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THE CHANGING CHARACTERISTICS OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN KUWAIT

INTRODUCTION

Kuwait is one of the gulf countries that has imported large numbers of temporary migrant workers over the last decade or so. The import of such workers was necessitated by the ambitious development plans that were made possible by the oil bonanza after 1973. Even prior to this influx, however, more than 70 percent of the labor force in Kuwait consisted of foreign workers. As the country has gone through economic and other changes, its goals concerning the magnitude and structure of the migrant worker population have undergone substantial revisions. These changes are reflected in such indicators as numbers of migrant workers; occupational and industrial distribution of the labor force; demographic, ethnic, and educational characteristics of this labor force; and related wage levels. An examination of the above changes is the objective of the present study.

We have analyzed the changing characteristics of the seven major nationality groups that comprise the labor force: Palestinians and Jordanians, Egyptians, Iraqis, Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, Syrians and Lebanese, and others. The characteristics of migrant workers are examined in relation to those of the Kuwaitis. The analysis is based on data from two national surveys taken in 1977/1979 and 1983. Comparisons are made with census data wherever appropriate. Before analyzing the data at hand, however, a brief discussion of the past trends in the labor force is presented, by way of background.

BACKGROUND

In 1965, Kuwait had about 141,000 foreign workers; in 1970, 177,000. This represents an increase of 25 percent. Between 1970 and 1975, the migrant workers increased from 177,000 to 213,000, an increase of 20 percent. The big jump in the number of foreign workers was witnessed between 1975 and 1980— from 213 to 385 thousand, or an increase of 80 percent. Over the last quinquennial (1980-1985) the number increased from 385,000 to 539,000, which represents an increase of 40 percent (Shah, 1986). Thus, the pace of worker migration declined somewhat in recent years but was still much higher than in the 1965—1975 decade. With regard to the future magnitudes, the consensus seems to be

that worker migration to this region is inevitable and will continue over the next few years, albeit at a reduced pace (Kanovsky, 1986; Nagi, 1986.)

Between 1965 and 1985, the percentage of Kuwaitis in the labor force changed as follows:

1965	23.4
1970	27.0
1975	30.1
1980	21.0
1985	18.9

Thus, a major implication of the increased magnitude of migration was a reduction in the percentage of Kuwaitis in the labor force.

The ethnic composition of non-Kuwaitis who comprised the labor force has also been changing. The single most important feature of this transition is the substantial increase in the percentage of Asian workers, relative to Arabs, as shown below:

		<i>Arabs</i>	<i>Asians</i>	<i>Others</i>
1965-1975	68-69	29-30	1-	
1980	60	38	2	
1985	46	52	2	

Researchers interested in the field have offered several explanations for the increased recruitment of Asian workers. Some of these include their relatively lower cost, the recipient country's desire to diversify the labor force, the shortage of Arab labor and the restrictions on its supply, the relative assurance that Asian workers would stay in the host country only temporarily, and the relative docility of such workers (Choucri 1983/1984, 1986; Kanovsky, 1986; Nagi, 1986; Weiner, 1982; Wriggins, 1985). It may be noted here that the marked increase in Asian workers seems contradictory to Kuwait's stated policy of "Arabization" of the labor force. The lack of consistency between the stated policy and the actual recruitment of Arab workers was also pointed out by Kanovsky (1986).

Another feature worth noting by way of background is the notable increase in female workers from Asia. Asian females constituted only 13 percent of the expatriate female labor force in 1965; this percentage increased to 33 in 1975, 41 in 1980, and 68 percent in 1985. Not only did the proportion of Asian females increase, but this also seems to have led to a sharp increase in the numbers of expatriate female workers in Kuwait. From only 8,000 in 1965, their number increased to about 28,000 in 1975, 49,000 in 1980, and 105,000 in 1985. Females employed as domestic servants constitute a significant proportion of the recent rise in the number of female workers. In 1975, expatriate domestic servants constituted 43 percent of the migrant female labor force; in 1980, this percentage was 41. In 1985, it rose to 60 percent. The corresponding numbers of expatriate maids in 1975, 1980, and 1985 were 11,921, 19,552, and 63,250, respectively. Some of the implications of the heavy reliance on domestic servants are discussed in a later section.²

DATA

As mentioned earlier, data from two national sample surveys were used for the analysis. The first survey, conducted in 1977/1979, was a household budget survey which collected data on: (1) household expenditure and income patterns, and (2) sociological and demographic characteristics of household members, including those who are labor participants. A geographically and ethnically stratified sample was drawn from the frame of the 1975 population census. As a proportion of the total population of 1977/1979, the sample that comprised 5,137 households represented about 3.8 percent of the total number of households in Kuwait. The total number of individuals covered in this survey was 37,134, while the number of working individuals was 7,050. The percentage of Kuwaiti households in the sample (42.3 percent) was commensurate with the corresponding percentage in the 1975 population census (42.1 percent).

A stratified sampling procedure was also used to draw a sample of households for the 1983 labor sample survey. The population was categorized into geographic and ethnic blocks derived from the 1980 population census. The sample comprised 5,374 households, which represented nearly 3.0 percent of all households in 1983. The number of individuals covered was 41,087; the number of working individuals was 12,076. The specific nationality breakdown of the 1980 census was used to draw a representative ethnic composition according to country of origin of foreign population, e.g., Egyptians, Palestinians/Jordanians. . . , etc. The discernible presence of collective households was captured by including an ethnically stratified sample of 442 collective non-Kuwaiti households containing 4,456 individuals. The final sample of private households produced a Kuwaiti/non-Kuwaiti split of 37.8 percent and 63.2 percent, respectively, which is statistically comparable to the actual distribution in the population census of 1980—37.7 percent and 62.2 percent.

Both surveys were conducted by the Central Statistical Office of the Ministry of Planning, which is the sole official entity in Kuwait entrusted by law to conduct such surveys. Both surveys collected information on the labor force such as the sector of employment, hours of work, occupational distribution, and monthly earnings. The forms used for collecting such data were identical in the two surveys. It should be emphasized here, however, that the primary objectives of the two surveys were different. The 1977/1979 survey focused on the household, requiring information primarily on the household budget and only secondarily on labor force characteristics. The 1983 survey focused primarily on the labor force. Thus, workers formed the critical respondents for the 1983 survey but not for the 1977/1979 survey. Such a difference may have led to biases in respondent selection, thus affecting the representativeness of the two samples. One indication of such bias is the percentage of working individuals, which was only 19 percent in the first survey compared with 29 percent in the second. Despite the differences in the objectives of the two surveys, we believe that it is reasonable to compare the changes in workers characteristics between the two time periods.

TABLE 1 *Percentage distribution of the labor force by detailed nationality (1975 census, 1977/1979 and 1983 surveys)*

Nationality	1975 Census		1977/1979 Survey		1983 Survey	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Kuwaitis	30.2	21.0	47.9	25.0	24.6	21.5
Palestinians & Jordanians	16.5	11.9	23.8	11.6	13.1	7.9
Egyptians	8.6	28.6	6.8	31.0	24.4	15.9
Iraqis	6.1	5.6	3.3	4.6	3.1	2.7
Indians	4.9	24.3			13.1	17.8
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis	4.0	1.5	7.3"	19.9"	8.5"	2.5*
Syrians & Lebanese	8.4	4.6	6.3	5.6	4.9	2.3
Europeans, Americans, Others	21.3	2.5	4.6	2.3	8.3	29.4
<i>Total</i>	263,585	34,830	817	233	9,581	2,495

" Includes Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis.

" Majority of the males were Pakistanis in this group 657 out of 811. Among the females, 32 out of 61 were Pakistanis while the rest were Bangladeshis.

The distribution of the labor force according to ethnic origin (i.e., nationality) for the two surveys and the 1975 census is shown in Table 1. (It should be noted here that the labor force characteristics were published in the 1980 and 1985 censuses only in terms of the migrant's continent of origin and not by his/her nationality. Therefore, the above surveys are the only sources providing data by nationality.) A comparison of the three sources in Table 1 allow the following conclusions. First, the 1977/1979 survey seems to substantially overrepresent the Kuwaiti males but underrepresent the "other" males in comparison with the 1975 census. In the 1975 census, Iranians and Yemenis constituted 79 percent of the residual category of nationalities "other" than the seven specified already. These groups seem to be underrepresented in the 1977/1979 survey, assuming that the nationality distribution had not changed markedly between the two time periods. Second, we found a relatively large variation in the percentage of Kuwaiti males between the two surveys (47.9 and 25.0, respectively). This is probably due to their different sampling frames but, nevertheless, results in a bias leading to an overrepresentation of Kuwaiti males. The sample for the 1977/1979 Income and Expenditure Survey was based on the 1975 census frame; that of the 1983 survey was based on the 1980 census.³ With regard to the other nationalities, Palestinians formed the largest group among males in 1977/1979, but they were outnumbered by Egyptians in 1983. Also, the percentage of Indian and Pakistani males taken together increased from 7.5 in 1977/1979 to about 22 in 1983.⁴ The latter increase is consistent with the growing percentage of Asians indicated by the 1980 and 1984 censuses discussed earlier.

Among the females, the percentage of Egyptians fell by almost one-half between the two time periods. The percentage of Europeans, Americans, and

others, however, rose from about 2 percent to 29 percent. A major reason for this big jump is the inflow of domestic servants from Sri Lanka and the Philippines.

The data analysis is organized as follows: First, we analyze the major demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the labor force within each of the eight nationality groups. Next, we examine the occupational structure and the changes in it between 1977/1979 and 1983. Finally, we present additional in-depth analysis of the occupational structure and wage differentials for males who have resided in Kuwait for varying durations of time. The above analysis is presented first for the male labor force and then for the female labor force.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MALE LABOR FORCE

The demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the male labor force for the years 1977/1979 and 1983 are presented in Table 2. In 1977/1979, the age pattern of the various expatriate groups looked very similar for males, with most of them between 36 and 38 years of age; the Kuwaiti males were younger than the expatriates (average age, 34 years). This pattern implies that the expatriate males were likely to have had more work experience than the Kuwaitis. The age differential among expatriates was more varied at the second time period (1983) and the ages ranged between 34 and 39, which suggests a trend toward a more diversified labor force in the later year; the Kuwaitis again had the youngest average age (32.7 years).

With regard to the average salary of males between 1977/1979 and 1983, it increased by 45 percent from KD 215 a month to KD 312 (Table 2; 1 KD = US \$3.3). The average salary of some groups increased considerably more than the others, however. For example, the average salary of Kuwaitis almost doubled, while that of the Palestinians and Jordanians increased by 60 percent; Iraqis, by 92 percent; and the Syrians and Lebanese, by 101 percent. The salary of the "other" category, which includes all other nationalities besides the ones already specified, increased by about 87 percent. However, this group comprises many different types of workers and makes any firm conclusions about this big salary jump difficult. The only group for which the salary actually declined between the two time periods was that of the Egyptians—from KD 273 to KD 251 a month. The decline in the salary of Egyptians is a result of the marked changes in the educational and occupation structure of this group, as discussed later.

While the salary of all groups except that of the Egyptians increased over time, this increase is not always matched by an improvement in the quality of labor, as measured by the average education of the group (Table 2). Among the Kuwaitis, Palestinians and Jordanians, Iraqis, and the residual groups of "others," there were notable increases in the average level of the education. The category of Syrians and Lebanese also showed a small increase. For the remaining three groups (i.e., Egyptians, Indians, and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis), however, the average grades completed were lower at the second time period. In the case of the Egyptians, the decline was particularly marked—from 12.8 grades in 1977/1979 to only 6 grades in 1983. This large decline indicates that the structure of

TABLE 2 *A sociodemographic profile of workers in the major nationality groups in Kuwait by sex: 1977/1979 and 1983 males*

Nationality	Age	Monthly Salary (KD)	Educational Grades	Working Hours/Week	Duration of Stay (in years)	Dependency Ratio"	(N)
1977/1979							
Kuwaitis	34.1	217	4.6	38.0	NA	118.6	2786
Palestinians & Jordanians	37.8	224	8.8	38.8	15.2	130.4	1390
Egyptians	38.2	273	12.8	38.9	7.2	72.8	394
Iraqis	36.9	160	4.9	39.6	16.5	102.0	191
Indians, Pakistanis, & Bangladeshis	36.2	162	8.5	47.2	8.9	50.7	424
Syrians & Lebanese	35.8	223	7.0	41.9	12.7	97.6	366
Europeans, Americans, Others	37.3	194	4.5	44.8	13.2	108.1	266
<i>Total</i>	35.7	215	7.1	39.6	12.8	112.8	5817
1983							
Kuwaitis	32.7	424	7.4	40.9	NA	100.8	2360
Palestinians & Jordanians	38.8	358	10.2	43.5	18.5	100.0	1254
Egyptians	35.8	251	6.0	46.3	6.2	23.4	2342
Iraqis	35.6	307	7.3	43.5	15.6	68.2	295
Indians	33.9	192	6.7	49.0	7.1	19.5	1254
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis	33.2	201	5.5	47.6	6.6	18.6	811
Syrians & Lebanese	35.2	448	7.2	46.7	14.0	67.5	470
Europeans, Americans, Others	36.8	362	6.7	47.7	11.6	50.9	795
<i>Total</i>	34.9	312	6.9	45.1	9.9	63.9	9581

"Defined as the ratio of persons aged less than 15 and 65+ to persons aged 15-64 x 100.

labor migration from Egypt to Kuwait changed significantly over the time period studied, as elaborated later.

In terms of weekly working hours, the average time increased from about 39.6 hours in 1977/1979 to 45.1 hours in 1983 (Table 2). The average working hours increased in almost every category. The largest increase occurred in the case of Egyptian workers, and the smallest in the case of Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis. For the latter group, however, the working hours in 1977/1979 were already about 7 hours higher than the average for all workers, leaving little room for an increase. In 1983, Kuwaitis were working about 3 hours more on the average than in 1977/1979; a comparable increase for the Palestinians and Jordanians was 4.7 hours and for the Egyptians 7.4 hours. The civil servant in Kuwait usually works for 34 hours a week, and the official working hours have not changed over the time period under question. The average working hours in the private sector are, however, considerably longer. Our figures therefore suggest that the recent entrants into the labor force may be concentrated in the private sector and in occupations that are time-intensive.⁵ Finally, a probable reason for the relatively fewer working hours of Kuwaitis in comparison with other groups is their concentration in government service.

The duration of residence in a country, which represents an important aspect of the stability of the expatriate labor force, is discussed by Al-Akhras (1982) and Choucri (1983/1984). The duration of residence varied substantially across the various nationality groups at both time periods (Table 2). A shorter duration for a group suggests that the members of that group stay in Kuwait for a short duration and are then replaced by others from their home country. Longer durations for the group suggest a tendency towards permanence in the labor force. The two groups with the longest duration in 1977/1979 were the Palestinians and Jordanians, and the Iraqis, who had lived in Kuwait for an average of 15.2 and 16.5 years, respectively. Data for 1983 suggest that the Palestinian labor force is more stable (or permanent) than the Iraqis since the duration for the two groups reversed to 18.5 years and 15.6 years, respectively (Table 2). Furthermore, the Syrian and Lebanese male labor force also shows a tendency towards permanence, with an average duration of residence equal to 14 years in 1983. Unlike the three groups just discussed, the Egyptians, as well as Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis, had shorter durations of stay in 1983 than in 1977/1979. A likely reason for this pattern is the marked increase in the number of South Asian and Egyptian workers who came to Kuwait in recent years, discussed earlier in this article.

One aspect of the stability of the labor force consists of the level of accompaniment by family members. The dependency ratio—the number of dependents per 100 persons aged 15-64—within a group is an indicator of such accompaniment. The dependency ratio for the group as a whole declined from 112.8 in 1977/1979 to 63.9 in 1983. A decline in the sex ratio is indicative of an increase in the migration of unattached males in the latter period, compared to the earlier one. Each of the eight groups, including the Kuwaitis, showed a decline in the dependency ratio over the two time periods. Among the expatriates, the Palestinians and Jordanian had the highest dependency ratio in 1977/1979 (130.4), and their ratio remained the highest in 1983 (100.0). This finding

TABLE 3 *Occupational distribution" of major nationality groups for males 1977, 1979 and 1983 (percentages)*

Nationality group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total (N)
1977/1979								
Kuwaitis	8.1	1.4	24.3	1.0	47.6	0.5	17.0	2786
Palestinians & Jordanians	26.4	1.7	19.7	6.3	8.1	1.7	36.1	1390
Egyptians	63.2	3.6	8.9	2.3	8.1	0.8	13.2	394
Iraqis	6.3	2.6	19.4	4.7	24.6	0.5	41.9	191
Indians, Pakistanis & Bangladeshis	f 16.0	3.1	25.5	6.4	19.8	0	29.2	424
Syrians & Lebanese	22.1	3.8	7.7	11.2	15.0	0.8	39.3	366
Others (all groups)	13.2	2.3	16.5	4.5	25.9	1.1	36.5	266
<i>Total</i>	17.8	2.0	20.7	3.7	29.7	0.8	25.3	5817
1983								
Kuwaitis	13.8	2.2	27.5	1.2	42.0	0.3	12.9	2360
Palestinians & Jordanians	28.1	3.9	19.2	7.3	7.7	1.7	32.2	1254
Egyptians	20.7	0.6	7.8	2.6	16.1	1.2	50.9	2342
Iraqis	16.6	3.1	22.0	4.7	19.0	0.3	34.2	295
Indians	11.6	0.9	13.4	8.6	23.4	0.6	41.5	1254
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis	7.2	0.7	5.1	2.7	9.7	0.1	74.5	811
Syrians & Lebanese	16.4	4.7	8.9	10.6	10.9	1.1	47.4	470
Others (all groups)	11.8	1.6	10.6	9.4	17.1	1.5	47.9	795
<i>Total</i>	16.6	1.8	15.4	4.7	21.7	0.9	38.9	9581

"1 = Professional, technical, and related workers; 2 = Administrative and managerial workers; 3 = Clerical and related workers; 4 = Sales workers; 5 = Service workers; 6 = Agricultural workers; 7 = Production workers and laborers.

has an important implication relating to the relative permanence of this group in the population. The Palestinians seem to represent a fairly "stable" group, with a dependency ratio almost equal to that of the Kuwaiti population.

Among the other expatriate groups, the Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis had the lowest dependency ratio in 1977/1979, declining even further in 1983. Compared to the Palestinians who had a dependency ratio of 100, the Indians and Pakistanis had only about 19 dependents per 100 persons aged 15 to 64. Also, the dependency ratio among the Egyptians declined substantially from 72.8 in 1977/1979 to 23.4 in 1983. Thus, there seems to be an increased tendency towards more workers moving to Kuwait without their families.

Occupational Distribution of the Male Labor Force

With regard to the occupational structure and its changes among the various groups, the following points are worth noting. Kuwait is a nonagricultural country and a negligible percentage of the labor force was therefore engaged in such activity (Table 3). Kuwaiti males were concentrated in the service sector in

both 1977/1979 and 1983, with 48 percent and 42 percent, respectively, engaged in such activity. The second preferred occupation of Kuwaiti males was clerical and related work. Among the Palestinians, the largest percentages were involved in professional work, production-related manual work, or clerical and related work in 1977/1979; the pattern remained essentially unchanged in 1983.

Among the Egyptians, there was a big surge in the percentage employed in production-related occupations, from 13 percent to 51 percent. The percentage of Egyptians in professional occupations, on the other hand, declined sharply, from 63 percent in 1977/1979 to 21 percent in 1983. These changes in the occupational distribution of Egyptian workers suggest that many of the new entrants to the labor force took up production-related manual occupations and probably account for the big increase in the overall migration of this group to Kuwait. These changes also suggest that the decline in the average salary level of the Egyptians (shown in Table 2) is likely to be a result of the concentration of this group in relatively lower paying occupations at the second time period.

Like the Egyptians, the two groups of Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis also showed a trend toward increased concentration in production occupations. About 16 percent of the combined group of Indians and Pakistanis were engaged in professional work in 1977/1979. By 1983, this percentage declined to about 12 for Indians and 7 for Pakistanis/Bangladeshis. There was a sharp increase in the percentage of workers involved in production and related work, on the other hand. Compared to 29 percent in 1977/1979, the percentage in production work in 1983 was 42 percent for Indians and 75 percent for Pakistanis/Bangladeshis.

The changes in the occupational distribution of the Syrians and Lebanese were less marked compared with the Egyptians, Indians, or Pakistanis/Bangladeshis. However, there was a relative decline in the percentage of professionals and an increase in the percentage of production workers among this group between 1977/1979 and 1983. Finally, there was a decline in the percentage of clerical and service workers but a gain in the percentage of production workers among the group of "others" between the two time periods.

Another facet of change in the occupational structure pertains to the duration for which a worker has resided in the host country. The duration of residence is an important aspect of labor force stability and may contribute towards occupational mobility by providing "in-country" experience for the longer-term migrants (Chiswick, 1982). Table 4 presents data on the occupational structure of the seven expatriate groups according to the duration of residence for the two time periods under study. The seven occupational groups shown in Table 3 were regrouped into three groups, namely, white collar, blue collar, and service/ agricultural workers for ease of analysis. The white collar category includes professional, administrative, clerical, and sales workers (groups 1-4, Table 3); the blue collar category includes production-related manual workers and laborers (group 7); the service and agricultural workers were added together since there were very few in the latter category (groups 5 and 6, Table 3).

If the percentage of workers in white collar occupations is treated as a measure of improvement in the occupational structure we find the following patterns from Table 4: The Palestinians have experienced an improvement in their occupational structure in recent years, since a substantially larger percentage of those

TABLE 4 *The changes in occupational structure of non-Kuwaiti males according to duration of residence*

Nationality and Duration of Residence	Percent Employed in 1977/1979			(N)	Percent Employed in 1983			(N)
	White Collar	Blue Collar	Service/ Agricul- ture		White Collar	Blue Collar	Service/ Agricul- ture	
Palestinians								
<5	69.7	28.3	2.0	99	72.5	25.0	2.5	40
5-9	68.7	24.2	6.9	131	71.1	25.0	3.8	184
10-14	61.1	31.9	6.9	332	80.8	16.4	2.9	111
15+	47.1	40.6	12.3	828	53.9	34.8	11.3	919
Egyptians								
<5	75.8	13.0	11.2	161	23.6	58.1	18.3	959
5-9	78.3	14.4	7.2	111	33.1	49.5	17.5	1,013
10-14	78.3	13.6	7.9	88	45.3	38.0	16.7	192
15+	85.2	8.8	5.9	34	52.9	34.3	13.0	178
Iraqis								
<5	33.3	50.0	16.7	12	68.1	25.0	6.8	44
5-9	50.0	45.8	4.2	24	46.2	32.7	21.2	52
10-14	31.8	43.9	24.4	41	33.4	48.7	17.9	39
15+	29.8	39.5	30.7	114	43.8	33.8	22.5	160
Indians"								
< 5	32.1	31.5	36.4	162	19.3	48.3	32.4	540
5-9	57.7	28.4	13.7	95	38.7	41.3	20.1	458
10-14	68.3	24.6	7.0	57	56.7	33.1	10.2	118
15 H	63.7	29.1	7.3	110	61.6	22.5	15.9	138
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis								
< 5					8.0	79.9	12.4	390
5-9					18.3	74.0	7.6	277
10-14					31.0	63.2	5.9	68
15+					31.6	59.2	9.2	76
Syrians & Lebanese								
<5	56.0	26.0	18.0	50	41.8	47.3	10.9	55
5-9	41.7	25.4	32.8	67	34.4	57.6	7.9	151
10-14	41.3	45.7	13.0	92	44.1	37.3	18.6	59
15+	44.6	45.9	9.6	157	43.8	42.9	13.1	205
Others								
<5	49.0	22.2	28.2	55	47.0	33.3	19.5	234
5-9	46.8	21.9	31.3	46	55.7	27.9	16.4	161
10-14	34.7	47.8	17.4	41	48.2	18.5	33.4	117
15+	38.0	37.8	24.3	124	44.3	27.6	28.2	283
Total (non-Kuwaiti)								
<5	55.1	25.2	19.7	539	23.3	57.2	19.5	2,262
5-9	61.4	23.4	15.2	474	35.7	49.7	14.6	2,296
10-14	57.5	32.6	9.9	651	46.7	38.5	14.8	704
15+	46.6	39.5	13.9	1,367	48.7	36.7	14.6	1,959
Total (all durations)				3,031				7,221

" Includes Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis for 1977/1979.

with 0-14 years of residence, compared with those with 15+ years of residence, were in white collar occupations at both time periods. The observed improvement is commensurate with the rise in educational attainment of recent Palestinian workers relative to those Palestinians who have been living in Kuwait for quite some time (data not shown).

Among the Egyptians, on the other hand, a substantial shift towards blue collar jobs seems to have occurred. In 1983, only 24 percent of those who had been in Kuwait for less than 5 years were in white collar occupations, compared with 53 percent of those who had been here for 15+ years. Thus, the new entrants to the labor force were concentrated in blue collar jobs, resulting in lower wages for the groups as a whole, as discussed earlier. This trend may be attributable to the lower productivity, in terms of education, of the recent migrants. For example, Egyptians working in the production occupations for more than 15 years had an average educational attainment of 2.6 years, compared with 1.9 years attained by those who had worked in such occupations for less than 5 years in 1983 (data not shown).

Among the Iraqis, there was an erratic pattern in 1977/1979, but a relatively clear trend towards upward mobility in 1983 (Table 4). About 68 percent of those with less than 5 years of residence were in white collar occupations, compared with 44 percent of those who had been in Kuwait for 15+ years.

Both the Indians and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis showed marked shifts towards blue collar occupations in 1983. Among the Indians, 62 percent of the long term migrants (i.e., with duration of residence equal to 15+ years) were in white collar occupations, while only 19 percent of the recent migrants (with 5 years duration) were in such occupations. The corresponding percentages for the Pakistanis were 32 percent and 8 percent, respectively (Table 4). Such a trend is again consistent with a decline in the educational attainment of the recent versus the long-term migrants, particularly in service and production occupations. Among the Syrians and Lebanese, there seemed to be an improvement in 1977/1979, but the pattern in 1983 was somewhat erratic. A similar pattern was also the case for the category of "others."

Thus, it seems that the relatively younger migrants among the Palestinians, and the most recent migrants among the Iraqis were more highly placed in the occupational structure than their older counterparts or those who had been in Kuwait for longer durations. The recent migrants among these two groups were relatively more highly educated and probably had better skills than their older counterparts. Among the Egyptians, Indians, and Pakistanis/Bangladeshis, the most recent migrants were concentrated in production occupations. The above findings suggest that in the case of the latter three groups, the increase in their numbers in the labor force is accompanied by a concentration in blue collar occupations, coupled with a decline in their skill levels as measured by education. The above findings imply that the duration of residence is not the only factor which causes changes in the occupational structure. Other factors, such as educational attainment, are also very important since education partly determines the job a migrant is likely to secure in the host country, and the consequent wages he is able to earn. In the following section, we examine the changes in

wage levels according to the occupation of the migrants and their duration of residence in Kuwait.

Occupation, Duration of Stay, and Wages

Table 5 presents data on wage levels according to the duration of residence and the three broad occupational groups for the eight nationality groups. A few general conclusions provided by this table are as follows.

First, the salary of the white collar workers was the highest and that of the agricultural/service workers was the lowest among each of the nationality groups at almost every duration of residence. While this was the case in general, the salary level of various nationality groups within the same occupation was often substantially different. For example, both Egyptian and Syrian/Lebanese white collar workers who had lived in Kuwait for less than 5 years earned about 3 times as much as their agricultural/service worker counterparts. However, the Syrian/Lebanese white collar workers were earning almost 2 times as much as their Egyptian counterparts in 1983.

Second, the wages of the long term migrants were higher than those of the most recent migrants in white collar occupations—with the exception of Iraqis and "others"—in both 1977/1979 and 1983. This pattern was also the case for the agricultural/service workers in most nationalities. The finding that the long-term migrants earn more than the recent migrants suggests that adaptation to the environment helps the migrants in improving their earnings in most occupations. Another implication is that the new entrants may be hired into the same occupation at lower wages than their older counterparts.

Third, the salary differential between the migrants who had been in Kuwait for 15+ years and those who had been there for less than 5 years was the largest among the blue collar (or production) workers from India, Pakistan, and Egypt. This suggests that the salary of new entrants in this occupation was markedly lower than that of new entrants in the white collar occupations. Thus, entrance into production occupations by large numbers of new migrants does result in downward economic mobility for that group, as in the case of the Egyptians discussed in the preceding section.

Finally, the income distribution of the Kuwaitis seemed more egalitarian than the distribution of other nationalities, particularly in 1983. This is consistent with expectations in view of the subsidies provided to Kuwaitis in various occupations and their concentration in the relatively high paying white collar jobs. These points are elaborated further in the last section of the article.

Percent of Kuwaitis in the Male Labor Force

One aspect of the labor force that deserves special attention is changes in the percentage of the indigenous population in it. As was discussed in the section on background, one of the consequences of increased labor migration seems to be a decline in the percentage of Kuwaitis in the labor force. Kuwait has a concrete policy to increase the number and percentage of the indigenous workers,

TABLE 5 *Average monthly salary (KD) of migrants with varying durations of residence in Kuwait among white collar, blue collar, and agriculture service workers*

Nationality	White Collar Workers					Blue Collar Workers					Agriculture / Service Workers				N
	Stayed				A'	Stayed				N	Stayed				
	<5 years	5-9	10-14	15+		<5 years	5-9	10-14	15+		<5 years	5-9	10-14	15+	
Kuwaitis (average)	261	—	—	—	—	190	—	—	—	—	200	—	—	—	—
Palestinians & Jordanians	237	270	256	281	752	177	170	180	181	502	121"	85"	130	150	136
Egyptians	277	317	365	366	307	152	187	154	222"	52	44	125"	102"	140"	35
Iraqis	337"	178	288	203	63	174"	140	144	148	80	85°	40"	81	110	48
Indians & Pakistanis	186	211	244	258	216	79	147	240	203	124	30	39	100°	133°	84
Syrians & Lebanese	271	315	281	280	164	209	163	190	202	144	105"	98	118	175	58
Others	497	200	241	225	97	123	121	204	190	97	46	57	95	148	72
Total (excluding Kuwaitis)	269	269	278	274	1599	133	160	184	184	999	44	77	110	143	433
Kuwaitis (average)	457	—	—	—	—	395	—	—	—	—	408	—	—	—	—
Palestinians & Jordanians	342	420	466	416	733	187	267	306	287	404	105"	199"	150"	244	117
Egyptians	296	360	473	493	743	216	233	256	235	1192	100	110	109	153	407
Iraqis	506	539	678	326	137	168	172	208	228	101	153°	115	173°	194	57
Indians	263	309	346	418	433	110	173	184	259	520	64	78	111	142	301
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis	342	327	436	436	127	167	198	240	257	604	99	144	136"	204"	80
Syrians & Lebanese	550	457	430	476	191	317	310	289	472	223	151"	201	205	205	56
Others (including Iranians)	604	486	283	469	266	262	248	256	250	381	93	133	144	172	148
Total	364	375	426	429	2630	206	223	247	292	3425	84	108	138	200	1166

"Less than 10 cases in the cell.

*For the total group.

Note: White collar workers include professional and technical workers as well as administrative, clerical, and sales workers, while blue collar workers include production workers.

TABLE 6 *The percentage of workforce comprised by Kuwaiti males in the 1977/1979 and 1983 surveys and 1985 census*

i Occupational Categories	Percent of Kuwaiti males in labor force			
	1975 Census	1977/1979 Survey	1983 Survey	1985 Census
Professional and technical workers	20.5	21.8	20.5	18.2
Administrative and managerial workers	36.4	34.5	29.4	37.0
Clerical and related workers	46.8	56.3	44.1	38.9
Sales workers	25.9	13.6	6.4	15.9
Service workers	50.9	76.8	47.6	33.2
Agriculturists, animal husbandry, fishermen, and hunters	50.5	29.8	8.4	20.1
Production workers and laborers	14.5	32.1	8.2	4.6
<i>Total</i>	30.2	47.9	24.6	18.9

or "Kuwaitize" the labor force, through providing adequate training programs and special incentives for Kuwaiti workers (Al-Qudsi and Hosni, 1986).

Table 6 shows the percentage of Kuwaiti males in various occupations in the 1977/1979 and 1983 surveys and the 1985 census. Administrative, clerical, and service work represent the three occupations in which more than one-third of the labor force was comprised of Kuwaiti nationals in 1985. The production work and labor category was almost entirely comprised of expatriates, in the 1983 survey as well as in the 1985 census. Since production work constituted a substantial percentage of all male occupations (41 percent) in 1985, the negligible participation of Kuwaiti males in this sector needs correction.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FEMALE LABOR FORCE

The female labor force in Kuwait, as in some other Asian countries, requires separate discussion since the two segments of male and female workers are structurally quite different. The female labor force in Kuwait—both the Kuwaitis and expatriates—is concentrated in the two or three occupations that are considered culturally appropriate for women. In the two surveys we considered, females comprised about 18 percent in the 1977/1979 survey, and 21 percent in the 1983 survey. In the 1985 census, females constituted about 20 percent of the total, the same percentage they represented in both the Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti labor forces.

The government has a stated policy to encourage female work participation, in occupations "suitable" for them, e.g., as teachers, nurses and doctors, and in other social services. A positive response to this policy is indicated by the notable increase in the labor force participation rate among females over the last decade, 1975-1985. In 1975, 6.2 percent of the Kuwaiti females aged 15+ were in the labor force. This percentage increased to 9.6 in 1980 and 13.8 percent in 1985.

In terms of the sociodemographic characteristics, shown in Table 7, the total female labor force was younger than the male labor force during both survey

TABLE 7 *A sociodemographic profile of female workers in the major nationality groups in Kuwait: 1977/1979 and 1983*

Nationality	Age	Monthly Salary (KD)	Educational Grades	Working Hours/Week	Duration of Stay (in years)	Dependency Ratio	(N)
1977/1979							
Kuwaitis	26.9	191	8.4	26.3	NA	109.4	309
Palestinians & Jordanians	29.8	130	9.9	31.6	12.3	130.2	143
Egyptians	32.9	92	4.7	46.8	4.9	49.0	382
Iraqis	34.6	81	3.3	33.6	16.7	77.3	57
Indians, Pakistanis, & Bangladeshis	36.8	65	3.6	55.8	5.5	48.9	245
Syrians & Lebanese	32.4	117	8.3	34.3	11.5	101.0	69
Europeans, Americans, Others	35.1	69	4.8	53.6	3.1	107.7	28
<i>Total</i>	32.1	115	7.9	40.9	7.3	104.1	1233
1983							
Kuwaitis	27.7	348	12.1	34.0	NA	93.6	537
Palestinians & Jordanians	30.1	238	13.0	38.5	18.0	104.5	196
Egyptians	33.1	206	11.0	40.3	8.8	64.5	398
Iraqis	34.3	183	6.7	40.8	16.7	77.8	68
Indians	34.2	89	3.9	57.5	6.6	32.8	445
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis"	32.8	73	2.9	59.2	5.4	85.9	61
Syrians & Lebanese	32.3	274	11.0	42.8	19.3	90.3	57
Europeans, Americans, Others	29.3	46	2.1	64.0	3.8	25.7	733
<i>Total</i>	30.8	168.9	7.2	49.1	7.8	81.3	2495
"Figures for Pakistanis and Bangladeshis	his separately	were as follows:					
Pakistanis	35.6	96	3.6	56.8	8.5	93.2	32
Bangladeshis	29.7	47	1.5	62.4	2.0	17.6	29

periods. Females earned about one-half the salary that males earned in 1977/1979 and 1983, even though their average educational level was somewhat higher than that of males during both time periods (Tables 2 and 7). Females worked longer hours than males, substantially so in 1983 (49.1 hours and 45.1 hours for females males, respectively). Finally, the duration of stay for expatriate females was relatively shorter than that of males during both time periods, indicating a higher turnover rate in the female labor force.

With regard to intergroup differences, there was a fair amount of variability according to most characteristics. Like the males, the Kuwaiti females were the youngest compared to the other groups during both time periods. The ages of the other groups ranged between 29.8 and 36.8 in 1977/1979, and between 29.3 and 35.6 in 1983. The salary of the Kuwaiti women was much higher than any of the other groups during both time periods. For example, the salary of Kuwaiti women in 1977/1979 was almost 3 times as high as the Indian and Pakistani women (191 and 65, respectively); by 1983, the differential had increased even further and the Kuwaiti salaries were about 4 times higher than the Indian/Pakistani salaries. One of the obvious reasons for this differential is the marked difference in the occupational structure of the two groups, as discussed in the next section. A majority of the Kuwaiti women were in the professional category, which is usually high paying, while a large majority of the Indians and Pakistanis were in the lower paying service category. In addition to the occupational structure, the Kuwaitis are provided specific allowances as citizens of the country (Al-Qudsi, 1985).

Next to the Kuwaitis, the Palestinians earned the highest wages in 1977/1979, followed by the Syrians and Lebanese in 1983 (Table 7). The changes in wage levels over time are again related with the corresponding changes in the occupational structure. The overall wages of the female labor force, however, rose by about 47 percent between 1977/1979 and 1983 (From KD 115 to KD 169 per month). The Syrians and Lebanese experienced the highest gain (134 percent) followed by Iraqis and Egyptians (126 percent and 124 percent respectively). Kuwaiti females had an increase of about 82 percent in their salary, as did the Palestinians and Jordanians. The Indian and Pakistani/ Bangladeshi women had the lowest percentage increase in their salaries between the two time periods (35 percent and 38 percent, respectively).

The quality of the female labor force improved in terms of education for almost all groups except the Pakistanis/Bangladeshis and the groups of "others," comprised mainly of domestic servants in 1983 (Table 7).⁶ The average number of grades completed by Kuwaiti females, for example, was 12.1 in 1983 compared with 8.3 in 1977/1979. The educational level of the "others" group declined substantially from 4.8 grades to 2.1 grades. For the group as a whole, the level of education declined somewhat, mainly due to the influx of large numbers of Asian (mainly Sri Lankan and Filipino) workers with low education.

Like the males, the weekly working hours for females also increased for each group (Table 7). The variation across groups was, however, much more marked in the case of females than males in 1983. The hours of work ranged from 34 among Kuwaiti females to about 57 among Indian and Pakistani females and 64

in the "other" category. The remaining groups worked between 38 and 43 hours a week in 1983. The unusually long working hours for Indians, Pakistanis, and "others" (mostly Sri Lankans) probably resulted from the concentration of these groups in domestic service.

The duration of stay of the total group increased little, from 7.3 to 7.8 years, which indicates a relative lack of stability. For most of the Arab groups, however, the duration of stay was substantially higher in 1983 than in 1977/1979. The category of "others" had the shortest duration of stay (3.1 in 1977/1979 and 3.8 in 1983), resulting partly from the high turnover of domestic servants.

As in the case of male workers, the dependency ratio among females declined over the two survey dates (from 104 to 81.3), which implies an increase in the migration of unattached females (Table 7). The Palestinian females had the highest dependency ratio in 1977/1979 as well as in 1983, which further reinforces our theories about family migration among this group, and is consistent with their average duration of stay of 18 years in 1983. Another point worth noting is the sharp decline in the dependency ratio of the group of "others"—from 104 to 26 between the two survey dates. This finding once more emphasizes the significance of the migration of domestic servants in the latter period, as discussed further in the next section.

Occupational Distribution of the Female Labor Force

Table 8 shows that, unlike the males, hardly any women were employed in the production or agricultural occupations. Also, percentages of women in administrative and sales occupations were negligible. The three categories in which employed females were concentrated were the professional, clerical, and service occupations. This was true among each of the eight nationality groups. When the two time periods are compared, we observe a shift in the occupational distribution from professional to service occupations. Between 1977/1979 and 1983, the percentage of women in professional occupations declined from 41 percent to about 30 percent, while the percentage in service occupations increased from 41 percent to 52 percent. This trend is consistent with the rise in female domestic servants discussed earlier.

The Kuwaiti women were heavily concentrated in the professional occupations at both time periods, even though the percentage declined slightly between 1977/1979 and 1983 (from 57 percent to 54 percent). A majority of the professional women were teachers. In the 1985 census, 34 percent of all employed Kuwaiti females were teachers. The second most preferred occupation of Kuwaiti women was clerical and related work. The pattern among Palestinian and Jordanian females seemed very similar to the Kuwaitis, particularly in 1983 (Table 8). However, there was a shift from professional to clerical occupations among Palestinian women between 1977/1979 and 1983.

The Egyptian women seem to have achieved some upward mobility by moving into professional occupations and away from service occupations over the two survey periods. Similarly, there were substantially more Iraqi women in professional occupations in 1977/1979 compared with 1983. Concerning the Syrians

TABLE 8 *Occupational distribution" of major nationality groups for females: 1977/1979 and 1983 (percentages)*

Nationality Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total (N)
1977/1979								
Kuwaitis	57.0	0.0	22.3	0.0	20.1	0.0	0.6	309
Palestinians & Jordanians	67.1	0.0	23.1	1.4	8.4	0.0	0.0	143
Egyptians	41.1	0.0	11.0	0.3	46.9	0.0	0.8	382
Iraqis	15.8	0.0	3.5	0.0	78.9	0.0	1.8	57
Indians, Pakistanis, & Bangladeshis	18.0	0.0	13.1	0.8	68.2	0.0	0.0	245
Syrians & Lebanese	31.9	0.0	27.5	5.8	34.8	0.0	0.0	69
Others (all groups)	7.1	0.0	10.7	3.6	75.0	0.0	3.6	28
<i>Total</i>	41.0	0.0	16.2	0.8	41.4	0.0	0.6	1233
1983								
Kuwaitis	54.2	0.2	37.8	0.0	7.8	0.0	0.0	537
Palestinians & Jordanians	54.6	1.5	37.2	1.5	4.1	0.0	1.0	196
Egyptians	51.5	0.5	17.3	1.6	28.6	0.0	0.5	398
Iraqis	33.8	1.5	14.7	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	68
Indians	15.7	0.0	7.0	0.2	76.6	0.0	0.4	445
Pakistanis & Bangladeshis	8.2	0.0	4.9	0.0	85.2	0.0	1.6	61
Syrians & Lebanese	33.3	0.0	45.6	3.5	15.8	0.0	1.8	57
Others (all groups)	2.5	0.3	1.8	0.0	95.5	0.0	0.0	733
<i>Total</i>	29.6	0.4	17.2	0.5	52.1	0.0	0.3	2495

"1 = Professional, technical, and related workers; 2 = Administrative and managerial workers; 3 — Clerical and related workers; 4 = Sales workers; 5 = Service workers; 6 = Agricultural workers; 7 = Production workers and laborers.

and Lebanese, a unique feature was their relatively large concentration in clerical occupations and their low concentration in service occupations, particularly in 1983.

Unlike the other groups whose occupational distribution either seems to have remained stable or changed in favor of white collar jobs, the groups of Indians, Pakistanis/Bangladeshis, and "others" seem to have experienced a shift toward service occupations. The percentage of professional women in these three groups declined, while that in the service category increased between 1977/1979 and 1983.

The service sector is a particularly important sector for expatriate female workers in Kuwait. In 1983, about 50 percent of the Iraqis, 75 percent of the Indians, 85 percent of the Pakistanis, and 96 percent of the "others" were in this sector. The service category in the case of expatriate females is comprised mainly of domestic servants and hotel and building cleaners. The majority in the "other" group are likely to belong to the category of domestic servants, due to the presence of Sri Lankan and Filipino maids.

TABLE 9 *Female share of the workforce in the 1977/1979 and 1983 surveys and 1985 census, by nationality*

Occupational Categories	Kuwaitis			Non-Kuwaitis		
	1977/79 Survey	1983 Survey	1985 Census	1977/79 Survey	1983 Survey	1985 Census
Professional and technical workers	43.8	47.2	49.1	28.9	26.2	28.4
Administrative and managerial workers	0.0	1.9	5.5	0.0	6.0	2.5
Clerical and related workers	9.2	23.8	27.9	19.9	21.5	20.9
Sales workers	0.0	0.0	1.6	5.1	2.8	2.9
Service workers	4.5	4.1	4.2	52.8	53.6	47.3
Agriculturists, animal husbandry, fishermen, and hunters	0.0	0.0	1.7	52.8	0.0	0.1
Production workers and laborers	0.4	0.0	1.1	0.5	0.2	0.2
<i>Total</i>	10.0	18.5	19.6	23.4	21.3	19.7

The above analysis enables us to draw some interesting conclusions about the female labor force in Kuwait. First, it supports the census data regarding their concentration in service occupations, but points out that this concentration is particularly extreme in the case of Asian females. Second, the salary level of females is much lower than that of males despite the somewhat higher educational level of the former. The salary differential could be the result of occupational concentration of females, discrimination against them, or both these factors. Finally, Asian females work unusually long hours but are the lowest paid.

Female Share of Various Occupations

Even though females comprised about one-fifth of the Kuwaiti as well as non-Kuwaiti labor force in 1985, they were heavily concentrated in a few occupations, as shown in Table 8 and elaborated further in Table 9. The Kuwaiti females comprised a substantial percentage of only two occupational categories, professional and technical work and clerical work. In the 1985 census, Kuwaiti females constituted about half of the total workers in the professional occupations and about 28 percent of the workers in the clerical and related occupations. Among the non-Kuwaitis, females constituted 47 percent of the service category, 26 percent of the professional category, and about 22 percent of the clerical and related occupations. Female participation in other occupations was negligible.

The heavy concentration of women in two or three occupations clearly indicates that female participation in the labor force is highly selective in nature. The cultural norms governing such participation have prevented female participation in occupations that are traditionally defined as "non-female"—administrative and managerial positions or production-related manual work. Societal norms relating to the segregation of the sexes in the work place continue to be quite important in Kuwait, as in some other Asian Muslim countries (Alessa, 1981; Shah, 1985). Occupational concentration among females is likely to continue

over the next few years, judging from planning documents that state that female participation should be encouraged, but only in occupations "suitable" for them (Ministerial Council, 1985).

Finally, participation by Kuwaiti females in the labor force does seem to have helped in reducing the dependency on expatriate workers in the two occupations in which they were concentrated—professional and clerical jobs. In the 1985 census, Kuwaiti females constituted about 40 percent of the total females in the professional occupations and 48 percent in the clerical occupations. Furthermore, Kuwaiti females constituted a substantial percentage of all females employed in agricultural and administrative occupations. Their participation in these occupations was, however, too small to be numerically important.

DISCUSSION

The number of foreign workers in Kuwait increased from 141,000 in 1965 to 539,000 in 1985. The largest influx occurred between 1975 and 1980, and the pace of migration declined between 1980 and 1985. Despite the declining pace, Kuwaitis constituted only 18 percent of the labor force in 1985. The high level of dependence on expatriate labor is a matter of great concern for the Kuwaiti government. Such dependence is recognized to be socially as well as politically undesirable. The government, therefore, has an overt policy aimed at achieving a balance between nationals and expatriates in the population. It is planned that the population mix of Kuwaitis (i.e., nationals) and non-Kuwaitis (i.e., expatriates) should be 50:50 by the end of this century. Steps aimed at reducing the number of foreign workers and increasing Kuwaiti workers ("Kuwaitization") are being taken simultaneously in order to help attain the desired balance (Ministerial Council, 1985).

Some of the reasons for the low level of nationals in the labor force are the youthful age structure of the population, the widespread expansion of secondary and university education, and the relatively low work participation of females (Nagi, 1982). In terms of future expected changes in the above factors, the age structure is likely to remain young in view of the high fertility rate of the nationals. The demand for secondary and higher education is also likely to remain high, both because such education is completely subsidized by the state and because Kuwaitis shun manual work. During the pre-oil era, Kuwaiti males were usually dhow builders, fishermen, pearl-divers, or traders. As oil was discovered and exploited, Kuwaiti males were absorbed by government service and employed as policemen, security men, and clerical and professional workers. Given the country's policy of Kuwaitization, every national looking for a job is essentially guaranteed one (Birks and Sinclair, 1979; Nagi, 1982). There is a separate salary scale for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis for the same job; the former are given special bonuses and incentives as encouragement. It has been estimated that for every dinar earned by a Kuwaiti, the government contributes another 2.5 in terms of social services, benefits, and direct cash subsidies (Hosni and Al-Qudsi, 1986). While such discriminatory policies are likely to increase the number of Kuwaitis in the labor force, they form the basis of a potential conflict between

workers (Al-Akhras, 1982). The expatriates are, however, kept in check through the issuance of short term contracts and the virtual absence of trade unions (Choucri, 1986; Weiner, 1982).

Some writers have argued that the dependence on migrant workers has stunted the growth of indigenous labor force (Nagi, 1982). In its effort to increase the percentage of Kuwaiti workers, the government has, in fact, provided "luxury" employment for nationals, resulting in very low productivity. This concern was recently expressed by the Kuwaiti Health Minister when he said that, in some cases, nine persons are doing the work of one. An additional concern involves the preference of young people for subjects related to the arts and humanities, rather than technical and vocational training, as the government would like them to have. Subsidization and encouragement of higher education actually pays people not to train for blue collar jobs (Keeley, 1980). The nationals' aversion to manual work seems to have increased over the years, as indicated by their decreasing participation in production work.

Work participation by Kuwaiti women has been increasing, but is concentrated in a few traditional occupations in the education and health sectors. Even though a few women have made it to fairly high administrative and managerial positions such as deans of university faculties or department heads, the general societal attitude still prefers females to work in segregated settings, e.g., in female schools (Alessa, 1981). Participation in political life is minimal and women have not yet won the right to vote for elected members of the national assembly. Kuwaiti women are beginning to get organized, but generally appear quite content to operate within the existing political and social structures (Shah, 1985).

The expatriates who constitute more than 80 percent of the labor force are not a homogeneous group. They are divided into many segments, according to sex, ethnicity, and occupation. Expatriates from over 100 nations are present in Kuwait, although about seven or eight predominate. The major ones are Jordanian/Palestinians, Egyptians, Iraqis, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Syrians, and Lebanese. The characteristics of these major groups have changed significantly over the last decade, as indicated by an analysis of two surveys, conducted in 1977/1979 and 1983.

The female segment constitutes about 20 percent of the expatriate labor force and is concentrated in only three occupations, which are further differentiated according to ethnic background. The non-Arab females from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka are concentrated in service occupations as house maids or cleaners. These groups usually work longer hours than the Arabs and have lived in Kuwait for relatively shorter periods of time. The Arab women, on the other hand, are concentrated in professional and clerical work. The professionals are mainly teachers and nurses while the clerks include typists and record keepers. The professional and clerical workers are often employed in the public sector and therefore work considerably fewer hours than the service workers. In general, the working hours of non-Arab women are about 1.5 times longer than those of the Arab women. Consistent with their low-income occupational structure, the non-Arab women earn only about one-third as much as the Palestinian women, and one-fifth as much as the Kuwaiti women. Thus, ethnic background

appears to be important in determining the roles that various expatriate women play in the Kuwaiti labor force, and in the concomitant benefits they derive from it (Al-Qudsi, 1986).

The low paying service sector in which the non-Arab females are concentrated has gained, considerable numerical strength over the last decade. About 53 percent of all non-Kuwaiti females were in service occupations in 1975; this increased to 65 percent in 1985. A major reason for the increase in this sector is the increased number of domestic servants. Kuwait had about 63,000 domestic servants in 1985, which implies that 28 percent of all households in Kuwait had a maid. Kuwaiti households are much more likely to import maids because of their higher incomes and their ability to arrange for visas. It would perhaps be safe to assume that about 60 to 70 percent of all Kuwaiti households have a maid. The presence of a maid provides a surrogate mother, thus enabling the young mother to enter the labor force if she so chooses. However, concern has often been expressed in the press about the allegedly unhealthy influence of maids on the upbringing of children, since many of the maids are non-Muslim and follow their own customs and habits. The demand for maids has nevertheless provided an important migration outlet, particularly for countries like Sri Lanka (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, 1983).

Among the male expatriate workers, the pattern of change seems to have followed at least two paths. The first is typified by migrants from the three South Asian countries of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Workers from these countries have gained in numerical strength. In fact, the 1985 census data indicate that the Asian workers outnumbered the Arabs for the first time in Kuwait's history. The percentage of Asian workers among all expatriates increased from 38 to 52 between the 1980 and 1985 censuses. Some of the reasons for this increase have been discussed in this article. Two factors which seem particularly important with regard to this trend are the relatively low cost of Asian workers (compared to Arab), and their relative docility. Furthermore, government regulations concerning workers from Asian countries have done much to facilitate the arrival of the required workers in an organized manner (Choucri, 1986).

The analysis in this article has shown that the increase in numbers among the Egyptians and South Asians was accompanied by an increased concentration in production-related manual work and laboring occupations. Such concentration was particularly extreme in the case of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. As their numbers increased, the quality of the migrants from these countries declined in terms of education. The numbers of hours worked increased significantly for the Egyptians and remained high (around 50 per week) for the South Asians. This pattern indicates a preponderance in private sector jobs, which require much longer working hours than those in the public sector. Finally, the Egyptians suffered a loss in wages while the South Asians experienced only modest gains over the period studied. Thus, even though a larger number of persons from these countries entered the Kuwaiti labor force, they filled relatively low-paying occupations compared to their predecessors, thus lowering the average wage for the group as a whole. We observed, however, that the duration of stay within the host country is a positive force in upward mobility of workers, as discussed later.

The second path of change for expatriate male workers seems typical of those Arabs who have been in Kuwait for several years. Their occupational patterns have remained much more stable than those of the Egyptians and South Asians. The stability of the occupational structure of these groups is partly a function of their longer durations of stay. The pseudopermanency of Palestinians is due to their political situation, resulting from their displacement from their homeland. The Arabs from Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon were among the first to arrive in Kuwait and get settled in the public sector jobs as well as in professional and technical jobs. The wage differentials between these workers and the Asian workers are marked, as expected. For example, a Palestinian worker earned 1.9 times more than an Indian, while a Kuwaiti earned 2.2 times more than a Palestinian in 1983. The ethnic differentials in income levels persisted even after the type of work was controlled. For example, an Indian production worker who had lived in Kuwait for less than 5 years earned KD 110 a month compared with KD 216 earned by his Egyptian counterpart. Thus, ethnicity is related to the amount of benefit an expatriate is able to gain in the host country, namely Kuwait. A more rigorous analysis of wage determinants is contained in an unpublished paper by Al-Qudsi and Shah (1988).

One important observation relates to the amount of economic "progress" male migrant workers are able to make as their stay in Kuwait is protracted. For almost all nationality and occupation groups, wages are positively associated with duration of stay. The differentials between the wages of various ethnic groups, however, persist over time. Furthermore, the differential between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis also persists for most groups. Some of the reasons for the migrants' ability to improve their wages are their adjustment and partial assimilation through learning the language (in the case of non-Arabs), gaining familiarity with cultural values and norms, and learning the rules of etiquette and expectation at the work place.

Assimilation into Kuwaiti society is, however, superficial since a large majority of the expatriates will continue to live in Kuwait only as "temporary" residents. The laws of the country do not allow the granting of nationality on the basis of residence or birth in Kuwait. Even after 15 or 20 years, an expatriate lives in Kuwait as a temporary resident and requires a Kuwaiti sponsor (*kafil*) to provide him a legal resident visa (*iqama*). The government is the sponsor in the case of those employed in the public sector. In the private sector, all business concerns are owned by a Kuwaiti who sponsors and imports foreign workers or hires them locally, if available. Other factors that discourage assimilation include the expatriates' inability to buy property, the residential segregation of expatriates and nationals accomplished through the provision of government housing, and the inability of lower income employees (earning less than KD 400) to bring their families to Kuwait.

Some writers have suggested that Kuwait should follow a more liberal nationalization policy to overcome its shortage of human resources (Alessa, 1981). Despite the economic merit of this argument, political and social conditions in the country are unlikely to permit such a policy change in the near future. In the meantime, the presence of a large expatriate community will

continue to form an integral social and economic feature of the country. The basis of the expatriate community is the migrant workers who come from many different lands, and whose characteristics have changed markedly over the last decade. An ongoing analysis and monitoring of such structural changes, as analyzed in this paper, is bound to be very illuminating and will be necessary for effective planning for the future.

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NOTES

¹The group of Palestinians and Jordanians is comprised mainly of Palestinians with Jordanian passports. This group was coded jointly and could not be analyzed separately. Among the South Asians, the Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis were coded together in the 1977/1979 survey. In the 1983 survey, these three groups were coded separately. The groups of Indians and Pakistanis were large enough to be analyzed separately (1,254 and 657 cases, respectively). However, the Bangladeshis were added to the Pakistanis since there were only 154 of the former. Finally, the Syrians and Lebanese were added together to avoid a small sample size for either group. It should be noted here, however, that the characteristics of the categories that were grouped together were often quite varied, particularly in the case of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The latter group had a much lower educational level and a significantly shorter duration of stay than the former group.

²A word of caution about the large number of domestic servants is in order. Since Kuwait has a system whereby a Kuwaiti sponsor (*kafil*) can easily have a visa issued for domestic servants, non-Kuwaitis sometimes buy such visas by paying a fee to a Kuwaiti, even though the migrant may simply be a housewife. There is no published estimate of the number of such (illegal) visas. It is likely that the work status of some respondents may be misreported at the time of the census, even though the census-taker is not required to check visa status.

³Another probable reason for the inadequate representation of non-Kuwaiti males in the 1977/1979 survey could be the nature of the survey itself. Since this survey was concerned primarily with estimating the household budget, the concern with obtaining a representative sample of the various nationalities in the work force may not have been so great. The 1983 survey was a labor force survey and therefore probably focused more specifically on the various nationality groups.

The apparent decline in the percentage of the Palestinians/Jordanians in the labor force was not accompanied by a reduction in their overall proportion in the population, however. The total sample (i.e., all ages) contained 20 percent Palestinians/Jordanians, 11 percent Egyptians, and 10 percent Indians and Pakistanis in 1983.

⁴Data on participation in the public sector versus the private sector indicate that the recent migrants are, indeed, concentrated in the private sector. For example, the 1983 survey data show that among the Arabs, 80 percent of those who had been in Kuwait for less than five years were in the private sector, compared with only 35 percent of those who had been there for 20 or more years. The corresponding percentages for non-Arabs were 95 percent and 67 percent, respectively.

⁵While the educational level of the combined groups of Pakistani and Bangladeshi females declined between 1977/1979 and 1983, a big decline was present only among the Bangladeshis, when analyzed separately (see note at the end of Table 7).

⁶Regression analysis of the 1983 survey data indicate that the wage differentials between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis persist even after the education, experience before and after migration, and marital status are controlled. The wages of Kuwaitis are consistently higher than those of the other groups.

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