

AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION AMONG GULF ARAB YOUTH

By

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary sense of the term, political socialization in the Arab Gulf is a recent phenomenon. The literature on the area has been essentially of a historical or journalistic nature. Empirical studies of social change, especially in the advent of the oil era, have only begun to appear.

This paper will attempt to study some of the causes and consequences of these changes which are unique in many ways. (1) An empirical investigation of the process of socialization will seek to answer some specific questions :

1. What are the agents of socialization?
2. What role do they play in shaping the attitude of the citizen?
3. To what extent have these socialization agents changed and influenced Arab culture in the drive toward modernity?
4. What is the role of the state in promoting some agents over others?
5. Is there evidence of fragmentation in the state?
6. What are some of the orientations of the youth?

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METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the research consisted of the distribution and analysis of a questionnaire administered to a random sample (5000) of Gulf Arab students. Twelve questions measuring specific indicators of socialisation were presented (SIS). These indicators were studied in terms of age, gender, family size, nationality, and socio-economic status. Only 1393 responses were accepted as valid, of the total sample; the remaining were rejected. It should be borne in mind that the sample is not trained to accept the questionnaire format of the study; indeed, the whole concept of research of this nature goes against the cultural grain in that it appears a violation of privacy. Negative attitudes toward the study were a major hinderance in obtaining data. The valid responses were processed by an SPSS program where correlation coefficient, regression and chi square analysis were obtained.

Table No. I indicates the break down of respondents per country.

Table No. 1

Country	No. of Respondents	%
Bahrain	469	33.7
Saudi Arabia	111	8
Qatar	232	16.7
UAE	235	16.9
Kuwait	287	20.6
Iraq*	3	0.2
Oman*	1	0.1
Other Arab Countries*	44	3.2
Unidentified	11	0.8
Total	1393	100.0

The research sample was composed of intermediate and high school students, with an average age of 17.009 years. Males constituted 28% of the sample, and females 71%; 1% declined to identify their gender. Females were significantly more forthcoming in answering the questionnaire, as the sample shows.

* These countries were not the objective of this particular study.

The questionnaire itself is presented in Appendix I. Average family size was 7 siblings, as identified below :

Table No. 2

Average Family Size

	No. of Respondents	%
less than 2 siblings	25	1.8
2 — 8	759	54.5
9 — 12	471	33.9
13 — 16	72	5.1
more than 16	6	.4
no response	60	4.3
Total	1393	100.0

Finally, the socio-economic status of the respondents was as follows :

Professional	39.8%
Merchant	22.2%
Bureaucrat	26.6%
Laborer	2.2%
Retired/deceased/unidentified	9.2%

DISCUSSION

If one accepts as a working definition of socialization, the process whereby a culture transmits and transforms its values from one generation to another, one is still faced with the problems caused by the fact that Arab culture is not homogeneous. (?)

In the desert areas, such as in the countries under study, human survival is highly dependent on the ecological factors present. One factor, tribal loyalty, is imperative for individual survival. While religion is very important in consolidating society as a whole, it has not united the tribes under the leadership of Islam. Hence, tribal authority, which waned somewhat in the earlier Islamic period, has nevertheless continued its authoritarian domination of the individual. In such a situation, the primary agents of socialization would tend to be the customs and

traditions of the tribe. Schools, political parties, teachers, friends, mass media and neighbours would have lesser socialization effect. Since some of these agents have sprung up relatively recently, in the short period of time following World War II, when the Gulf area was suddenly thrust into the 20th century because of its oil wealth and strategic location, it merits study to determine exactly which socialization agents have affected change in the Gulf Arab youth.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Age

Research results indicate that the Gulf students are confused and lacking in priorities. When asked to identify an important topic of concern to them, their answers were vague, particularly by those under 18. Research analysis showed a weak correlation between age and SISI (0.006), and F test confirmed the hypothesis of confusion as indicated in Table No. 3.

The results are illuminating, for while the research was being conducted, the Gulf area was in turmoil; the Irani-Iraqi war, the American hostages, the Arab Gulf Unity conferences, the Israeli excursions into Lebanon, the Palestinian problem all occupied critical coverage, yet the students in general failed to note these issues.

In the question following (SIS2) the respondents were asked about the commandos. It was felt that the students' responses would reveal to some extent their feelings about the defense of their own country. Instead, fully 55% of the sample expressed the belief that a commando is a defender of religion. Of those 24 years old and over, 7.4% believed that a commando is a defender of the nation. No one felt that a commando is a defender of the state. Other responses included 26.7% who described a commando as "the defender of honor", and 18.7% who described a commando as "the defender of the family and the tribe". Thus the findings reject the research hypothesis, that the students would identify a commando as one who defends his country. Analysis revealed an inverse relationship of $-.05$ between age and SIS2, as indicated in Table No. 3.

Most countries have some form of basic defense preparations, either as conscription and/or political indoctrination. (9) Respondents were asked whether they were exposed to any military or political training; 94.2% of the sample replied in the negative. The remaining 5.8% indicated that they had some political indoctrination in school. Of the total sample, 827 (59.3%) agreed to military training, if required; 385 (27.6%) indicated they would refuse, and 181 (12.9%)

declined to answer. The students under 18 were more inclined to agree to military training than the older students. Age and SIS4 correlated positively as indicated in Table No. 3.

In further testing, students were asked to choose among defending the state, accepting a scholarship joining a lucrative business or taking a trip. Most of the respondents regardless of age chose a scholarship over being a commando when asked to indicate a preference.

Those over 16 (85%) generally chose the scholarship, while students 15 years old and younger vacillated between defending the state (36%) and accepting a scholarship (32.6%). Some 15% of the sample were 15 years old or less. Statistical analysis also revealed a positive correlation between age and SIS5. The F test (.432) accepted the hypothesis that the respondents in general were not interested in defending their country.

In spite of their avowed preference for scholarship, as indicated in the previous responses, most students in the Gulf are not interested in scholastic achievement. Contradictions crop up frequently in questionnaires of this sort because students seem to give what they feel is the "proper" response. Compulsory education is a new phenomenon in the Gulf and formal education was not a high priority under the Bedouin ethic. When asked how they spent their free time, few students answered studying or reading; rather, 94% indicated that they read the newspapers or talked to family members.

Gender

What do Arab Gulf students do in their spare time? About half of the male sample responded that they read local newspapers rather than any other activity. Females (45%) preferred to chat with members of their family. Few mentioned traveling, in spite of the fact that most are financially able to do so. Only 1/3 of both sexes indicated a desire to travel in their leisure time. Of those who do travel, 65.6% went only to Arab countries. Most of the other 34.4% went to India. It seems that the Gulf students have little interest in other activities and maintain a traditional aloofness. Some 86.6% indicated that they travel for pleasure rather than to increase their knowledge; 7.4% went for study, while the remaining 6.1% traveled for business reasons.

The average incidental spending per month was over 50 KD (nearly \$200). Spending habits vary with age, with the younger respondents (20 years old and under) spending significantly more than the older ones. The younger ones seek out materialistic outlets for pent-up social frustrations, it would appear. Females

Table (3)
(X1) AGE Relation to (YE)

AGE (X1)

Regression

SISS (YS)

	X2	DF	X26	CC	S	CCS	MR	SR	R	BETA	F
SIS 1	18.233	20	.572	.006	1393	.402	.320	.029	.000	.027	1.079
SIS 2	54.491	48	.241	-.050	1393	.030	.322	.034	.035	.033	1.380
SIS 3	11.998	8	.151	-.012	1393	.323	.324	.048	-.045	-.021	.449
SIS 4	34.557	8	.000	.089	1393	.001	.333	.115	.200	.093	9.259
SIS 5	36.306	24	.051	.129	1393	.001	.334	.006	-.020	-.018	.432
SIS 6	31.022	24	.153	.058	1393	.015	.336	-.052	-.000	-.026	1.007
SIS 7	14.688	8	.065	.181	1393	.001	.336	-.028	.021	.009	.127
SIS 8	6.743	8	.564	.031	1393	.119	.339	.089	-.044	-.022	.485
SIS 9	76.476	16	.000	.042	1393	.056	.347	.129	.117	.080	6.225
SIS 10	42.903	48	.681	.024	1393	.184	.347	.058	.003	.004	.032
SIS 11	142.799	40	.000	-.001	1393	.477	.368	.186	.092	.146	28.642
SIS 12	29.433	28	.390	.033	1393	.109	.374	-.079	-.000	-.057	4.793

X2	=	Chi Square	Rete	=	Test of Liniarity
X2S	=	Chi Square Significance	F	=	F Test
DF	=	Degrees of Freedom			
CC	=	Correlation Coefficient			
S	=	Sample			
CCS	=	Correlation Coefficient Significance			
MR	=	Multiple Regression			
SR	=	Simple Regression			
B	=	Liniarity			

Table S (4)

SEX (X2) Relationship to (YS)

SEX (X2)

Regression

SISS (YS)

	X2	DF	X2S	CC	S	CCS	MR	SR	R	BETA	F
SIS 1	4.320	4	.364	-.011	1393	.332	.267	-.011	.017	.044	2.416
SIS 2	2.117	6	.908	-.037	1393	.079	.269	-.037	.005	.013	.251
SIS 3	.209	1	.647	.134	1393	.001	.284	.134	.000	.059	4.204
SIS 4	.135	1	.712	.033	1393	.104	.284	.033	-.001	-.002	.006
SIS 5	23.243	3	.000	.056	1393	.018	.285	.056	.025	.048	2.185
SIS 6	3.342	3	.341	-.080	1393	.001	.297	-.080	-.024	-.094	11.330
SIS 7	12.550	1	.000	.013	1393	.314	.299	.013	.000	.012	.193
SIS 8	.019	1	.890	-.042	1393	.058	.299	-.042	-.000	-.029	1.149
SIS 9	17.553	2	.000	-.062	1393	.010	.300	-.062	-.000	-.019	.489
SIS 10	56.654	6	.000	.046	1393	.041	.300	.046	.000	.000	.001
SIS 11	8.339	5	.138	.091	1393	.001	.302	.091	.000	.001	.002
SIS 12	6.445	4	.168	.109	1393	.001	.329	.108	.061	.134	25.932

indicated that they spent mainly on clothes and males indicated generally on "amusement."

In terms of topics discussed both sexes correlated negatively with SIS1. Males indicated sex, love and relations with girls as their chief topics of conversation. Females indicated sex and school as their main concerns.

Although the students did not identify religion as one of their main topics of conversation, it permeates their way of life. In the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, the students appear to be particularly susceptible to that part of Islam which preaches Jihad — sacrificing one's self for religion. Thus, the majority of the respondents defined the role of the commando as a defender of Islam. Table No. 4 indicates that the only positive correlation for the role of the commando was the defender of religion. F test, however, (0.251) accepts the null hypothesis that females and males are deeply involved in religious teaching, especially in terms of Jihad. However, this idea is treated differently in practice, as indicated by SIS3, where 94.2% of the total sample expressed no preparedness for military duty. In addition, the respondents were asked whether they were willing to defend their country under severe circumstances. Only two-thirds of the total sample showed interest in doing so, if they had to, as indicated in table No. 4, where the correlation is weak (0.033) between gender and SIS4. Most of the respondents would rather go on scholarship than join the military. However, males showed more interest (51.1%) in accepting a scholarship than females (36.6%).⁴

Family Size

The size of the family is related to its religious outlook, with smaller families tending to be less traditional. Table No. 5 indicates a negative correlation between family size and SIS1; F Test, however, confirms the research hypothesis that smaller families tend to be less traditional. This may be due to a higher standard of living, and the greater freedom of small numbers. The point is a sensitive one, however, and serious deviations from the prescribed form would have to be carefully hidden. Consider for example, the fact that many of the Gulf States prohibit liquor, yet it is common knowledge that it is available and it is consumed.

Religion is also closely associated with politics. The fact, mentioned earlier, that the samples defined a commando as the defender of religion, indicates that there is a general theocratic belief in the non-separation of state and religion. The result is confusion: regardless of family size, the sample (91.4%) refused conscription. Nor were those from smaller, less traditional families any more inclined to defend their country: family size did not have any bearing on the respondents choice of alternatives. Table No. 5 indicates a weak correlation between family size and SIS6. Larger families (over 10 members) indicated a

greater preference for watching television than smaller families. Smaller families (up to 4 members) traveled more than larger families, which might be expected, and spent more money on entertainment than larger families. Other than these findings, family size did not significantly affect other variables.

Nationality

The research hypothesis stated that regardless of nationality, the students in the Gulf would focus on political, economic and social problems in their daily discussions. However, statistical analysis shows a negative correlation of .110 between nationality and SISI. Unlike the Kuwaitis, Saudis, Qataris and Emiratis, the Bahrainis are interested in political affairs and discuss social problems. Compared to the rest of the Gulf, the Bahrainis appear more Westernized, more educated, relatively less wealthy, (due to Bahrain's enormous civil list, the Bahrainis would say) and more dissatisfied with the status quo. In the key question of the definition of a commando, the Bahrainis (56.6%) defined him as a defender of the nation; while the Saudis (65.2%), Kuwaitis (45.3%), Qataris (47.5%) and Emiratis (71.6%) defined him as a defender of religion.

Though they may have expressed admiration for the cammando, the students were paying convenient lip service for their admiration which did not extend to any practical lengths; barely 6% had any military training whatsoever, whether in defense of Islam or the nation. The correlation coefficient of .244 appears in table No. 6 and indicates the relationship between nationality and SIS3.

The Bahrainis also scored higher in patriotism measured as willingness to defend one's country in need, than the rest of the Gulf youth, whereas 74.7% of the Bahrainis indicated their willingness to defend their country, 69% of the Saudis, 68.9% of the Emiratis, 65% of the Kuwaitis, and 57.5% of the Qataris respectively expressed a similar willingness. Approximately 1/3 of the students did not state a willingness to defend their countries.

It would seem that a large number of the Gulf youth do not have political loyalty in view of the general absence of political participation and aggregation. The majority of the respondents, regardless of nationality, preferred to accept scholarships abroad rather than assume military duty in the following proportions: 43.9% of the Bahrainis, 47% of the Saudis, 43.8% of the Qataris, 49.5% of the Emiratis and 44.8% of the Kuwaitis. Table No. 6 shows a positive correlation between nationality and SIS5. Those who wanted to join the military were as follows: 30.4% of the Bahrainis, 26.6% of the Saudis, 13% of the Qataris, 18.4% of the Emiratis and 19.6% of the Kuwaitis.

Table (5)

Family Number (X3) Relationship (YS)

Family Number (X3)

Regression

SISS (YS)

	X2	DF	X2S	CC	S	CCS	MR	SR	R	BETA	F
SIS 1	22.733	16	.121	-.048	1393	.034	.226	-.048	.002	.001	.003
SIS 2	98.725	48	.000	-.017	1393	.255	.227	-.017	.053	.041	2.159
SIS 3	12.353	8	.136	.097	1393	.001	.240	.097	.000	.042	2.008
SIS 4	24.776	8	.001	.009	1393	.364	.240	.009	-.059	-.025	.585
SIS 5	26.134	24	.346	.030	1393	.125	.241	.030	.025	.014	.189
SIS 6	19.323	18	.372	.037	1393	.079	.244	.037	.034	.039	1.864
SIS 7	13.652	8	.091	-.024	1393	.079	.244	.037	.034	.039	1.864
SIS 8	12.113	8	.146	-.016	1393	.272	.245	-.016	-.000	-.013	.237
SIS 9	8.994	15	.913	-.019	1393	.228	.245	-.019	.000	.013	.237
SIS 10	71.676	48	.015	.058	1393	.014	.246	.058	.007	.014	.244
SIS 11	58.761	40	.028	.135	1393	.001	.258	.135	.011	.023	.508
SIS 12	9.000	20	.982	-.034	1393	.100	.261	-.034	-.059	-.039	2.087

Table (6)

Relationship of Nationality (X4) to YS

Nationality (X4)

Regression

SISS (YS)

	X2	DF	X2S	CC	S	CCS	MR	SR	R	BETA	F
SIS 1	8.533	8	.383	-.110	1393	.001	.899	.001	.000	.009	.649
SIS 2	171.951	42	.000	-.069	1393	.005	.899	-.213	.025	.018	1.988
SIS 3	20.466	7	.004	.244	1393	.001	.900	-.243	-.096	-.035	5.721
SIS 4	21.829	7	.002	.119	1393	.001	.900	-.156	-.064	-.023	2.772
SIS 5	69.641	21	.000	.145	1393	.001	.900	-.108	-.023	-.017	1.739
SIS 6	18.707	12	.095	-.020	1393	.221	.901	-.035	.000	.047	14.312
SIS 7	45.801	7	.000	.088	1393	.001	.901	-.005	.078	.026	4.591
SIS 8	39.401	7	.000	-.125	1393	.001	.902	.118	.049	.019	1.743
SIS 9	50.571	14	.000	-.138	1393	.001	.902	.146	.095	.051	11.642
SIS 10	76.702	42	.000	.060	1393	.012	.903	-.020	-.047	-.051	15.905
SIS 11	427.472	35	.000	.194	1393	.001	.903	.090	-.003	-.000	.144
SIS 12	12.777	16	.688	-.075	1393	.002	.904	-.037	-.000	-.012	1.022

The remaining choices were divided between traveling and going on a business venture. It would appear that nationalism is not a marked characteristic of the Gulf youth.

During their spare time, Bahrainis prefer to read local newspapers; Qataris, Saudis, and Emiratis discuss religion; and Kuwaitis prefer to chat with their families. Due to the the large number of female respondents, the national average for travel abroad is lower than might be expected. Females in Islamic societies in general and in the Gulf area in particular are sheltered and much more restricted in their movements than males. Therefore, the sample projected a strong sense of isolation. Of the sample, 75.8% of the Bahrainis, 63.6% of the Saudis, 53.2% of the Qataris, 67.4% of the Emiratis and 74% of the Kuwaitis do not travel abroad. Spending habits of the various nationalities vary widely; the majority of the Bahrainis indicated they do not spend more than KD. 20 per month, while 28.4% of the Saudis, 33.8% of the Qataris, 63.9% of the Emiratis, and 72% of the Kuwaitis spend over KD. 50 a month. The Bahrainis claim they spend their money on books, while the other Gulf students spend on entertainment and clothes.

Socio-economic Status

The results of the research revealed that topics of conversation varied according to socio-economic status.⁽⁵⁾ The majority of the labour class indicated that they discussed economic matters. The merchant class responded that they addressed religious topics, and bureaucrats mentioned primarily political issues appearing in local newspapers. The professional class concentrated on political-economic matters.

In identifying the role of the commando, interestingly, only the merchant class defined him as a defender of the nation. The other classes all agreed that he was a defender of religion (labourer, 66.7%; bureaucrat, 54.7%; professional, 49.7%). Table No. 7 below clearly shows a negative correlation (-0.027) between socio-economic status and SIS2. The finding runs contrary to the popular notion that the more economically depressed an individual, the more he is likely to be politically radical.⁽⁶⁾ 94% of the total sample, regardless of socio-economic status, disagreed with participating in military affairs. 67.2% of the total sample agreed to bear arms only if their countries faced a critical attack. 47.1% of the workers, 40.5% of the merchants, 45.1% of the bureaucrats and 47.2% of the professionals preferred to go abroad on scholarships as opposed to 17.6%, 29.8%, 23.5% and 19.3% respectively who would rather join military service. The remaining percentages were scattered between taking a trip or joining a successful business.

Table (7)

Socio-economic Status (X5) Relationship to YS

Occupation (X5)

Regression

	X2	DF	X2S	CC	S	CCS	MR	SR	R	BETA	F
SIS 1	7.499	8	.483	-.032	1393	.110	.223	-.032	-.026	-.030	1.013
SIS 2	46.265	24	.004	-.027	1393	.153	.227	-.027	-.034	-.038	1.840
SIS 3	4.173	4	.383	.018	1393	.250	.229	.018	.000	.030	1.021
SIS 4	11.172	4	.024	-.035	1393	.092	.231	-.035	-.076	-.047	2.001
SIS 5	18.817	12	.093	-.028	1393	.144	.231	-.028	-.010	-.008	.067
SIS 6	11.312	9	.254	.025	1393	.169	.237	.025	.024	.041	1.995
SIS 7	36.633	4	.000	-.012	1393	.326	.238	-.012	.000	.024	.749
SIS 8	9.115	4	.058	-.016	1393	.273	.240	-.016	-.000	-.034	1.420
SIS 9	6.560	8	.584	-.004	1393	.440	.240	-.004	.000	.013	.223
SIS 10	25.735	24	.366	.033	1393	.105	.241	.033	.002	.007	.063
SIS 11	46.991	20	.000	-.043	1393	.051	.244	-.043	-.013	-.042	1.561
SIS 12	6.399	8	.602	-.004	1393	.435	.244	-.004	-.018	-.017	.403

SISS (YS)

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66.7% of the merchant class spend their spare time watching television. Bureaucrats were divided equally (33.3%) between watching television, chatting with family members and reading local newspapers. 50% of the professional class however, spend their time reading newspapers, while 33% watched television and the rest preferred socializing with their family. Almost all the children of the labourers would rather socialize with their family.

In terms of travel, 78.9% of the working class, 19.2% of the merchants, 53% of the bureaucrats, and 31.5% of the professionals do not travel every year. As might be expected, the merchant class then the professional class travel more than the others. As mentioned earlier, most traveled to Arab countries, and mainly for pleasure.

CONCLUSIONS

The nation of political socialization in the Arab Gulf area is very recent, mainly due to the historical absence of political life. These countries have acquired their independence very recently and have not yet developed their political institutions in a more modern manner.

The societies of the Gulf are immersed in religious, tribal, familial and cultural impediments that are hindering them from achieving a modern form of government. Religion plays the major role in influencing the lives of the Gulf students. Family loyalty comes next in importance as a major socializing agent. The family in these societies dominates the individual in almost every aspect of his life. The average individual in the Gulf state must consult and get the approval of his parents or a senior member of the family for every major action on a daily basis. For example, he cannot marry, go to school, attend a university, choose a major, start a business, build a house, or even choose a friend without at least the tacit approval of his family. Such restrictions create a fatalistic dependency syndrom devoid of any creative individual action. Without the support (material and moral) of the family and its web of connections an average individual in these traditional societies cannot succeed on his own. Local newspapers, that mainly reflect the interests of certain families, are also important socialization agents. However, friends, colleagues, teachers, schools, the state and its mass media and services have little socializing effect, if any, on the political orientation of the youth in the Arabian Gulf.

Appendix I — Questionnaire

- SIS1: What is the most important type of daily discussion among your friends?
- SIS2: How do you define "Fedai"?
- SIS3: Were you ever a Fedai?
- SIS4: If not, would you like to be one in the future?
- SIS5: If you were given the choice to be a Fedai, or receive a scholarship, or join a successful business, or a go on a tourist trip, which would you choose?
- SIS6: What do you do in your spare time?
- SIS7: Do you travel during your holidays?
- SIS8: Do you travel to Arab or non-Arab countries?
- SIS9: Do you travel for reasons of business, vacation or study?
- SIS10: What do you do during your trip?
- SIS11: How much money do you spend monthly?
- SIS12: How do you spend your money?

Notes and Selected Bibliography

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Conscription is a recent phenomena in this part of the world.

Most females know in advance that their parents would not allow them to go abroad on a scholarship.

In this study, socio-economic status is reflected in the occupation of the father.

One should note here that economic deprivation is relative. Most of the native labor is not as economically, socially or politically depressed as the expatriate labor who by far from the majority in these states.

See in this context: Al-Salem, F., Al-Salem, M, and Farah, T., "Alienation and Expatriate Labour in Kuwait," Migration and Development Study Group. Center for International Studies. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Cambridge, Mass., December, 1979.