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# Migrant Values and Beliefs: How Are They Different and How Do They Change?

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*This is a study of the values of migrants. We examine processes of selection—how values affect migration—and adaptation—how migration influences value changes. Empirical analyses use a unique collection of data that combines detailed information on values from a representative sample of non-migrants in Nepal with a representative sample of Nepali migrants living in the Persian Gulf. Results suggest that migrants were selected from those who were more materialistic, less committed to religion and more family-oriented. In terms of adaptation, our results are consistent with the idea that migrants become more religious, less committed to historical Nepali values, and change ideas about family-orientation in mixed ways. Thus, we find that value adaptations of migrants are complex processes that could have immense impacts on ideational diffusion around the world.*

*Keywords: Migration; Values; Ideational Change; Nepal; Persian Gulf*

## Introduction

This article is an investigation of the values and beliefs of migrants and how they change with the migration experience. There is a vast literature about how the migration experience affects migrants in terms of health, employment, education, language

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acquisition and illegal activities (Antecol and Bedard 2006; Borjas 1985; Brockerhoff and Biddlecom 1999). However, we know little about what migrants believe, their values and how these change. With new ethnographic insights and innovations in survey measurement of values, social scientists are accumulating evidence that values and beliefs are important for the well-being of individuals and can drive behaviours and interactions with individuals and institutions around them (Thornton, Axinn, and Xie 2007; Lesthaeghe 2010). Migrants, and their interactions with people at their destinations and with people at their origins, might be one of the strongest catalysts of social change in host and origin countries. Thus understanding migrant values and how they change is key to understanding migrant well-being and social change in general.

In seeking to understand the processes of change in migrants' values, it is also important to address the likelihood that they are not representative of the origin populations from which they come. Instead, migrants are a select group of people and we expect that their values vary systematically from their non-migrant counterparts. Accordingly, the two key questions that this article seeks to investigate are: How do the values of migrants differ from non-migrants in their communities of origin (selection)? And, does the experience of migration change the values of migrants (adaptation)?

Scholars of migration have long been concerned with the adaptation of migrants to destination societies, as evidenced by a large body of literature addressing concepts such as assimilation, acculturation and incorporation of immigrants (Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002; Rumbaut 1997; Zhou 1997). These concepts can imply a one-way path where migrants adopt the cultural, economic and political patterns of their host society, while simultaneously shedding the patterns of their origin. This makes sense if we assume that migrants intend to stay permanently and have little contact with their origin. However, these assumptions are often not relevant today, and this has likely been the case for a long time (Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003).

A more recent scholarly interest is that of transnationalism. This introduces an alternate possibility, whereby migrants might create a lifestyle that incorporates the social patterns of both destination and origin societies (Portes 1997; Portes, Guarnizo, and Haller 2002). In addition, it allows for the possibility that migrants might return to their origin and even migrate again. This article uses this concept and further contributes to the literature on transnationalism. Our aim is to examine how migrants adapt to a transnational lifestyle, by interacting with their host culture, but also by interacting with their communities of origin and other migrants and experiencing new non-family living arrangements.

Much of the literature on migration and transnationalism is based on migration to western countries—primarily the United States and Western Europe. There are, however, vast streams of migrants circulating in Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the processes of change in these migrants' behaviours and values might differ drastically from those who move to western countries. One example is the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), including Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates who host over 11 million Asian migrants. This situation creates an ideal laboratory for the study of migrant value changes in

the GCC that can also highlight key aspects of the value change process of migrants around the world.

Empirical analysis of selection and adaptation of migrant values is exceptionally demanding in terms of data, requiring information about migrants' values linked to information about the prevailing values of their origin communities. Furthermore, quantitative analysis requires representative samples of migrants, a requirement that is notoriously difficult to meet (Bilsborrow et al. 1997; McKenzie and Mistiaen 2007). In this article, we use a unique set of survey data that meets many of these exceptional requirements, which includes survey data collected from a representative sample of migrants from the Chitwan Valley of Nepal, who were living in the GCC, and a representative sample of non-migrants living in the Chitwan Valley. Although these data are exceptional in providing representative information about migrants and their origins, they are limited to one cross-section of time, instead of an ideal longitudinal survey. Nonetheless, these data and analyses are one of the most direct studies to date on this topic.

In the next section, we describe the two settings in this study—rural Nepal and the primarily urban GCC. We start with the setting in order to provide a context in which to place our theoretical hypotheses. In the following sections, we describe the theoretical basis of the study, and then, we formulate specific empirical predictions concerning migrant selection and for value change of Nepali migrants in the GCC.

## Setting

### *Chitwan Valley, Nepal*

All members of this study's sample originate from the Chitwan Valley in rural south-central Nepal. Historically, this area has been largely isolated and controlled by groups adhering to Hindu ideology, which includes such things as strict religiosity, extended households, putting family obligations over individual needs, and rejection of certain family behaviours such as unmarried cohabitation, contraception and divorce. However, since the 1950s, the government progressively opened the country to people and ideas from around the world and a variety of programmes, services and media are now available in rural areas. Such changes likely influenced adherence to historical values and increasing desires for improving standards of living.

Since 1985, when the government enacted the Foreign Employment Act, increasing numbers of Nepali migrants have moved around the world, with the GCC one of the most popular destinations for short-term labour. Estimates suggest that over 800,000 Nepali migrants were living in Gulf countries by 2010, although this could be a substantial underestimate that does not include unregistered migrants (NIDS 2011).

### *The GCC*

The destinations of the Nepali migrants in this study are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These six countries are amongst

the world's wealthiest and have enjoyed several decades of great prosperity, which contributed to a rapidly growing economy that in turn triggered a need for a much larger workforce. Consequently, the region began to rely heavily on migrants to fill that gap. Indeed, the proportion of migrants in the workforce is striking, ranging from 94% in Qatar, to 51% in Saudi Arabia (Baldwin-Edwards 2011).

South Asians are the largest group of migrant labourers in the GCC, primarily working as labourers in low-skilled jobs such as construction. Reports indicate that they generally work long hours and have few entertainment or relaxation opportunities. Migrants typically live in crowded labour camps in industrial areas or city peripheries. Unskilled South Asians of all nationalities are housed together regardless of caste, along with low-skilled non-national Arab workers.

## Conceptual and Theoretical Background

Values and beliefs are important subjects of study, because they provide people with understanding of how the world works, what factors are causally powerful, what things are good and to be attained, what things are bad and to be avoided, and the proper ways for attaining the good and avoiding the bad (Geertz 1973; Thornton et al. 2001). Scholars have long understood that values have strong influences on decisionmaking and behaviour, such as marriage, childbearing, divorce, living arrangements and parent-child relations. Ideational factors also influence inter-group relations, gender roles, voting, consumer behaviour and numerous other elements of social and economic life.

### *Migration and Selection on Values and Beliefs*

We expect the values and beliefs of migrants to differ from non-migrants along three dimensions. These include commitment to the origin culture, aspirations beyond the origin and commitment to family. This is not a comprehensive listing; there are many other ways in which migrants could differ from non-migrants. We identify these three dimensions as important items that can be empirically tested in this study and hope to stimulate further discussion of selection of migrants in terms of ideational factors.

Concerning commitment to the origin culture, we expect that those who are more committed to the local culture, religion, and values will be less likely to migrate, and people who are less connected will be more likely to migrate. The latter might include people whose values do not strictly follow the local norms, or those who are disadvantaged in the local culture or hierarchies.

The second dimension of selection is aspirations. We expect that people who aspire to own consumer goods, attain higher education, or access to services that are not readily available in the origin will be more likely to migrate. Note that this theoretical connection is similar to the neo-classical economics theory of migration, which describes migration as a strategy to earn higher wages (Massey et al. 1993; Sjaastad 1962; Todaro 1969). In addition to wages, we suggest that people might also migrate to seek access to other materials and opportunities.

The third dimension we address is commitment to family. Initially, we might expect that those who are most independent from their families would be the most likely to leave their families. On the other hand, insights from the new economics of migration theory suggest that many people move as part of a family strategy in which they are trying to maximise family and not individual utility (Stark and Bloom 1985; Stark and Taylor 1989; Taylor 1987). This would suggest that migration is more selective of people with greater feelings of familial obligation rather than individualistic orientations.

In the case of Nepal, these theoretical considerations suggest the following hypotheses:

*H1: People who value ownership of material goods will be more likely to migrate to the GCC.*

*H2: People who are less committed to religion will be more likely to migrate.*

*H3: People who are less committed to historical Nepali prohibitions against pre-marital cohabitation, divorce, and contraception will be more likely to migrate.*

*H4: People who put more importance on their families than on their individual needs will be more likely to migrate.*

### *Migration and Adaptation of Values and Beliefs*

Similar to selection, we expect that the process of adaptation of migrant values will follow some general patterns, irrespective of the origin or destination setting. First, we argue that the longer a migrant is in a particular destination, the more they will adapt to the situation. There is consistent evidence in the literature that migrant behaviours cumulatively change over time at a destination (Antecol and Bedard 2006; Brockerhoff and Biddlecom 1999). We argue that there will be similar cumulative changes in values.

Second, migrant values can change due to different kinds of experiences. In order to predict how they will change, it is important to consider what exactly migrants are adapting to. While it is often assumed that migrants will adapt to the destination society, they can also be exposed to a transnational or intercultural milieu, and to a migrant lifestyle, which must be considered as catalysts of change.

Adaptation to the destination society is a process, whereby migrants are exposed to and might become familiar with the material amenities and the cultural, religious and social patterns of the destination society. Familiarity with these new ideational patterns and amenities could produce ideational shifts. Thus, we might expect migrants to become more desirous of material goods and amenities that are available in their destination and more committed to the values of the destination society.

Migrants also interact with other migrants, from their own and other countries. Especially where migrants live in enclaves, they might interact more frequently with other migrants than with host-country nationals. This is probably the case in the GCC,

where South Asian migrants live in camps that are almost completely comprised of other South Asians. In addition, given significant numbers of expatriates from Western countries living in the region, South Asian migrants could be exposed to Western ideas or cultures. As a result, we might find ideational shifts, whereby migrants become more committed to the values of other migrant groups and the transnational lifestyle.

The third experience that could influence ideational change is the migrant lifestyle or living conditions. In leaving behind their national borders, migrants are removed from the familiarity of their home community and the routines of daily life. They invariably leave behind some or all of their family and often live with non-family members. Furthermore, migrants' position within the social hierarchy of the destination will most likely be lower and less prestigious than their position in their origins. Thus, the transition to a migrant lifestyle, that includes living in new and unfamiliar surroundings, decreases in family support, lower prestige and increased social isolation and stigma, can make migrants feel alienated, confused, nostalgic, or lonely. Such a transition could lead migrants to re-evaluate their ideas about individualism and family relationships, and the importance of other sources of support, such as religious faith. In fact, ethnographic research with Cuban and Haitian migrants documents how migrants use religion to create a sense of belonging, which replaces a sense of geographic belonging that was lost when they moved across national borders (Levitt 2003; McAlister 2002; Tweed 1999). Further, studies of Nepali migrants in India and the US find that family and social networks with other Nepalis are among the most important coping mechanisms for this group (Bohra-Mishra 2011; Thieme 2006). Extending this to a longitudinal perspective, we might find ideational shifts among migrants, where they place greater emphasis on familism over individualism and more importance on religion.

In the Nepali case, these theoretical considerations suggest the following hypotheses:

*H5: Nepali migrants in the GCC will place more importance on material goods the longer they stay in the GCC.*

*H6: Migrants will become more committed to religion.*

*H7: Migrants will become less committed to prohibitions against pre-marital cohabitation, divorce, and contraception.*

*H8: Migrants will put more importance on families and time spent with families.*

## Data and Measures

To test these hypotheses, we use data from two sources. The first is the Chitwan Valley Family Study (CVFS). Building on the original CVFS sample from 1996, a new data collection was launched in 2008 that covered a sample of individuals living in 151 neighbourhoods in the western part of the Chitwan Valley of Nepal (Axinn, Pearce, and Ghimire 1999; Barber et al. 1997). The second source of data comes from the

Nepali Migrants to the Gulf Study (NMGS), conducted in 2009. The sample for this study included the people who were listed as family members in the CVFS sample, but were reported as living in the GCC. Using contact information from respondents in the CVFS, interviewers administered face-to-face interviews to migrants who had returned to Nepal for a visit (34% of the NMGS sample) or interviewed by telephone those who were still in the GCC and had no plans to return to Nepal within a year (66% of the NMGS sample). This resulted in a response rate of 87%, a remarkable rate for any survey, much less one that is migratory and transnational in nature.

The migrant and non-migrant samples we use in this study are further restricted in several ways. Because there were only 14 women in the NMGS, we restrict the migrant sample for this analysis to the 445 men. In order to match the sex and age range of the migrant sample, we restrict the non-migrant sample to include only the 2346 men between the ages of 17 and 55 for whom full information was available.

The questionnaire for the GCC interviews included identical data that were collected from non-migrants, allowing for comparison of values across both groups. All measures of values in our empirical analyses are dichotomous. The exact survey questions and the codes that we used to create the dichotomous variables are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1**. Variables, questions, and dichotomous codes used to measure values, attitudes, and beliefs.

| Variables | Questions (Besides amenities, italicised responses coded as '1', Non-italicised coded as '0') |
|---|---|
| Amenities | • How important is it for you to have a radio, TV, VCR or DVD, motorcycle, gas stove, refrigerator, computer, telephone in your home? |
| | Overall, which do you think is better for people in Nepal today: |
| Cohabitation OK | • a society in which it is *acceptable for an unmarried man and woman to live together* like a married couple or a society in which it is not acceptable? |
| Divorce OK | • a *divorce* or an unhappy marriage? |
| Live separate OK | • married children living with their parents or in-laws or *married children living separately* |
| Individual needs first | • to put *individual needs first* or to put family needs first? |
| Religion very important | How important is religion to you? |
| | • *Very important*, somewhat important, or not at all important |
| Often Prays | How often do you pray at home? |
| | • *More than once a week*, once a week or less, or never |
| Contraception OK | It is wrong to use contraceptives to avoid or delay pregnancy. |
| | • *Strongly agree, agree*, disagree, or strongly disagree |
| Spend time with family | A man should spend most of his time with his family rather than at work. |
| | • *Strongly agree, agree*, disagree, or strongly disagree |

**Analytic Methods**

Although our empirical data are superb in many respects, they depart from the ideal design for studying migrant selection and adaptation. The ideal design would begin with a representative sample in the origin community and then follow all individuals across time. For the selectivity analysis one would use the original measures of values to predict who later migrated. The adaptation analysis would compare changes in values of migrants and non-migrants after the migrants moved. This would allow for tests of how trajectories of changes of migrants after they moved differ from changes among stayers.

Our reliance on cross-sectional data necessitates a different approach, requiring more stringent assumptions than the ideal longitudinal design. For the selectivity analysis, we compared a sample of people resident in Chitwan in 2008 with people who had migrated to the GCC within the past year (93 people). This strategy requires that we assume individuals did not adapt to the migration experience in this short period of time. This assumption cannot be entirely true as adaptation probably begins immediately, but it provides a first approximation to measuring the selectivity of migration on values. We also tested models using migrants who had been in the GCC for six months or less. Although the shorter time in the GCC requires a less stringent assumption about adaptation, it is less empirically appropriate, because it creates a much smaller sample of 58 migrants. Nonetheless, results from these tests using migrants who were in the GCC six months or less were similar to the results from the models we present here, which use migrants who were in the GCC for 11 months or less. In either case, the results for selection will be conservative for some values, if migrants adapted during the first year to become more like non-migrants; for other values, the results will be biased towards showing more difference, if migrants adapt to become further unlike their migrant counterparts during the first year. Overall, results for the selection analysis should be viewed hesitantly, but provide important initial evidence towards understanding selection of migration on values.

The selection models test whether value orientations affect the likelihood of migration. Thus, the outcome is migration and the key independent variables are values. We use a series of models, where only one value measure is included in the equation. The final model includes all values measures. We use multivariate logistic regression and include controls for characteristics that have been shown to be important predictors of migration in Chitwan (Massey et al. 2010; Williams 2009).[1] This allows the models to better isolate the effects of values on migration, independent of other selection processes.

For adaptation, we used a sample of only migrants. Multivariate logistic regression and similar controls to the selection models are used, with the inclusion of controls for different GCC countries. The outcomes of these models are values. The key independent variables of interest are the number of years spent in the GCC and the number of years in the GCC squared. The linear term (years in the GCC) measures if values change with time. The quadratic term (years squared) measures if the change

is non-linear, or, if values change quickly in the first few years and more slowly in later years. We also tested models that included only the linear term for length of stay. In some cases, the linear term alone produced statistically significant results; in other cases, the linear and quadratic terms produced significant results, while the linear term alone did not. We present results from the model that produced statistically significant results for each value outcome.

For these adaptation analyses, we make the assumption that there were no selectivities in migration to the GCC based on year of migration. This assumption permits us to interpret differences in the amount of time in the GCC as reflecting differential amounts of change in values, rather than cohort differences in values at the time of migration. If our assumption is incorrect and there were cohort differences in values at the time of migration, those differences will bias our interpretations of the time in GCC differences. We expect that any cohort differences in values will be small compared to time in GCC differences. Despite our need to make this assumption, our findings are an important contribution, but will need to be confirmed by longitudinal data that can directly document value changes in migrants.

## Results

### *Descriptive Statistics*

As shown in Table 2, the migrant and non-migrant samples were similar in terms of demographic characteristics. The average age of migrants was slightly lower than that of non-migrants, migrants were more likely to be married and had slightly higher education than non-migrants. Notably, migrants had an average of 1.74 children, less than the 2.25 children of non-migrants. Both groups were primarily Hindu and about half were high-caste.

At the time of interview, migrants had been in the GCC for an average of 40 months. However, the distribution of time in the Gulf is far from normally distributed, with the median length of stay being 30 months. As shown in Table 2, the vast majority of the migrants lived in three countries—Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with only a few in Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

### *Regression Results*

*Selection—Values and Migration.* We find that some values and beliefs had significant effects on the likelihood of migration, while others did not. As shown in Table 3, desire for material goods has a significant effect on the likelihood of migration. The odds ratio of 1.13 indicates that for each one point increase in the index of desire for amenities, the likelihood of migration increases by about 13%. For example, someone who answered that all eight material goods were very important to have would be more than three times more likely to migrate than someone who answered that all eight material goods were not important at all. This provides strong support for hypothesis one.

**Table 2**. Descriptive statistics and t-test comparisons of Persian Gulf migrant sample and Nepali non-migrant sample.

| | | Non-migrant sample | | Migrant sample | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Range | Mean | Std. dev. | Mean | Std. dev. |
| *Demographics* | | | | | |
| Demographic and social characteristics | | | | | |
| Age | 17–55 | 35.28 | (10.69) | 32.22*** | (6.35) |
| Married | 0,1 | 0.79 | (0.41) | 0.90*** | (0.30) |
| Number of children | 0–8 | 2.25 | (1.95) | 1.74*** | (1.24) |
| Education | 0–16 | 7.43 | (4.43) | 8.15*** | (3.18) |
| Hindu | 0,1 | 0.84 | (0.36) | 0.83 | (0.38) |
| High caste | 0,1 | 0.52 | (0.50) | 0.54 | (0.50) |
| Born in Chitwan | 0,1 | 0.56 | (0.50) | 0.64*** | (0.48) |
| Ever migrated | 0,1 | 0.63 | (0.48) | 0.55** | (0.50) |
| Ever migrated to the GCC before | 0,1 | | | 0.38 | (0.49) |
| Length of Stay | | | | | |
| Number of months in GCC | 1–203 | | | 40.47 | (37.95) |
| Country of Residence in GCC | | | | | |
| Qatar | 0,1 | | | 0.39 | (0.49) |
| U.A.E. | 0,1 | | | 0.27 | (0.44) |
| Saudi Arabia | 0,1 | | | 0.29 | (0.45) |
| Other GCC country | 0,1 | | | 0.05 | (0.23) |
| *Values and beliefs* | | | | | |
| Amenities | | | | | |
| Material goods desired | 0–16 | 12.97 | (2.90) | 13.67*** | (2.15) |
| Religiosity | | | | | |
| Religion very important | 0,1 | 0.50 | (0.50) | 0.53 | (0.50) |
| Often prays | 0,1 | 0.77 | (0.42) | 0.77 | (0.42) |
| Sex and marriage | | | | | |
| Unmarried cohabitation is OK | 0,1 | 0.14 | (0.35) | 0.11* | (0.31) |
| Contraception is OK | 0,1 | 0.65 | (0.48) | 0.60* | (0.49) |
| Divorce better than unhappy marriage | 0,1 | 0.60 | (0.49) | 0.59 | (0.49) |
| Families and individuals | | | | | |
| Married children living separately from parents | 0,1 | 0.14 | (0.34) | 0.11† | (0.32) |
| Put individual needs before family needs | 0,1 | 0.12 | (0.33) | 0.09* | (0.29) |
| Men should spend more time w/ family than work | 0,1 | 0.56 | (0.50) | 0.69*** | (0.46) |

Note: Significance of two sample t-test shown in migrant sample mean column. *$p< 0.05$; **$p< 0.01$; ***$p< 0.001$; †$p<0.10$. Two-tailed tests.

With regard to religiosity, results in Table 3 show some support for hypothesis two that migration is selective of people who are less committed to religion. Although there is no significant effect of the importance of religion on the likelihood of migration, the frequency of prayer had a large impact. People who reported praying often were about 40% less likely to migrate than those who did not.

Of the beliefs about sex and marriage, we find no support for hypothesis three that migrants are less committed to prohibitions against pre-marital cohabitation, divorce

**Table 3**. Selection—logistic regression results predicting migration likelihood, contingent on values and beliefs.

| | Models 1–9 Separate model for each value | Model 10 Comprehensive model for all values |
|---|---|---|
| Values and beliefs | | |
| *Amenities* | | |
| Household goods | 1.13** | 1.14** |
| | (2.43) | (2.56) |
| *Religiosity* | | |
| Religion very important | 1.10 | 1.09 |
| | (0.45) | (0.36) |
| Often prays | 0.61* | 0.57* |
| | (2.14) | (2.39) |
| *Sex and marriage* | | |
| Cohabitation OK | 0.66 | 0.64 |
| | (1.04) | (1.10) |
| Divorce OK | 0.96 | 0.91 |
| | (0.20) | (0.41) |
| Contraception OK | 1.03 | 1.04 |
| | (0.12) | (0.18) |
| *Families and individuals* | | |
| Spend time with family | 1.38† | 1.41† |
| | (1.46) | (1.55) |
| Live separate OK | 0.37* | 0.38* |
| | (2.13) | (2.08) |
| Individual needs first | 0.55† | 0.58† |
| | (1.49) | (1.34) |
| −2 log likelihood | | 696 |
| Number of Observations | | 2468 |

Note: Controls for demographic and social characteristics included in all models, such as age, marital status, education, Hindu religion, high caste, born in Chitwan, and ever migrated before. Results not shown. Estimates are presented as odds ratios. Z-statistics are given in parentheses.*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$; †$p<0.10$. One tailed tests.

and contraception. All three values produce non-significant results. Thus we find no evidence for hypothesis two.

With regard to families and individualism, migrants were more family-oriented than their non-migrant counterparts. For example, a positive (albeit marginally statistically significant) coefficient suggests that respondents who reported belief that men should spend more time with their families than at work, were about 38% more likely to migrate. However, because this was measured for migrants within one year after migration, instead of migrants before they had moved, this result must be interpreted with some hesitancy. Similarly, reasonably strong and negative coefficients of 0.37 and 0.55 indicate that respondents who reported acceptance of living separately from parents and putting individual needs first were roughly half as likely to migrate.

In summary, with regard to selection of migrants, we find mixed support for our hypotheses. Evidence suggests that migration is selective of individuals who place

more importance on material goods, were less committed to religion, and more family-oriented. Results regarding desires for material goods and commitments to family, above that of individualism, are particularly strong and consistent. Alternately, we find no evidence of selection on historical beliefs regarding sex and marriage.

*Adaptation—Migration and Values.* Table 4 presents the results of our empirical analysis of value adaptation. As shown in Model 11, migrant desires for material goods decreased with more time in the Gulf. This is exactly opposite of hypothesis 5. However, the magnitude of this decrease is very small—0.07 points on a 24 point scale for each year in the GCC. Thus, we cannot conclude that this result supports hypothesis five, in which we expected migrants to become more desirous of material goods the longer they stayed in the GCC. This lack of change (or adaptation) in migrants' valuation of material goods is surprising. It could be explained in two ways. One possibility is that migrants are, on average, at the top of the scale of valuation of these particular material goods; in other words, it would be hard to value goods much higher given the values for the questions that were asked with this study. A second possibility is that although high quality material goods are commonly available in the GCC, many are not likely accessible to most migrants who make relatively low wages. It is possible that this could cause migrants to re-evaluate their material desires.

Turning to religiosity, results indicate that migrants generally became more concerned with religion with increasing time in the GCC. Model 12 shows a significant effect of time in the GCC on reports that religion is very important with an odds ratio of 1.06. This indicates that with each successive year in the GCC, migrants were about 7% more likely to report that religion was very important. Thus, we can expect that a migrant who has been in the GCC for 10 years would be twice as likely to report that religion is very important, compared to migrants who had just arrived. The results for importance of religiosity support hypothesis six and the theory that migrants become increasingly religious as a mechanism to cope with the strains and lack of social support in the migrant lifestyle. We find no effect of time in the GCC on migrant reports that they prayed often, as shown in Model 13.

With regard to sex and marriage, we find mixed results. As shown in Model 14, we find no evidence that time in the GCC affects beliefs about cohabitation. However, for acceptance of divorce, the coefficient for length of time is 1.31 and the quadratic term is 0.98. This means that the endorsement of divorce generally increases quickly and then slows down. Alternately, as shown in Model 16, we find that length of time spent in the GCC negatively affects migrants' beliefs about contraception. Thus, with each year spent in the GCC, we would expect migrants to be 31% more likely to endorse divorce as an acceptable behaviour, but about 6% less likely to endorse use of contraception. Thus, the evidence regarding changes in beliefs about divorce supports hypothesis seven and the evidence regarding contraception refutes it. One possible reason for these disparate results is that there are disparate influences that could affect Nepali migrants in the GCC. For example, the dominant Arab culture of the

**Table 4**. Adaptation—Logistic regression results predicting adaptation of values for Nepali migrants in the Persian Gulf.

| | Amenities | Religiosity | | Sex and Marriage | | | Families and Individuals | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Model 11 Household goods (OLS) | Model 12 Religion important | Model 13 Often prays | Model 14 Cohab-itation OK | Model 15 Divorce OK | Model 16 Contra-ception OK | Model 17 Spend time with family | Model 18 Live separate OK | Model 19 Indivi-dual needs first |
| Length of Stay | | | | | | | | | |
| Number of years in GCC | −0.07* | 1.06* | 1.12 | 1.02 | 1.31** | 0.94* | 1.10** | 1.32* | 1.14* |
| | (1.94) | (1.66) | (1.01) | (0.41) | (2.59) | (1.73) | (2.40) | (1.88) | (2.07) |
| Squared number of years in GCC | | | 0.99 | | 0.98** | | | 0.98* | |
| | | | (0.97) | | (2.66) | | | (1.68) | |
| Country of residence in GCC | | | | | | | | | |
| U.A.E. | −0.17 | 1.10 | 1.12 | 1.00 | 0.60* | 0.66† | 1.58* | 1.18 | 1.42 |
| | (0.65) | (0.39) | (0.38) | (0.01) | (1.95) | (1.60) | (1.63) | (0.41) | (0.85) |
| Saudi Arabia | 0.46* | 1.77* | 0.99 | 1.13 | 0.90 | 0.79 | 0.87 | 1.02 | 0.38* |
| | (1.83) | (2.30) | (0.02) | (0.34) | (0.44) | (0.95) | (0.54) | (0.05) | (1.75) |
| Qatar | Reference | Reference | Reference | Reference | Reference | Reference | Reference | Reference | Reference |
| Other GCC country (Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait) | −0.36 | 1.35 | 0.99 | N/A | 1.18 | 0.41* | 1.32 | 1.21 | 1.74 |
| | (0.78) | (0.66) | (0.02) | | (0.34) | (1.99) | (0.56) | (0.27) | (0.85) |
| Controls for demographic and social characteristics included in all models, such as age, marital status, education, Hindu religion, high caste, country in the GCC, ever migrated to the GCC before, born in Chitwan, and ever migrated before. | | | | | | | | | |
| $R^2$ or −2 log likelihood | $R^2$=0.08 | 590 | 464 | 300 | 560 | 574 | 536 | 295 | 243 |
| Number of Observations | 445 | 445 | 444 | 445 | 445 | 443 | 445 | 445 | 445 |

*$p$< 0.05; **$p$< 0.01; ***$p$< 0.001. One-tailed tests.

GCC generally endorses prohibitions against pre-marital cohabitation, contraception and divorce and would have little effect on the similar values of Nepali migrants. However, if Nepali migrants interact with the sizable number of migrants from Western countries, they might be influenced towards less strict beliefs about sex and marriage. Whatever the reason, these results highlight that adaptation of migrant values is a complex process that is influenced by a complex array of factors.

Turning to values about families and individualism, we find strong and mixed results. As shown in Model 17, the effect of time in the GCC on agreement that men should spend more time with their families is statistically significant and positive, with an odds ratio of 1.10. This suggests that with time in the GCC, migrants were more likely to agree that men should spend more time with their families. Somewhat to the contrary, Model 18 shows that with each additional year in the GCC, migrants were more likely to agree that it is acceptable for married men to live separately from their parents. In fact, at 1.32, the odds ratio is relatively large. In addition, Model 19 which tests endorsement of putting individual needs first, shows a statistically significant and positive odds ratio of 1.14.

The result that migrants increasingly endorsed the importance of spending time with families supports hypothesis eight, where we expect that migrants will become more family-oriented. However, evidence that migrants increasingly endorsed living separately from parents and putting individual needs above family needs seemingly refutes this hypothesis. These two measures certainly reflect attitudes and commitments towards the family unit, but they also relate to the migrant lifestyle. Many of the migrants have been living away from their families for several years. Thus, increasing endorsements of living separately and individual needs could be a result of adapting to the migrant lifestyle. Although we find some evidence to support hypothesis eight, that migrants will become more family-oriented, it is likely that becoming more family-oriented is too broad a phrase that does not reflect the nuances and differences between experiences living alone and thoughts regarding caring about and nostalgia for family time.

## Conclusions

In this article, we have examined the values and beliefs of migrants, concerned with both selection and adaptation effects. Our empirical results from regression analysis of nine different values and beliefs show mixed patterns, some of which confirm theoretically derived hypotheses and some of which do not. We find that compared to their non-migrant counterparts, migrants are selected from among those who place more importance on material goods, and are less religious and more family-oriented. We find no evidence that migration is selective of people who are less committed to historical Nepali values regarding sex and marriage. Once in the GCC, we find that migrants become more religious over time, and less committed to some historical Nepali values such as prohibitions against divorce. We also find mixed results

regarding family-orientation, where migrants become more likely to value some aspects of family commitment and less likely to value others.

Viewing each of these ideational changes from a broader perspective, we find that there is complexity in processes of ideational change of migrants, a result that is not new in the literature (Levitt, DeWind, and Vertovec 2003). With rapidly changing communication technologies, migrants are regularly exposed to more than one setting (the origin and the destination), each with different social, cultural and economic patterns. Further, migration patterns are rapidly changing from that of the permanent migrant to that of the transnational entrepreneur who might be rooted in the destination culture, the origin culture, the transnational milieu, and be thinking about the next destination all at the same time.

Another pattern that comes out of our empirical results is that there are differences in adaptation of values related to what is acceptable for others and what is acceptable for the self. Results suggest that migrants generally became more open with what they believe is acceptable for society in general (or for other people to do), including acceptance of divorce and the primacy of individual needs and living separately from parents. We attribute this loosening of prohibitions to experience with the destination culture and the transnational lifestyle, which expose migrants to many different kinds of people and lifestyles. At the same time, results suggest that Nepali migrants in the GCC became stricter with their own behaviours, including placing more value on religion and wanting to spend more time with families. We attribute these changes to the experience of the migrant lifestyle, which can be stressful and provide few opportunities for social support. Thus, even in the complexity or initial appearance of divergent results, there might be some broader patterns.

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. As emphasised earlier, our empirical analyses are based on cross-sectional rather than panel data. This means that our study of migration selectivity rests on the assumption that the values of migrants shortly after migration accurately reflect their values and beliefs before migration. We doubt that this assumption is precisely accurate, but believe that it is close enough to provide a first approximation of the selectivity process. Of course, more precise measurement in a panel study will be necessary to confirm or disconfirm our results.

We also emphasise that our analysis of adaptation is essentially reading history sideways in that we use information from one point in time to infer processes of change that are inherently longitudinal (Thornton 2001, 2005). That is, we use a synthetic cohort approach rather than an actual cohort approach in estimating changes in values. To the extent that there are real cohort effects, our estimation of effects of length of time in the GCC will be biased. We expect that there were not large differences in the values of migrants according to their arrival times in the GCC, but future research will be required to confirm or disconfirm the accuracy of our estimates. Although not ideal, our analyses are valuable as among the first to provide empirical evidence about selection and adaptation of ideational factors with regard to migration.

In addition, this study is limited to one group of migrants—Nepalis who moved to the GCC. Many of the selection and adaptation patterns we find will likely be similar for other groups of migrants in different destinations; but many are likely to be different. It is encouraging that new innovations in survey measurement of values will make possible further research on how different groups of migrants adapt to different situations.

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## Notes

[1] We also tested models with several controls for SES, including parental education and work experience. This information is available only for married respondents, thus, we tested models with and without these controls on the married sample. We find no substantive differences in results from these tests and results we present here.

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