Nepali Migrants to the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Values, Behaviors, and Plans

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Introduction

The Gulf Cooperation Council countries-- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—have large migrant populations and their economies rely heavily on this population. This reliance is unique in the world as the United Nations Population Division (2006, 2007) estimates that over one-third of the combined populations of the six Persian Gulf countries are composed of migrants, with the number reaching 78 percent in Qatar. The percentage of migrants in the workforce is even higher, constituting at least 50 percent in every country and reaching about 90 percent in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Kapiszewski 2006; Willoughby 2006).

This large number of migrants has significant implications for the host countries. Especially for countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which currently have huge, but not infinite, natural resources and relatively small locally born populations, migrants are essential for their thriving economies but raise an array of important issues as well. These issues may vary from infrastructure, recruitment and monitoring of migrants, turnover of the population, intermarriage, and the socialization and identities of the children of migrants (Dresch 2006; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah, and al-Mutawa 2006; Shaw 2006; Vora 2008; Willoughby 2006). Such large foreign populations also raise issues of security and the long-run composition of the populations of these countries. Similar to migrants in other areas of the world, these foreign populations may also form transnational communities that have relationships with citizens of the host countries, with their countries of origin, and among immigrants from different places (Kalb et al. 2000; Portes 2000). Furthermore, migrants influence the functioning of the economy, including the flow of remittances out of the Persian Gulf to other countries. The culture, behaviors, and values of migrants can also influence the native populations. These issues are relevant in the present day, and with changes in the global economy, they may become even more pertinent in the future. Yet scholars and policy makers know very little about these migrants and their behaviors, values, and future plans.

This article provides insight into some of these issues in an effort to address this knowledge gap. The broad aim is to establish ways in which the economic and social character of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is influenced by their migrant populations. Specifically, this article focuses on Nepali migrants and four dimensions of their lives in the GCC countries, including (1) key demographic characteristics of migrants; (2) work, income, remittances, and predictors of income and remittances; (3) plans of the migrants concerning return to Nepal or to migrate elsewhere; and (4) values and beliefs of the migrants. This article addresses these issues for the GCC region as a whole and provides comparisons of migrants and their impact across different countries in this region.

Our analysis is based on a unique data set collected from a sample of Nepali migrants in GCC countries. This sample is based on a large representative sample from the Chitwan Valley of south-central Nepal. While collecting survey data from households in the Chitwan Valley, we also collected contact information on household members who were currently living in the GCC and then interviewed these migrants. This representative sample of migrants at destination is relatively rare in the migration literature which often relies on non-random sampling procedures, such as snowball and targeted sampling, which are widely acknowledged to provide unrepresentative samples. Because our sample of migrants is representative, we can have higher confidence that the results obtained from analysis of the sample reflect the larger population of Nepali migrants in the GCC countries.

Although Nepal is a small country of 26 million, a study of Nepali migrants to the Persian Gulf is important for examining the influence of migrants on GCC countries. First, South Asia is currently the dominant source of migrants into the GCC countries (United Nations 2006). In the 1970s, the great majority of migrants to the Persian Gulf were from other Arabic countries (Kapiszewski 2006; Willoughby 2006). This preponderance declined in later decades, and by the early 2000s, less than one-third of these migrants were from other Arabic countries. As the migration from Arabic countries to the GCC countries declined, migration from Asia, especially South Asia, greatly expanded (Massey et al. 1998; Willoughby 2006). The largest Asian migration stream is now from South Asia, with South Asians comprising about 59% of migrants to the GCC countries (Kapiszewski 2006). Nepal has economic and social conditions that are similar in many ways to the other South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Consequently, this analysis of migrants from Nepal to the GCC countries will provide many insights into the nature and impact of migrants from the South Asian subcontinent in general.

Second, Nepal has substantial out-migration, with the GCC countries being an especially important destination. More than 100,000 and perhaps as many as 200,000 Nepali migrants, most of whom are legal, are living in these countries (Graner and Gurung 2003; Seddon, Adhikari, and Gurung 2002). At the time of the 2001 Nepal census, Saudi Arabia was, with the exception of India, the most common destination country for Nepalis searching for work outside their country (Kansakar 2003). Qatar and the United Arab Emirates held third and fourth positions, and sizeable numbers were reported for Bahrain and Kuwait (Kansakar 2003). Migrants are an important component of the Nepali economy, as one-quarter of all households in Nepal receive remittances from abroad (Kollmair et al. 2006). The value of remittances has been estimated at between 15 and 25 percent of the Nepali gross domestic product, accounting for more of the economy than tourism, exports, and foreign aid combined (Graner, and Gurung 2003; Seddon, Adhikari, and Gurung 2002; KC 2003; Lokshim, Bontch-Osmolovski, and Glinskaya 2007). It is also estimated that the largest share of remittances to Nepal comes from the GCC countries, equaling 35 percent of all remittances (Lokshim, Bontch-Osmolovski, and Glinskaya 2007). It is likely that there have been recent increases in both the number of migrants and the value of remittances (Lokshim, Bontch-Osmolovski, and Glinskaya 2007). This substantial flow of remittances is an important link between the economies of the GCC countries and Nepal.

Study Setting

The Chitwan Valley in rural Nepal provides an excellent setting to study individuals' migratory behavior, values, beliefs and their plan. Until the early 1950s this valley was completely covered with dense forest and populated only by sparsely settled groups of hunter-gatherers. Around the mid-1950s, the Nepalese government opened this valley for settlement by people from the neighboring hills and mountains¸ leading to a sharp increase in migration from the surrounding hill districts to Chitwan. In the late 1970s the valley was connected to the rest of the country by all weather roads (Shivakoti et al. 1997). As a result, over time schools, health services, markets, bus services, and employment centers expanded considerably in Chitwan (Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Ghimire and Axinn forthcoming). This massive expansion of services resulted in more young people going to school, working outside the family, living away from family, interacting with the mass media, and participating in youth clubs. For example, among those born between 1936 and 1945, only 31 percent ever attended school, whereas among those born between 1966 and 1975, fully 84 percent had ever attended school. In the face of a rapidly growing young

population with rising expectations for higher standards of living, a lack of economic opportunities at home, and an augmented labor demand both from the booming East Asian economies and the GCC countries, which were undergoing a construction boom, the government of Nepal promulgated a Foreign Employment Act of 1985. The Foreign Employment Act licensed non-governmental institutions to export Nepalese workers abroad and legitimized certain labor contracting organizations. This ignited large streams of international migration, including to the GCC countries, which had been very much limited to India prior to this date (Thieme and Wyss 2005).

As international migration to countries other than India was becoming more and more common, the internal armed conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoists) and the government, which began in 1996, became widespread over the whole country by 2000. This resulted in increased international migration. Although researchers claim the official figures to be a gross underestimation, even the underestimated figures show a huge surge in migration, with the total migrant workers abroad (excluding those to India) increasing from 1,926 in 1992/93 to over a million by the end of 2007 (Bohra-Mishra and Massey forthcoming; Shrestha 2008; Williams et al. 2010). The decade-long armed conflict ended in a peace agreement between the Maoists and the government in 2006, but Nepal is currently undergoing a post-conflict socio-political transformation. Following the peace agreement Nepal experienced a series of major political transitions – the election of constitutional assembly, the formation of a new interim constitution, the abolition of monarchy, the conversion of Nepal into a Federal Democratic Republic State with an elected head of state, and several ethnic movements. Even though great progress has been made in implementing the peace agreement, the ongoing bickering between political parties to form and run a coalition government and various ethnic and minority movements pushed the country into the uncertain political and economic situation, which has continued to lure young Nepali adults to international destinations including GCC countries.

Data

The data for this study come from the Nepali Migrants to the GCC Countries Study (NMGCCS) funded by the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. NMGCCS directly builds on the Chitwan Valley Family Study (CVFS), a large scale longitudinal panel study of communities, households and individuals from the Western Chitwan Valley of Nepal. The CVFS selected a systematic probability sample of 151 neighborhoods in Western Chitwan (Barber et al. 1997). The CVFS defined a neighborhood as a geographic cluster of five to fifteen households. Once a neighborhood was selected, all the households and individuals residing within those neighborhoods were included in the sample. If any of these study respondents had a spouse living elsewhere, that spouse was included in the study. The CVFS started in 1996 by collecting a wide array of information, including community histories, household censuses, household consumption and agriculture practices, individual baseline interviews, and life histories. The households living within Nepal were interviewed at regular intervals over the next fourteen years. In 2008 we launched a new data collection and repeated household censuses and relationship grids, individual baseline interviews, and life histories on those households and individuals who were either interviewed in 1996 and currently living within Nepal or currently residing in the sample neighborhoods. This data collection resulted in 2091 households and 7446 individual interviews with 99 and 95 percent response rates respectively. Further details

about the CVFS are available at the website of the Population and Ecology Research Laboratory, the organization that collected the data, at http://perl.psc.isr.umich.edu, and in Axinn, Barber, and Ghimire 1997, Axinn, Pearce, and Ghimire 1999, and Barber et al. 1997

Our household interviews identified all individuals considered to be a member of the household irrespective of their current location. For each of the household members living outside the household, we ascertained extensive information about their locations, contact information, and when they were expected for visits in Nepal. Our study population of Nepali migrants to GCC countries includes the members of the households residing in the CVFS sample neighborhoods, who were living in one of the GCC countries during July 2008 to January 2009. This study population definition resulted in 526 individuals from 508 households. As expected a vast majority of these migrants were young males, with about three percent female.

Based on migrant contact information collected during the household interviews we administered the interview in two ways. First, those who had returned to Nepal for vacation or a short visit were visited by our interviewer at their home in Chitwan and interviewed face-to - face. As expected, a significant portion (34 percent) of migrants had returned to Nepal and they were interviewed face-to-face. Next, those who were still in the Persian Gulf and had no plans to return to Nepal within a year were interviewed by telephone while they were still residing in the GCC countries.

As one of the first few studies attempting to contact a representative sample of migrants from an origin community while they were still out of the country, our study faced some important challenges and also achieved some notable successes. On one hand, we had no problem locating and contacting nearly all of the migrants who had returned to Nepal. On the other hand, we found it much more difficult than we anticipated to locate and contact migrants who were still in the GCC countries. A number of factors were working against us. At the household level, our attempts to collect migrant residential addresses in the Gulf were not very effective because a vast majority of migrants and their families back in Nepal did not know their addresses. Next, we were unable to get email or work mailing addresses for most migrants. In cases where we were able to get work addresses, we were not able to contact migrants at those addresses. Consequently, the only feasible way to contact these migrants was via telephone. This was complicated by the fact that most of the migrants did not have land lines at their places of residence and we were unable to contact them at their work contact numbers. Finding contacts was particularly difficult for migrant who were domestic workers, most of whom were women.

Thus we concluded that the most feasible way to contact the migrants in GCC countries was by mobile telephone. Even this presented challenges as many of the migrants did not have stable jobs and were not able to afford a mobile phone. For those who did have mobile phones, obtaining the phone number from those family members in Nepal was a long and tedious job requiring our interviewers to make multiple visits to their households. Of course, the most difficult migrants to contact were women working as domestic helpers, as most often they were neither allowed to have a mobile phone nor have access to a land line.

Once we obtained contact telephone numbers and production interviewing began, we again faced a number of challenges and noted a number of successes. Because Nepali migrants are in the GCC to work and make as much money as possible, they usually work as many hours as they possibly can. It was thus difficult to contact them and schedule an interview time. To add to this, inadequate communication technology (poor telephone connections) on the Nepal side and dependence on mobile phones having limited battery power were other major hurdles. These

limitations required most interviews to be completed via multiple phone contacts rather than during just one call. Together, all of these disadvantages increased the possibility of respondent refusal or the likelihood of obtaining just partial interviews. Yet, the respondents were very excited to speak to a person from Nepal and were happy participate in the study.

Therefore, despite the challenges both in Nepal and in the GCC countries, we were able to achieve an 89 percent response rate because of the extraordinary level of respondent cooperation, the persistence of our well-trained interviewers, and our multiple method approach. Out of 526 eligible respondents, 469 interviews were completed. The average interview length was 110 minutes, which included an individual base line interview, a life history calendar, and a migration module questionnaire.

Measurements

Previous research both from Nepal and elsewhere suggests that such individual demographic characteristics as ethnicity, gender, age and religion are important predictors of migratory behavior (Bhandari 2004**;** Bohra and Massey 2009; Bohra and Massey forthcoming; Massey et al. forthcoming; Massey, Axinn and Ghimire 2007; Piotrowski forthcoming; Shrestha and Bhandari 2007; Williams 2009a, 2009b; Williams and Pradhan 2009).

Ethnicity. Nepali society consists of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups (Bennett, Dahal, and Govindasamy 2008; Dahal 1993; Bista 1972; Gurung 1980, 1998). These groups differ in many respects that have important consequences for their migratory behavior. Although ethnicity in Nepal is complex, in this study we use five major ethnic categories that are also used by other scholars in previous studies: Brahmin and Chhetry (High Caste Hindus), Dalit (Low Caste Hindus), Newar, Hill Indigenous (mostly Hill Tibeto-Burmese), and Terai Indigenous (mostly Terai Tibeto-Burmese) (Axinn and Yabiku 2001; Axinn and Barber 2001; Ghimire et al, 2006). Our analyses use a series of dichotomous measures for each ethnic group. For example *Brahmin/Chhetry* is coded '1' if a respondent reported that they were a member of this ethnic group, and '0' if they reported being a member of another ethnic group.

Gender. As elsewhere, gender inequality in various aspects of social life is deeply rooted in Nepali society (Acharya and Bennett 1981; Bennett 1983; Morgan and Niraula 1995; UNICEF 1998). Compared to men, women have lower social status in South Asian societies in general (Dyson and Moore 1983; Caldwell et. al. 1983; Morgan and Niraula 1995). Most women, regardless of their ethnic group, wealth, and age, are discouraged from participation in education, the labor market, politics, and business. Furthermore, their personal autonomy and decision-making power is limited. This disadvantaged position of women has substantially reduced their ability to freely move around or migrate abroad. Gender is coded '1' for female respondents and '0' for males.

Age. Previous research around the world has shown that an inverted U shaped function generally summarizes the relationship between age and migration, where there is a low rate of migration in childhood, a peak of migration during the 20's, and then a progressive decline through middle and older ages (Massey and Espinosa 1997; VanWey 2005; Williams 2009a; Zhao 1999). We asked respondents how old they were at the time of the interview and recorded answers in years.

Religion. Religion is another important factor that can influences migrants' behavior, contact with host country nationals, and assimilation. Respondents were asked about their religion and we coded answers into three dichotomous measures for the primary religious identities in Nepal—Hindu, Buddhist and other.

*Work***.** The type of jobs that migrants do in host countries has important consequences both for the host's economy and migrants' earnings and remittances. In order to ascertain the type of job the migrants had, the migration module of the questionnaire asked respondents "Now let's talk about your main job in (COUNTRY). Which one of these categories best describes your main job – working in a salaried job with government or private company, working as a domestic laborer, working as some other type of laborer, owning your own business, or going to school?" Next, in order to determine whether the job respondent had a professional job or not, we asked a follow up question "Is that job as per your educational qualification? This question was asked only to those respondents who have bachelors or more education.

Next to learn about how migrants got their jobs we asked "How did you get your main job in (COUNTRY)? Was it through a relative or friend, through an employment agency, through the newspaper, on the internet, or did you find it yourself?" As finding a job may involve more than one step, respondents were allowed to make multiple choices. Respondents' responses were coded into categorical measures for relative or friend, employment agency, newspaper or internet, yourself, and other.

Income. To ascertain migrants' incomes and benefits, we began with asking whether or not they got any other kind of benefits besides salary. If the respondent answered yes, then we asked about those benefits. We asked the respondent "I am going to read you a list of benefits you might get from your job. Please tell me which ones you get: food, housing, health benefits or life insurance, or something else." Again as there could be more than one type of benefit received by each respondent, they were encouraged to choose multiple choices. The responses were then coded into separate measures for food, housing, health benefits or life insurance, transportation, or other. We created a measure for transportation benefits because many respondents indicated that they received this; in most cases this involved transportation from their housing unit to the work site by bus. Next we asked about wages or salary with the question, "Thinking about this job, and any other jobs you might have right now, altogether how much do you earn in wages or salary each month?" Here respondents were allowed to give the amount they earned in any currency per hour, week, or month. We then converted it to USD per month.

Remittances. Remittances are a key reason for and consequence of international labor migration and are of great importance to both host and sending countries. Host countries might be interested to know how much money is being sent out of the country through remittances and how much is being recycled through spending in country. On the other hand, remittances are an interest of sending countries, many of which receive large proportions of their GDP through remittances from overseas. To ascertain the amount of remittances we began with a question about migrants' savings. We asked, "About how much money do you save each month after your personal expenses?" Again the respondent was allowed to report in any currency but we later converted the answers into USD.

Next we asked the worth of all goods, gifts, or money that the respondent sent to Nepal. The respondent was asked "Have you sent or brought any money, goods, or gifts to your household in Nepal (in the past 12 months (or while in (COUNTRY))?" In addition to their household, we repeated the question and asked the amount of money, goods, or gifts that respondents had sent or brought to anyone else in Nepal, besides their household. Respondents were also asked whether they received any money, goods or gifts from their household or any one else in Nepal. These questions were worded similarly to the previous questions.

Intentions for Future Migration Destinations. Previous research on intention and behavior has shown a positive relationship between individual's intentions and their behavior, but this relationship is not completely correlated (de Jong 2000; de Jong et al. 1996). An understanding of migrants' intentions could have important implications both on host and sending countries. In order to learn about the intentions of Nepali migrants to the GCC countries, the respondents were asked "Ignoring vacations or visits to Nepal or any other country, do you plan to leave (COUNTRY) at any time in the future?" Note that the Nepali language version of this question used a word that approximately translates to definite plans. Thus while the vast majority of respondents likely know they must leave, this question aims to record if they have made plans already, such as deciding on a date of departure or next destination. If the response to this question was yes, then respondents were asked where and when they plan to move next.

Values and Beliefs Concerning "Modern" or "Traditional" Society. We ascertained information about the values and beliefs of Nepali migrants by presenting respondents with a set of choices between things commonly seen as "modern" and things commonly seen as "traditional". We asked respondents to select which of the attributes was better for most people in Nepal today – the "modern" attribute or the "traditional" attribute. For example, with regard to spousal choice, we asked respondents, "Overall, which do you think is better for most people in Nepal today- young people choosing their own spouses, or parents choosing their spouses for them?" A similar question format was used for a variety of values and beliefs. We accepted a response of "no difference" or "about the same" only if respondents spontaneously volunteered it.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic characteristics of the NMGCCS sample are shown in Table 1. The first column presents the characteristics of the total sample and the next three columns disaggregate the sample of Nepali migrants by their country of residence in the GCC. The fifth column in Table 1 is presented for comparison and shows characteristics of a sample of non-migrants living in Nepal from the CVFS. To create a relevant comparative group, this sample includes men only of the same age range that we find in the NMGCCS sample, ages 17 through 55.

[Table 1 about here.]

As shown in Table 1, of the total 456 Nepali migrants interviewed, the vast majority live in three countries—38% live in Qatar, 30% in Saudi Arabia, and 26% in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Amongst the remaining 4% of the sample, a few people live in Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain. This heavy concentration of Nepali migrants in these three Persian Gulf countries could partially reflect difference in labor demand in each country. However, it is more likely a consequence of the importance of social networks in migration (Massey 1990; Massey et al. 1990) and employment agencies in recruitment and hiring in Nepal. For example, the first Nepali migrants to work in the GCC went to Qatar. The migrant social networks that ensued, as well as the institutionalization of employment agencies associated with Qatar, likely affected the later preponderance of Nepalis going to this country. Thus, despite the fact that Qatar is not a large country, even by GCC standards, the majority of Nepali migrants in this study were working there.

The vast majority of Nepali migrants in this sample, 97%, were male. This differed little by country, with only Saudi Arabia having slightly more females, who made up 7% of the Saudi migrant sample. This is consistent with previous research that shows that most migrants leaving

Nepal for any country are male and that the vast majority of jobs in the GCC are in the construction or oil sector and are primarily open to men (Bohra and Massey 2009; Williams 2009a). Amongst the few women in our sample, the vast majority were working as domestic servants in the households of host country nationals.

The average age of migrants is 32 years old. This is slightly higher than the median age of first adult migration from the Nepali sample at 26 years old[1]. We expect that this age difference between Nepali migrants in GCC countries and first time Nepali migrants to any destination reflects a changing pattern of migration destinations with each migration experience. As described by Ravenstein (1885) in one of the earliest studies of human mobility, in some cases migration might involve multiple moves, whereby an individual might first move to somewhere relatively nearby their origin, and then in subsequent migrations move progressively further away. While stepwise migration is clearly not a universal phenomenon, there is evidence of this process in other settings (Conway 1980). The data in this study indicate that this might also be a process through which many Nepali migrants reach the Persian Gulf. This not only serves as a possible explanation for the comparatively older age of GCC migrants, but also indicates that many of the Nepali migrants currently in the GCC countries likely have previous migration experience and this is not their first move away from home.

An average of about 89% of Nepali migrants in this sample were married. This is consistent across countries in the GCC (Arnold and Shah 1984; Gaudel 2006; Garner and Gurung 2003; Thieme amd Wyss 2005). It is consistent with the pattern of almost universal marriage in Nepal, but notably somewhat higher than the 79% of non-migrant men in the CVFS who were married. Migrants had an average of 1.30 children between the ages of 0 and 15. This is also similar and slightly higher than the average 1.21 children born to male non-migrants in Chitwan. These statistics indicate that in regard to family, Nepali migrants in the GCC are not wholly different than their non-migrant counterparts.

In terms of educational attainment, the average number of years of schooling completed in this sample is 8.00. This is somewhat higher than the average of 7.39 years of schooling completed by non-migrant men in Chitwan. Furthermore, migrants in the UAE stand out, with a higher 9.18 years of schooling. It is likely that this higher educational attainment of migrants in the GCC countries is a result of migrants in general having higher education (Williams 2009a). It is also likely that migrants to GCC countries in particular have higher educational attainment than migrants to such other countries as India, for example.

The largest ethnic group amongst migrants is Brahmin/Chhetri, which comprises 46% of the migrant sample. A further 11% are Dalit, 21% Hill Indigenous, 14% Terai Indigenous, 7% Newar, and 1% of other ethnicities. These statistics are similar across countries in the GCC and in the non-migrant sample in Nepal.

Similar to in Nepal and the non-migrant sample shown here, the majority (83%) of migrants in the GCC ascribe to the Hindu religion. A further 14% are Buddhist and only 2% ascribe to any other religion, including Hindu-Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity. This pattern of religious association of Nepali migrants is similar across individual GCC countries.

Work, Income, and Remittances

As shown in Table 2, the vast majority of Nepali migrants (90%) reported that their main job was some form of labor. In light of previous research and government statistics, this is not surprising

[1] This median age of first migration is calculated from a sample of adults who were at least 15 years old. If all ages had been included in the sample, the median age of migration would be even lower.

(Gaudel 2006; Garner and Gurung 2003; Thieme amd Wyss 2005). Amongst other types of work, 6% of respondents were doing domestic labor, and 2% were professionals. Less than 1% were engaged in another type of work. A total of twenty men (5% of the sample) were working as domestic laborers. Of the fourteen women in the sample, nine were in domestic labor and five reported working in other types of labor jobs. The 2% of the sample that were working as professionals includes eleven men, seven of whom were in Qatar, with a further three in UAE and one in Saudi Arabia. Because of the small number of professionals and the vastly different circumstances in which they live and work, the remainder of the analyses in this paper include only non-professionals.

[Table 2 about here.]

Employment agencies were the most common way in which respondents found their current jobs. 58% of the sample reported that they found their jobs through employment agencies, although this is slightly higher in Saudi Arabia and lower in UAE. Amongst other routes, jobs were commonly found through recommendations by friends and seldom through newspapers or internet[2]. While it is not surprising that many people used employment agencies to secure their jobs, the surprising result from this question is that 42% of the sample did not use employment agencies. Without the assistance of an employment agency, it would be very difficult for a Nepali in Nepal to find employment in the Persian Gulf and arrange for a visa and other logistics. Thus we suspect that many of the 42% of respondents who did not report using an employment agency found their jobs while already in the Persian Gulf. This likely indicates a significant amount of job changing, or that many Nepali migrants might use employment agencies to secure a first job in a GCC country, but after arrival they take new jobs that they find through other sources. We believe that this is the most logical interpretation of these data, but we are not able to test these hypotheses given the data currently available from this study.

The average monthly base salary or wages (not including overtime) is 358 USD[3]. The average salary in UAE is higher, at 443 USD per month. This salary difference between UAE and the rest of the sample is statistically significant, using a student's t-test.

Amongst other benefits that migrants receive from their employers, housing, food, medical treatment or insurance, and transportation are all common. About 83% of migrants received housing, 57% food, and 66% medical care. This varied little across countries. A few respondents reported receiving clothing or other benefits.

The average amount of savings per month was 279 USD. This was higher in UAE, surely reflecting the higher average wages. Across all countries, the average monthly savings was over 75% of salary. This large percentage of monthly salary that is saved might be surprising in other countries. However, in the context of GCC countries where most migrants receive housing, food, and medical benefits and where many migrants go for the specific purpose of earning money to remit, the large amount of savings is not at all surprising.

Turning to remittances, net remittances from Nepali migrants in this sample were about 2225 USD in the past year[4]. This is a net calculation which includes the amount each individual

[2] For this question, respondents were allowed to report all routes that they used to find their job. For example, if a friend recommended that they apply to an employment agency, they could report that they found their job through both of these sources. If respondents only reported the primary method, we expect that the percentages would decrease for recommended by friend, found it by self, and newspapers and internet.

[3] Based on a conversion of 75 Nepali rupees to the American dollar.

[4] Remittances vary drastically by year. Informal discussions with Nepali migrants in GCC countries indicate that many migrants save money for more than one year and then bring all their savings when they return to Nepal to live or visit. Furthermore, many migrants who are not able to return home at a given time, give money to another Nepali

sent to Nepal, from which the amount they received from Nepal is subtracted. Not surprisingly, remittances sent to Nepal vastly overwhelm the amount of money or gifts received from Nepal. Only 47% of migrants received any money from Nepal, and 53% received none. Net remittances sent to Nepal are somewhat lower in Saudi Arabia with a median of 1540 USD and significantly higher in UAE at 2678 USD per year. Compared to yearly salaries, Nepali migrants across the GCC countries annually remit about 58% of what they make. This is fairly consistent across countries.

Influences on Work, Income, and Remittances

We next turn to multivariate analyses to examine influences on variances in yearly wages or salary and remittances. We used ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to predict these outcomes, based on demographic characteristics, country of residence in the GCC, and ethnicity. Again, we include only non-professionals in these analyses. Results are presented in Table 3. As shown in Model 1, which tests the influences on yearly wages, the only statistically significant predictors of the amount of salary that migrants received were education and residence in UAE. The coefficient for education is positive, at 16.25, meaning that for each extra year of education an individual had, they received about 16 USD more in salary per year. This means that compared to someone with five years of education, another migrant with 10 years of education would be expected to make about 81 USD more per year. Considering that average yearly salaries are about 4296 USD, this increase of 81 USD is not a significant amount. Furthermore, working in the UAE had positive effects, increasing salary by 75 USD per year. Again, considering average yearly salaries, this difference is not large.

Turning to remittances, results are shown in Model 2. Notably, only one measure had statistically significant effects on the amount remitted per year. Alternately, we find no significant effects on remittances due to age, gender, marital status, children, length of stay, education, ethnicity, and country or residence. Yearly wages was the only significant predictor. With a coefficient of 0.45, this means that with every extra dollar a migrant earns in salary, we can expect that they will remit 45 more cents back to Nepal.

[Table 3 about here.]

Intentions for Future Migration Destinations

Results concerning migration experience and future intentions of Nepali migrants in GCC countries are shown in Table 4. On average, at the time of interview, migrants had been in the GCC country for 13 months. This includes a range from one month, to a migrant who had been in Qatar for over 21 months. Length of stay varied little by country of residence. Referring to previous experience in the GCC, about 28% of migrants had lived in the same GCC country before this time. A further 5% had lived in another GCC country before moving to their current residence. Notably, the percent of migrants living in the UAE who had lived there before was much higher, at 36%.

[Table 4 about here.]

About 22% of the total sample of migrants (or 77 people) who were living in GCC countries had definite plans to leave. The majority of Nepali people living in GCC countries have no definite plans to leave in the future. Again, as the word ‘plan’ is translated in Nepali,

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who is returning. Thus the amount of remittances sent in the last year is exceptionally high for some respondents, to the extent that a few report remitting four times more than they actually made in the last year. As a result, we report the medians instead of means for remittance calculations.

this refers to definite plans, including deciding on a date to leave, applying for a release from work, buying airline tickets, or arranging for the next destination. Of those 77 people who did have plans, their intended next destinations vary widely. Only 12% planned to return to Nepal. Thus a full 83% intended to continue living outside Nepal. 33% planned to go to another GCC country. UAE is clearly a favored destination amongst GCC countries, as 23% of the migrants who were living in a GCC country and had plans to leave intended to go there. This is not a surprising result, given the significantly higher salaries in the UAE. Amongst other intended destinations are Europe (Belgium and the United Kingdom), Australia, North American, Asia (Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Macau), and Israel. 19% of migrants who had plans to leave the Persian Gulf did not know where they would go next.

Results also show that a significant proportion (58%) of migrants who had recently returned to Nepal after living in GCC countries also planned to migrate again in the future. Of the 52 people who planned to leave Nepal, 63% intended to return to the Persian Gulf. Again, the UAE is a favored destination; 35% of those with migration plans intended to go to the UAE. Amongst other intended destinations are the United Kingdom, Japan, Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, and Israel. 13% of respondents in Nepal who planned to leave again did not know where they would go next.

This evidence that a majority of migrants who were living or had lived in the GCC planned to migrate again at first appears to be contrary to classic migration theory. The new economics of migration theory, which has received strong empirical support in the literature (Massey and Espinosa 1997; Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Taylor 1989, 1991; Taylor 1986, 1987), proposes that migration is a strategy for people to not only increase their earnings, but importantly to gain access to capital to finance consumer purchases and production activities at the migrant's origin. Migrants are sometimes described as target earners, migrating to earn enough to purchase specific items such as land, tractors, livestock, or a house. Once a migrant earns the desired amount of money, it is often believed that he or she will return home. Evidence from our sample in the GCC countries suggests that this might not always be the case. Although on average they had earned and remitted significant amounts of money, the majority of migrants intended to migrate again, instead of returning to live in Nepal. It is possible that some migrants had not yet met their target earnings, but given the high average remittances, it is most likely that many did. This evidence suggests the need to refine classic migration theory to incorporate changes in migrant intentions. Even if a migrant might intend to earn a certain amount of money, their intentions might change over time, as they become accustomed to the migrant lifestyle and higher earnings. Indeed, it is possible that families who receive remittances might become accustomed to this higher income and also encourage repeat migration. In addition, as Nepali society is undergoing turbulent post conflict transformations, migrant intentions may also change with current socio-economic and political circumstances in Nepal. Although these possibilities cannot be addressed within the scope of these data, this study highlights the need for research to address these issues on a theoretical and empirical level.

Values and Beliefs

We now turn to the beliefs and values of Nepali migrants in the GCC countries concerning the best societal and family arrangements for most Nepali people. We are particularly interested in whether Nepali migrants value things that are commonly believed to be part of a "modern" or a "traditional" aspect of society and family life. The degree of people's support for the ideas of

modernity and development has been found to be an important element in decision making and behavior (Thornton 2001, 2005).

Table 5 shows the percentage of respondents choosing the "modern" attribute for each item. The furthermost left column lists each individual measure, with the "modern" choice shown in italics. The distributions are displayed in the remaining columns for the GCC countries combined as well as by individual countries.

[Table 5 about here.]

We draw two general conclusions from these distributions. First, Table 5 shows little variation both within and across each of the individual countries relative to which attributes migrants think are better. That is, for nearly all societal and family characteristics, migrants firmly endorse either the "modern" or the "traditional" attribute at least eight out of ten times. Eighty-seven percent of all migrants believe it is better for a woman to give birth in a hospital, (ranging from 86 to 89 percent between countries), eighty-nine percent believe it is better for married children to live with their parents, (ranging from 80-90 percent between countries), more than nine out of ten migrants believe it is better to have a TV in the home than not, (96-97 percent ranges), and so on.

The only measures with substantial variation relative to which is better are the divorce and inter-caste marriage items. Although both measures concern marriage and both show considerable ambivalence, it is possible to apply separate interpretations to each anomaly. When asked about marital dissolution, Nepali migrants appear to be conflicted about whether a divorce is better (60%) or an unhappy marriage is better (40%). While on the surface this might be attributed to a growing acceptance of divorce, this variation may in fact be due to the composition of the migrant sample. Historically, divorce in Nepal has been taboo mostly for members of high-caste groups; more variation is seen amongst other ethnic groups. Indeed, we see that approximately 46% of our migrant sample consists of high-caste Hindus (Table 1). On the other hand, inter-caste marriage is generally unacceptable to most Nepali people regardless of caste, although its acceptability has recently become a topic of growing debate. Therefore, the ambivalence seen in Table 5 relative to this measure, (30% believing marriage outside of one's caste is better vs. 70% believing the opposite is true), may indeed reflect growing differences of opinion amongst our Nepali migrant respondents.

A second conclusion we draw from these Table 5 distributions is that a very clear pattern emerges relative to the type of attribute respondents choose as being better for most people in Nepal today. Television ownership, use of medical facilities and personnel, having a job outside the home, and having great personal freedom are all attributes generally associated material wealth and with "development". Nepali migrants in this sample overwhelmingly endorse these material aspects of "development" as being better than their "less developed" alternatives. Premarital sex, non-marital cohabitation, choosing not to marry, and married children living away from parents are family-related attributes that are often viewed as being related to "development". Yet, most Nepali migrants reject these familial attributes by saying that they are not better than what has been "traditionally" acceptable. This way of thinking would appear to be confirmed by the measure asking "Which is better for most people in Nepal today – culture in America or culture in Nepal?", where 91% of all migrant respondents report that Nepali culture is better than American culture.

An exception to the emergent pattern of endorsing "modern" material things and "traditional" family or cultural attributes is found in the spouse choice item. Eighty-two percent of migrant respondents believe that spouse choice is better left up to the individual rather than to

the parents, thereby, endorsing the family behavior commonly associated with "modernity". We note however that in Nepal, spouse choice has long been a joint venture involving children and parents alike. When viewed within this context, the distributions for this measure are more consistent with the overall pattern.

Conclusion

This article provides some important insights into the lives, work, values, behaviors, and intentions of Nepali migrants living the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. Furthermore, as Nepal is similar in many ways to other migrant-sending South Asian countries, including India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the information in this study is likely relevant to understanding the lives of South Asian migrants, the largest group of foreign workers in the GCC countries. This study is unique in that it is based on data collected from a representative sample of migrants from one area of Nepal, the Chitwan Valley. The logistic and financial difficulties of collecting data from a representative sample of migrants at a destination inhibit most migration research from doing so.

Data for this study were collected using innovative procedures that include sampling in the Chitwan Valley, the origin, collecting contact information for any household members who were migrants, and finally interviewing these migrants via telephone while they were in the GCC or face-to-face when they returned to Nepal. With these methods, we were able to achieve an exceptional 89% response rate. Thus, we argue that while there were difficulties encountered in data collection, this method of sampling and contacting migrants can be effective and efficient and should be considered for future studies of migration and for addressing selectivity in origin based samples of other topics in areas with high out-migration.

Results from this study show that Nepali migrants in the GCC countries were relatively similar to their non-migrant counterparts in Nepal, in terms of age, marital status, childbearing, education, religion, and ethnicity. Furthermore, there was very little variance on demographic, social, and economic characteristics of migrants living in the different GCC countries. Not surprisingly, most migrants in the sample were male and working as laborers. There were very few professionals and very few women. We find that remittances to Nepal were common and large, averaging about 60% of each person's yearly salary. Perhaps the only major difference we find between GCC countries is that salaries, savings, and remittances are considerably higher in the UAE.

Overall, yearly remittances from this sample of migrants totaled over one million USD. This of course is only calculated based on the 456 migrants in this sample. The amount of money moving from the GCC to Nepal, or South Asia in general, is much higher if all Nepali or South Asian migrants would be considered. Migrant origin countries, and families, likely depend on these remittances. Unfortunately, this income source is contingent on labor demand in the GCC, as well as oil prices and the health of the global capitalist economy. These processes, and the large amounts of money that annually cross borders through remittances, must be considered by policy makers in both origin countries in South Asia and destination countries in the GCC.

This study also addressed migrant's future intentions. Far from the classic perception of migrants as target earners who will immediately return back to their country of origin, results show that amongst this group of Nepali migrants, most intended to migrate again. GCC countries were high on the list of intended future destinations, with UAE being the most sought after destination. These results highlight the need for further enhancements to migration theory

that consider the likelihoods of second, third, and higher order migrations, and the possibility of migrant intentions changing with time and experience. Because much of migration research considers single migration trips, we might be missing key dynamics of intrapersonal change as well as patterns of the development of transnational relationships and a peripatetic international labor force.

Our measures of the values of Nepali migrants to the GCC countries indicate that most migrants endorse the various material aspects of "modernity" in that they believe that such things as hospitals, doctors, television, and working outside the home are good. These attributes probably help to fuel the desires of these migrants to seek employment in the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the great bulk of migrants retain most of their historical Nepali values centered on marriage, family, and the restriction of sex and cohabitation to marriage.

This study provides valuable insights into the lives, work, values, behaviors, and intentions of Nepali migrants living in the GCC. However, it is limited to the extent that it is based on a cross-sectional survey. Many of the results in this study draw attention to the possibility of change over time in all these dimensions of migrant lives and behavior in the GCC. These changes, due to individual migrant experience, family circumstances at home, and global economic, social, communication, and transportation changes, likely play a large role in the well-being of migrants and the host populations and governments in the GCC. Further research based on longitudinal data collection could provide immense contributions to understanding these processes over time.

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TABLES

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Nepali Migrants to GCC Countries

	All GCC countries	**Qatar**	**Saudi Arabia**	**United Arab Emirates**	**Nepal sample[1]**
Total	456 people	38%	30%	26%	2487
Interviewed in GCC ctry	64	63	64	62	0
Living in GCC ctry [2]	80	76	83	83	0
Sex (% male)	97	100	93	99	100
Age (mean years)	32	31	33	32	35
Married	89	90	91	87	79
# of children (mean)	1.30	1.37	1.26	1.20	1.21
Education (mean yrs)	8.00	7.57	7.42	9.18	7.39
Ethnicity					
Brahmin and Chhetry	46	46	45	51	45
Dalit	11	16	9	7	11
Hill Indigenous	21	17	22	23	15
Terai Indigenous	14	12	18	14	20
Newar	7	8	4	6	6
Other	1	1	1	0	3
Religion					
Hindu	83	85	79	86	84
Buddhist	14	13	17	14	11
Other	2	3	4	0	5

Notes: Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers are percents.
Professionals included in this analysis.

[1] For comparative purposes, this column shows similar statistics for a representative sample of men ages 17-55 in the Chitwan Valley Family Study who are currently living in Nepal.

[2] This includes those who were interviewed in a GCC country and those who were interviewed Nepal while on a visit. This is in contrast to those who were interviewed in Nepal while living there, after a final return from a GCC country.

Table 2. Work, Income, and Remittances of Nepali Migrants to GCC Countries [1]

	All GCC countries	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
Type of job (%)				
Labor	90	91	88	94
Domestic Labor	6	3	11	3
Professional	2	4	1	3
Other	0	1	0	0
How R got this job (%) [2]				
Employment agency	58	53	68	53
Recommended by friend	34	42	25	33
Found it by self	17	15	15	24
Newspaper or internet	5	5	2	7
Monthly wages/salary (USD)				
Wages/salary (mean)	358	341	314	443
Other benefits (%) [2]				
Housing	83	83	80	84
Food	57	52	60	59
Medical treatment or insurance	66	58	68	72
Transportation	81	80	80	81
Monthly savings (USD)				
Savings, monthly (mean)	279	264	251	337
Yearly remittances (USD)				
Net remittances to Npl (median)	2225	2049	1540	2678
% salary remitted to Npl (median)	58	60	56	57

Notes: Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers are percents.

[1] Except for type of job, professionals excluded from this analysis.

[2] These categories are not mutually exclusive. Respondents were allowed to select as many categories as fit their situation.

Table 3. OLS Regressions Predicting Income and Remittances

	Model 1 **Yearly wages**	**Model 2** **Remittances** [1]
Age	- 0.53	- 3.42
	(0.31)	(0.05)
Gender (female)	- 64.47	757.71
	(1.05)	(0.28)
Married	30.30	322.02
	(0.79)	(0.19)
# of kids	- 14.25	- 207.33
	(1.30)	(0.43)
Length of stay in GCC	- 2.37	- 131.80
	(1.20)	(1.50)
Education	16.25 ***	149.20
	(4.61)	(0.94)
Yearly wages		0.45 **
		(2.56)
Country in GCC		
Qatar	Reference	Reference
Saudi Arabia	- 21.39	529.46
	(0.83)	(0.49)
UAE	75.46 **	1739.93
	(2.93)	(1.52)
Other	- 29.40	38.79
	(0.64)	(0.02)
Ethnicity		
Brahmin and Chhetry	Reference	Reference
Dalit Hindu	54.59	633.34
	(1.64)	(0.43)
Hill Indigenous	50.16	1652.28
	(1.91)	(1.42)
Terai Indigenous	8.78	938.93
	(0.28)	(0.68)
Newar	45.70	854.96
	(1.15)	(0.48)
R^2	0.1424	0.0477
Adj R^2	0.1165	0.0167
No. of people	444	444

Note: Professionals excluded from these analyses.
[1] Amount reported here might include remittances from several years of savings.
*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001 (two-tailed tests).

Table 4. Migration Intentions

	All GCC countries	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
Length of stay in GCC country this time (months)	13	12	13	12
Ever lived in this country before this time (%)	28	24	25	36
Ever lived in other GCC country before (%)	5	3	8	5
For those living in GCC country [1]				
Definite plans to leave GCC country (%)	22%	24%	19%	23%
Definite plans to leave GCC country (# people)	77	31	22	22
For those living in GCC country who have definite plans to leave				
Intended next destination				
Other GCC country	33	45	45	5
UAE [2]	23	29	36	n/a
Other Middle East/N Africa	4	10	0	0
Nepal	12	6	9	25
Other Asia	17	6	18	30
Europe/Australia/North America	15	16	9	15
Don't know	19	16	18	25
For those living in Nepal				
Plans to leave Nepal again (%)	58%	49%	57%	84%
Plans to leave Nepal again (# of people)	52	20	13	16
For those living in Nepal who have plans to leave again				
Intended next destination				
any GCC country	63	65	54	67
UAE [2]	35	40	8	40
Other Middle East/N Africa	8	15	8	0
Other Asia	12	0	15	27
Europe/Australia/North America	4	0	8	7
Don't know	13	20	15	0

Notes:
Unless otherwise indicated, all numbers are percents.
Professionals excluded from this analysis.
[1] These people were either interviewed in a GCC country, or interviewed in Nepal while they were on vacation.
[2] Note, UAE is also included in 'any GCC country'. A separate line for UAE is included in this table to show that the vast majority of people who want to return to GCC countries are aiming for UAE.

Table 5. Migrant Values – Percent of migrants agreeing that certain "modern" societal attributes are better for most people in Nepal today. 'Modern' response choice in bold italics.

	All GCC countries	Qatar	Saudi Arabia	United Arab Emirates
Women giving birth in a ***hospital*** / at home	87	89	86	86
Culture in ***America*** / in Nepal	9	8	11	8
Visiting a ***medical doctor*** / local healer	100	100	99	100
Having / not having a TV in one's home	96	97	96	97
Working ***outside the home*** / at home	92	92	92	92
Having ***great*** / little personal freedom	89	89	92	90
Married children living ***separately*** / with parents	11	10	12	12
Choosing own spouse / parents choosing	82	80	81	86
Unmarried cohabitation ***acceptable*** / unacceptable	11	13	12	9
For women- ***sex*** / no sex before marriage	4	3	5	5
Divorce / unhappy marriage	59	61	60	56
Putting ***individual needs*** / family needs first	9	9	5	13
Marrying ***outside*** / within own caste	31	26	34	33
Not to get married / get married	1	1	1	2

Notes: All numbers presented are percents.
Professionals included in this analysis.