The Women's Cultural and Social Society (WCSS):  
Its Role in Shaping Women's Political Participation  
In Kuwait (1963-2010)

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ABSTRACT

Feminism and women's rights movements are often seen as concepts and activities that originated within the West. As it is important to examine sociological concepts where they occur, this study reviews these concepts within a particular culture and social context: that of the Kuwaiti society. Specific sociological and cultural features, which are important in shaping the petition for political participation of women in Kuwait, are identified and examined. The focus of this dissertation is to understand the role and impact of one organization, the Women’s Cultural and Social Society (WCSS), in the struggle to bring about women’s political participation in Kuwait. The main strategies and methods used by the WCSS between 1960 and 2010 are emphasized. Data sources include interviews with members and leaders of the WCSS, members of the general population primary documents along with secondary (historical) documents and observations of activities organized by the WCSS. The findings of the study are: the WCSS is perceived as a liberal feminist organization in Kuwait and has an orientation that is quite different from that of the more conservative Islamist or Tribalist associations. The study also identified the various strategies and methods used by the WCSS in its drive to obtain political participation for women. Its strategies and methods changed over time due to specific social and political events occurring in the country. Finally, WCSS members and leaders felt the organization did have a significant impact over the period under discussion, but members of the general population felt that the organization had minimal impact.