefore, it is important to further explore the connections between intentions and behavior in general and help-seeking behavior in particular.

Another caveat concerns the Arab questionnaire, which was answered in Arabic. It is possible that Arab respondents assumed that the reference to professional figures was to Arab professional figures, which may have lessened the extent of mistrust associated with help offered by representatives of the majority society (Nickerson, Helms, & Teller, 1994). The

potential openness expressed by Arab youths to using professional advice indicates a need for the development of appropriate services to better serve this population, and for ways to encourage youths to use such services.

Another issue that emerges from our study concerns the preferences for applying to different sources of advice and help and the expectations for the nature and quality of the service rendered. Given that the advice of friends and family is limited in scope, it would be beneficial to study the issues that youths prefer to refer to various potential sources of help. In light of our finding that the most preferred sources for advice and help are friends and parents, consideration should be given to the development of help-seeking education programs that would promote access to more specialized services (Wilson & Deane, 2001). This should be emphasized in the Jewish sector to reduce the psychological costs of turning to help, while expansion of proper services should be pursued in the Arab sector. Implications for other cultures, probably as a result of higher exposure to Western culture and norms, call for possible revisions in the expectation that minorities have a lower tendency to apply for professional advice and help.

To promote help-seeking behavior among Arab youths, attention should be paid to their culture and tradition, which explain mental health problems on religious grounds or use other idioms of distress (Al-Krenawi et al., 2004). The discrepancy between the number of males and females seeking advice and help is of concern that must be addressed. Planners of mental health services, practitioners, and promoters of social welfare services should be aware of adolescent culture and promote educational services that support help seeking practices from both informal sources and formal professional services in ways that are culturally accepted by the youths. Likewise, given the importance of friends and family in this respect, educational services should empower youths and their families to help in case of need.

In sum, ethnicity and gender play an important role in help-seeking intentions. Different characteristics and values affect individual intentions to seek advice and help in general and to turn to specific figures in particular. Our findings indicate greater intentions of seeking help from friends and parents.

Consequently, we should promote the potential of formal support systems. Reducing the psychological cost of seeking professional help may improve the adolescents' adjustment later in life.

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