GULF MIGRATION AND CROSS-NATIONALITY RELATIONSHIPS
A NETWORK CASE STUDY FROM KUWAIT'S PRIVATE SECTOR

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Abstract

Media, human rights, and even scholarly discourses about the experiences of noncitizens living and working in the GCC rely overwhelmingly on narratives of socio-political exclusion and economic exploitation. The central emphasis on ethnocracy and the *kafala* sponsorship system often obscures the multifaceted nature of Gulf residents' everyday interactions with one another, interactions which go beyond the segmenting effects of ethnically-motivated citizenship and migration policies. Building off of existing Gulf migration literature and through a network analysis of formal and informal relations among employees at a Kuwaiti construction company, this paper paints a richer picture of how residents with different ethnic and class backgrounds relate to one another. The case demonstrates the utility of network analysis in augmenting ethnographic studies of Gulf societies, laying the groundwork for more extensive future research.

Author's note

Before proceeding, I offer an important qualification regarding my personal connection to the subject under study. It relates to my positionality vis à vis both the general subject of study and the specific case of Sadeer Trading and Contracting Company (Sadeer). As a long-term Indian resident of Kuwait with a close family member who is a Sadeer employee, I cannot claim the absence of bias guiding my research. I acknowledge that, as someone embedded within the general socio-political space under study, my perception of my duties, prejudices, and rights within the community necessarily impacts the nature of and rationale behind the research design and implementation. Yet, I firmly view my insider status as underpinning the academic value of the objectives and findings of this project. I, of course, attempt to ensure that my analysis of the literature and data is not unreasonably prejudiced by my connection to the research field or the case. How I do this is best laid out in section V.

Acknowledgments

This project would not have been possible without the constant support and guidance of Prof. Christopher Tunnard and the cooperation of Sadeer's management and staff. I would also like to thank Prof. Neha Vora (Lafayette College), Prof. Noora Lori (Boston University), and Prof. Farah Al-Nakib (American University of Kuwait) for their feedback at various stages of research as well as for the intellectually rigorous conversations about the current state of the literature on Gulf migration. Last but far from the least, I am grateful for the ever-present support of my family and friends.

I. Introduction

The motivations behind this project are an amalgam of personal and academic ones. Discourses about migration to and lives of noncitizens in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, whether in mainstream media, reports on the region's human rights record, or policymaking circles, are to date largely marked by the trope of a privileged, complacent citizenry oppressing an exploited foreign workforce. As both a third-generation Indian citizen born and raised in Kuwait and a student of international affairs, I have been struck by the broad-brushed nature and incompleteness of the overall picture of Gulf societies that these analyses, taken together, present. This, of course, is not meant as an indictment of the existing *scholarship* on the history of migration and migrant experiences in the region. Indeed, this paper is significantly grounded in and builds off much of that excellent work, in particular contributions made in the field of anthropology, which provides a significantly more nuanced understanding of citizenship, migration, and belonging in the region. My objective is instead twofold. First, it is to add to this body of work by focusing on spaces and relations of social analysis as yet marginally studied. Second, by doing so, the attempt is to de-naturalize common understandings of Gulf migration experiences as exceptionally determined by ethnocratic politics and the *kafala* sponsorship system. In the following pages, I do this through a case study that employs network-based analysis of cross-nationality formal and informal relationships among private sector employees in Kuwait. The guiding research questions are: How do employees' nationalities affect how they communicate and collaborate with one another and whether or not they develop friendships with their colleagues? To what extent are workplace interactions shaped by macro-level forces of *kafala* and ethnocracy versus micro-level particularities?

On one hand, the emphasis on the workplace brings into focus spaces and relationships--as of now overlooked by Gulf Studies literature--relevant to the formation, enactment, and reproduction of structures and practices of exclusion and belonging. The use of social network analysis (SNA) de-territorializes the study of relationships among citizens and foreign residents by moving beyond the analytical isolation of the experiences of a particular migrant group (South Asians *or* Arabs, for example), to looking at cross-nationality interactions. The case analysis of Sadeer Trading and Contracting Co. (Sadeer), a mid-sized Kuwaiti construction company, interrogates a space of everyday interaction where men and women from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds spend a significant portion of their lives.

On the other hand, a more fundamental impulse driving my conception of the literature review and case study presented in the following pages has been to challenge the typical view of Gulf migration as exceptional in its exclusionary social, political and economic aspects. Reflecting on the scholarship's use of the concepts of ethnocracy and *kafala*, Neha Vora and Natalie Koch[1], who have both sought to challenge narratives of Gulf exceptionalism through their work, write:

> We have increasingly found them to be conceptual barriers to examining belonging and identity in the Gulf in ways that move beyond over-determining resident experiences through exclusion and citizenship status…Approaching the Gulf in this way risks missing or underplaying numerous, often unexpected, ways that non-citizens feel belonging and perform their identities as 'insiders', while also eliding stratification built into citizenship and the various exclusions that Gulf nationals experience.[2]

Thus, although I acknowledge the importance of the concepts of *kafala* and ethnocracy in studying migrant experiences in the GCC, I do not see them as centrally determinative to my analysis of workplace interactions among employees of different nationalities. Rather than pre-supposing the existence of nationality-based fault lines in interaction among Sadeer's employees—as a centralization of *kafala* and ethnocracy would otherwise entail—the use of relational network analysis allows me to test for the effect of citizenship and of other context-specific influencers such as tenure in the firm, language, and job hierarchy. SNA, couched within a field of relational sociology, homes in on specific micro-level relationships between different individuals whose interactions shape and are shaped by macro-level socio-political structures and processes. The approach provides an analysis that challenges the popular assumption of noncitizens' social lives in the Gulf being primarily marked by exploitation and exclusion, demonstrating the relevance, in Sadeer's case, of the particularities of the workplace.

Here, it is important to note the exploratory nature of the research design and methodology of the study. Although primarily drawing from existing ethnographic studies of Gulf migration, this study also takes cue from scholarship in the fields of relational and workplace sociology. And, while a mixed methods approach combining personal interviews, on-site observation, and a network survey would have been ideal, constrains on my time and

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[1] Neha Vora and Natalie Koch, "Everyday Inclusions: Rethinking Ethnocracy, Kafala, and Belonging in the Arabian Peninsula," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 15, no. 3 (2015): 540-552.
[2] Ibid, 541-542.

resources as a graduate researcher precluded this. Instead I rely primarily on data obtained through an online survey. The data's partial nature prevents conclusive analysis about the nature of workplace interactions at Sadeer. But it still provides indicative findings useful in terms of the objectives discussed above and lays the groundwork for further research.

The discussion in the subsequent pages is organized as follows. Section II first provides a brief overview of historical and contemporary migration to the GCC states, with specific attention to Kuwait. It then surveys relevant anthropological literature studying migrant communities in the region, identifying key insights and unexplored potential to explicate the rationale behind my research question in further detail. Section III makes the specific connection to the choice of the workplace as a site of study relevant to understanding citizens' and noncitizens' social lives and interactions. Section IV places my use of SNA as a method within a relational understanding of social life, addressing a pull between individualist and holist approaches evident in the Gulf migrations literature. The case of Sadeer is finally presented in section V, which gives a detailed account of how data was collected and analyzed along with a statement of indicative findings. I conclude with a brief assessment of how my approach can be further developed, helping link anthropological analyses of citizenship, migration, and belonging to policymaking in the region.

II. Gulf migration

a. Historical change and continuity

The current state of migration in the GCC *is* unique in terms of the sheer proportion of noncitizens comprising those countries' workforce and overall population. In Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, foreign nationals significantly outnumber citizens. Across the GCC, they make up 49 percent of the total population.[3] However, contrary to common perception and practice, this reality should be seen as neither peripheral nor traceable solely to the creation of the modern rentier state when studying the Arabian Gulf. Instead, as Nelida Fuccaro points out, histories of migration to the region---by no means monolithic across its different port towns and cities---are central to processes of urbanization, economic growth, and

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[3] Gulf Labour Markets and Migration. "GCC: Total population and percentage of nationals and foreign nationals in GCC countries (National statistics 2010-2016) (with numbers)" Gulf Research Center, accessed March 5, 2018 http://gulfmigration.eu/gcc-total-population-percentage-nationals-foreign-nationals-gcc-countries-national-statistics-2010-2016-numbers/

state-building both before and after the discovery of oil.[4] In the pre-oil era of the late nineteenth century, the urban lives of Kuwait, Manama, and Dubai were characterized by cosmopolitan "societies of migrants,"[5] whose residents could trace their origins to the desert hinterland as well as to Iran, East Africa, and India. Migrant identities were resilient in the sense that people continued to identify with their ancestral places of origin over multiple generations. But in so far as they were embedded into local patronage networks, being a migrant did not equal being politically "alien".[6] Instead of being illustrative primarily of the modern, late-twentieth century phenomenon of globalization, the centrality of migration in the region's historical trajectory demonstrates the Gulf's fundamentally, if changing, globalized nature. True, modern statehood and the discovery of oil in the twentieth century crammed the definition of the Gulf's tribal and communal identities into the narrower confines of legal citizenship. Yet despite this, migrants remain the de facto building blocks of the regions' political, economic, and social order.[7]

If we look at Kuwait specifically, the town was itself first established as the result of the drought-driven migration of the Bani Utub, a group of families of the Northern Arabian tribe of Aneza, around the year 1716.[8] By the late eighteenth and into the twentieth century, the small town had flourished into an important, politically stable port for both maritime and desert trade. As described by Anh Nga Longva[9], Kuwait became part of three interrelated cultural spheres: The Northern Gulf and its predominantly sedentary lifestyle; Central Arabia with the nomadic Bedouin tribes of the Najd; and the Indian Ocean with its connections to other coastal trading areas.[10] By virtue of its geographic location and its dependence on the sea trade, a constant flow of migrants from the surrounding regions was thus a normal and necessary feature of Kuwait's development.

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[4] Nelida Fuccaro, "Pearl towns and early oil cities: Migration and integration in the Arab coast of the Persian Gulf," In *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the making of urban modernity*, eds.Ulrike Freitag, Malte Fuhrmann, Nora Lafi and Florian Riedler (Ambingdon: Routledge, 2011), 99-116.

[5] Ibid, 107.

[6] Ibid, 105-108.

[7] Ibid, 109.

[8] Anh Nga Longva, *Walls Built on Sand: Migration, exclusion, and society in Kuwait.* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 19.

[9] Longva's ethnographic and anthropological work on the connection between migration and citizenship in Kuwait's society remains perhaps the most extensive and foundational, albeit now somewhat dated. It is thus of high relevance to this project. I use Longva's work in two ways. In section II, I use it as a direct source of information. In section III, I use her 2005 and 1997 publications as both sources of theory and objects of critique.

[10] Ibid, 21.

Social life in this cosmopolitan pre-oil Kuwait was, as Farah Al Nakib describes, characterized by the diversity of ethnic, occupational, income and even religious backgrounds with which one would have to interact on a day-to-day basis. The spatial organization of the town supported this cosmopolitanism. Al-Nakib states that public spaces, such as the seafront and market place, enabled social and political access to newcomers and long-term residents alike.[11] Where one lived depended on the source of one's livelihood. This, in turn, was a characteristic that cut across lines of national and ethnic origin.[12] The town's very identity was that of a hybrid place, wherein belonging to and participation in Kuwaiti society was not precluded by the continued adherence to cultural markers of communal difference, such as dress and religion.[13]

Following the discovery of oil in 1938, the pace and scale of migration to the country picked up almost exponentially. As shown in Figure I, 1957 was the last year that citizens were a majority in the country. By 1965, merely four years after independence, there were more foreigners than citizens. Like in the past, Kuwait's new economic bounty necessitated an influx of workers. But the exploitation of oil presented an altogether different form of human resource challenge. Kuwait's resident fishermen and pearl divers did not possess the technical expertise critical to modernization.[14] The state's ability to provide welfare services even to non-nationals, in the form of subsidized food, electricity, water, and healthcare, from its now substantial oil

Figure 1: Percentage of Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaitis (1957-2017) (Sources: Kuwait, *Annual Statistical Abstract*, 1989 qtd. in Longva, *Walls Built on Sand* 27; PACI, "Population by Nationality," http://stat.paci.gov.kw/englishtimeseries/)

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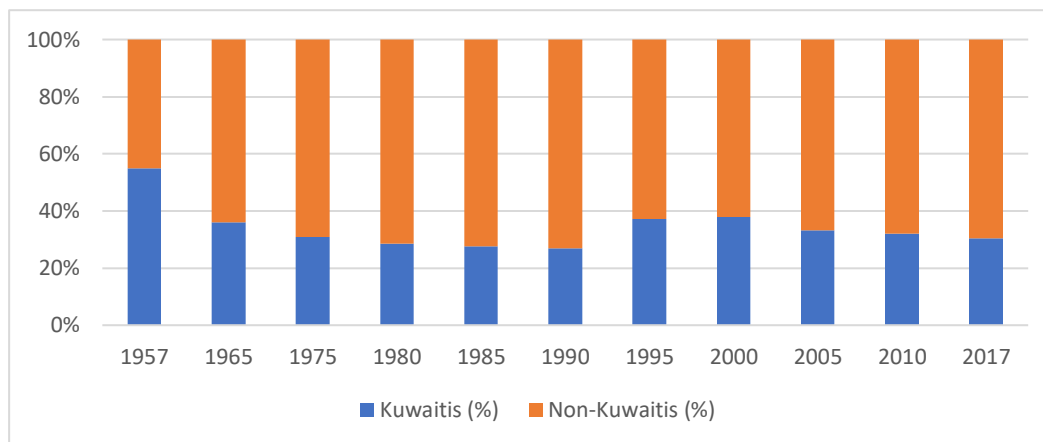
[11] Farah Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 48-53.
[12] Ibid, 54-58.
[13] Ibid, 71-89.
[14] Longva, *Walls Built on Sand,* 25.

revenues, encouraged the influx of semi-skilled and skilled workers from South Asia and the Middle East. Over the following decades, this trend deepened, with citizens rarely comprising more than a third of the country's total population.[15] In addition to this, the ethnic composition of the migrant population also evolved. From the 1970s onwards, the percentage of noncitizens of Arab origin consistently decreased and is today well surpassed by the Asian population, the result of massive migration inflow from countries such as India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines.[16]

According to the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI), as of 2017, 69.6 percent of Kuwait's population of 4.4 million people is made up of noncitizens. Of this figure, the majority i.e. 57 percent are Asian (combining those from South and Southeast Asia), 39 percent are other Arabs, and the remaining hail from Africa, North and South America, Europe, and Australia.[17] Approximately two-thirds of the noncitizen population is male, with most being between 25 and 44 years old.[18] Most of the working Asian population is concentrated in occupations related to domestic work (mostly women), construction (largely though not only as laborers), wholesale and retail trade, and manufacturing. In addition to construction and retail trade, a large proportion of Arabs meanwhile are also involved in real estate as well as rental and business activities. Arabs also tend to be in more professionalized fields than Asians.[19] Moreover, 17 percent of the total current noncitizen population was born in Kuwait.[20]

Al-Nakib argues that these recent demographic developments, driven by the shift from past conditions of economic scarcity to the bounty of oil wealth, were accompanied in turn by a drastic erosion in the nature of the country's pre-oil migration-fueled cosmopolitanism. The advent of state-led modern planning increasingly homogenized the nature of people's everyday interactions.[21] In contrast to the heterogeneity of social interactions afforded by both residential and public spaces in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kuwaitis increasingly self-

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[15] Ibid, 26.
[16] Ibid, 28-30.
[17] Public Authority for Civil Information, "Gender by Nationality and Age," accessed March 1, 2018
http://stat.paci.gov.kw/englishreports/#DataTabPlace:ColumnChartGendrAge
[18] PACI, "Gender by Nationality and Age and Region," accessed March 1, 2018
http://stat.paci.gov.kw/englishreports/#DataTabPlace:ColumnChartGendrRegion
[19] PACI, "Employment by Economic Activity and Sector," accessed March 1, 2018
http://stat.paci.gov.kw/englishreports/#DataTabPlace:ColumnEmpOccup
[20] PACI, "Birth Place by Age and Gender," accessed March 1, 2018
http://stat.paci.gov.kw/englishreports/#DataTabPlace:ColumnRelegionNat
[21] Al-Nakib, 179.

segregated into in a suburbanized and insular national realm. The ways in which they did this included the adoption of more 'traditional' forms of dress[22], the avoidance of public transportation, a reduced frequenting of cafés where one could not choose one's company, and a growing aversion to the idea of sharing residential neighborhoods with newcomers.[23] The lives of migrants from different nationality groups would also become increasingly insular and parochial. Writing in the context of Bahrain, Andrew Gardner observes that, regardless of class status, Indians were likely to have no contact with Bahraini citizens outside the context of work. They live in separate neighborhoods, sent their children to private schools offering Indian curricula, and joined social clubs specific to their home regions.[24] This is just as true in Kuwait, where even middle-class Indians whose families have been in the country for multiple generations may have never visited the home of a citizen and are unlikely to consider Kuwaitis among their personal friends.

This solidification of previously fluid understandings of the native and the newcomer marks a rupture in the historical relationship between migration and Kuwait's society. But the breach is far from absolute in that, despite the change in its nature (or because of it), migration remains part and parcel of the country's economic and political life. To posit a complete break would discount the effects of historical processes on the present. Rather than a *tabula rasa* instance of a new form of migration, the oil era marked a significant change in how national identity and belonging have come to be defined.

b. Scholarship on migrant experiences in the Gulf

This change is often attributed and understood with reference to the structures of ethnocracy and *kafala* (sponsorship). Longva traces the crystallization of the citizen-noncitizen dichotomy in Kuwait to the consolidation of the modern-nation state as a "civic" ethnocracy.[25] As a socio-political system, an ethnocracy is "the outcome of ethno-nationalism, that brand of nationalism that views the nation as a 'natural' and ethnically 'pure' community, as opposed to

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[22] Longva, *Walls Built on Sand,* 116-125; and Anh Nga Longva, "Kuwaiti Women at a Crossroads: Privileged Development and the Constraints of Ethnic Stratification," International Journal of Middle East Studies 35, no. 3 (1993): 448-454.

[23] Al-Nakib, 179-182.

[24] Andrew M. Gardner, *City of Strangers: Gulf Migration and the Indian Community in Bahrain* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2010), 29.

[25] Anh Nga Longva, "Neither Autocracy Nor Democracy Nut Ethnocracy: Citizens, Expatriates and the Socio-Political System in Kuwait." In *Monarchies and Nations: Globalisation and Identity in the Arab States of the Gulf*, eds. Paul Dresch and James Piscatori (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 119.

its liberal conceptualization as a community based on equal rights and duties".[26] Importantly, in Kuwait and the rest of the GCC, the central feature of the *ethnie* is "not race, language, or region, but citizenship conceived in terms of shared descent."[27] In 1948, the legal category of 'originally Kuwaiti' included members of the ruling Al Sabah family, those permanently residing in Kuwait since 1899, children of Kuwaiti men, and children of Arab or Muslim men also born in Kuwait. This legislation followed the *jus soli* principle as either birth in Kuwait or long-term residency—provided one spoke Arabic and was employed—guaranteed access to citizenship.[28] However, a new Nationality Law was instituted in 1959 and has since become the linchpin of the country's ethnocratic regime. While the category of 'originally Kuwaiti' was expanded to include the descendants of those settled in Kuwait since 1920, the qualification of "children of Arab or Muslim fathers also born in Kuwait" was eliminated, thereby transitioning to the *jus sanguinis* principle.[29] Descent was also framed in patriarchal terms as only children of Kuwaiti men could claim citizenship. Naturalization was heavily restricted and, in 1960, the number of non-Gulf naturalizations was limited to fifty a year. A 1981 amendment meant that only Muslims could be granted citizenship.[30]

In addition to this codified preclusion of the possibility for newcomers to integrate into Kuwait's society on an equal footing, the institutionalization of the *kafala* system further reinforced the citizen/noncitizen distinction. Although still based on the broad, historically relevant notion of social patronage, *kafala* today regulates the presence of noncitizens by treating them not as potential immigrants but as temporary contractual workers, for whom the question of integration necessarily does not arise. The system is based on citizens' sponsorship of foreign labor whereby the *kafeel* (sponsor) takes financial and legal responsibility for the worker. The *kafeel* is generally an individual citizen (especially in the case of domestic workers) or a private business (which must have majority Kuwaiti ownership). Noncitizens can sponsor members of their families as dependents; but the criteria for doing so are, in turn, tied to their own legal status within the country.[31] The system thus (re)produces asymmetrical power relations between

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 40.

[29] Longva, *Walls Built on Sand*, 48.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Maysa Zahra, "The Legal Framework of the Sponsorship Systems of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries," Explanatory Note No. 10/2015, GLMM, http://gulfmigration.eu.

citizens and noncitizens by devolving to the former a measure of state authority in the enforcement of labor and migration regulations.

Extended to analyses of migration beyond Kuwait, ethnocracy and *kafala* have become central to the scholarship's understanding of migrant experiences in the Arabian Gulf more broadly. Taken together they constitute the "politics of exclusion" which supposedly color all aspects of the everyday lives and interactions of citizens and noncitizens alike. A reliance on these concepts is often unavoidable, necessary, and valid. But, as Vora and Koch find, it has the propensity to over-determine the understanding of state-society relations in the Gulf in exclusionary and (legal) citizenship-based terms. It inadvertently legitimizes, rather than interrogates, state-crafted narratives and criteria of national belonging, while simultaneously positioning Gulf societies and (migration thereto) as exceptional vis à vis otherwise similar processes elsewhere.[32] To focus on *kafala* as the prime frame of reference reifies the dichotomy of the exploitative citizen and the oppressed migrant. It also presumes exclusion and pure economic motivation as inherently characteristic of noncitizen life, and so overlooks entirely any possibility of migrants' forming a sense of belonging or experiencing inclusion in their everyday social interactions.[33] Emphasizing ethnocracy has contributed to an implicit assumption in Gulf scholarship that discourses and projects of national identity formation are directed at citizens alone.[34] In other words, structural forces, instead of being interrogated for possible porosity and differentiation in their effects, are taken as granted in shaping individuals' subjectivities. The Indian doctor, the Filipino saleswoman, and the Iranian groundskeeper become subjects of study only when the issue is migration and not when generally discussing Kuwaiti, Qatari or Emirati societies.

The best examples of this can be found in scholarship that speaks of the GCC as comprising "rentier states" that use petrodollars to buy legitimacy for ruling monarchies, placate a complacent citizenry through cradle-to-grave welfare, and get away with exploiting migrant workers by paying them marginally more than they would earn in their developing home countries. The theme also runs through the more mainstream and generally accessible analyses of journalism, human rights advocacy groups, and popular culture.

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[32] Vora and Koch, 541.
[33] Ibid, 542-543.
[34] Ibid, 547-549.

However, a reified reading of *kafala* and ethnocracy can also be found in the work of scholars who explicitly try to deconstruct them. Consider, for example, Longva's seminal ethnography, *Walls Build on Sand: Migration, Exclusion and Society in Kuwait,* in which she identifies the role of *kafala* and citizenship in shaping citizen-migrant interactions. Writing in the 1990s, she identifies the shortcomings of the then available research on Kuwait to be either its exclusive focus on citizens (in the analysis of the country's politics) or its broad survey of trends and volumes when studying economic migration.[35] In studying the conceptualization and maintenance of ethnic identities, her work is an attempt to examine the social relationships between native employers and migrant employees, calling for a de-territorialized understanding of migration.[36] Importantly, she argues that exclusion and dominance in Kuwait acquire social viability through the participation of both dominant (citizen) and subordinate (noncitizen) groups. Longva thus illustrates how the interplay of human agency with structural forces reinforces the latter and gives them meaning.[37] This theoretical approach circumvents the structural determinism characteristic in "rentier state" analyses, by showing how migrants too contribute significance to a politics of exclusion.

Notwithstanding her adoption of a diachronist view of cultural integration, what Longva's work fails to do is allow for the possibility that human agency can over time re-appropriate and transform the meanings attributed to structural constraints or that the latter apply unevenly or differentially across sites of social interaction. This results in conclusions that forego the nuance of her ethnographic analysis. For instance, despite examining cases of long-term noncitizen residents who developed a deep sense of attachment to the country—supposedly through their everyday experiences of work, leisure, and family life-- Longva concludes that they acknowledge their own feelings of belonging only reluctantly i.e. despite their exclusion.[38] The role of individuals' initial economic motivations for moving to the country are also somewhat uncritically mapped on to the entirety of their relationships, whether with Kuwaitis or with other migrants of the same ethnicity/nationality. Longva's claim that the majority of noncitizens opt for "individual strategies", thus preventing the creation of a strong "us" identity among expats, is a generalization not sufficiently substantiated by her ethnographic work. Most conspicuously

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[35] Longva, *Walls Built on Sand,* 1-2.
[36] Ibid, 238-241.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid, 237.

perhaps, is that while *kafala* is rightly positioned as structuring relations between citizens and migrants in primarily economic terms, the fact that a large section of noncitizens, professionals and construction workers alike, hardly ever interact with their Kuwaiti *kafeels*[39], is overlooked. Longva states:

> [Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis] ascribed to each other identities that, although embedded in the reality of legal and economic dominance, also engendered their own non-legal and non-economic consequences. There is little doubt meanwhile, as to who had the most constraining role in this ascription/ In the sphere of native-migrant articulation, non-Kuwaitis had to enact whatever roles were assigned to them by Kuwaitis and espouse the status and identity that went with such roles.[40]

Instead of truly examining how *everyday* practices of citizen-noncitizen interactions represent ways in which systems of exclusion are exercised and given structural potency, the impact of *kafala* (and citizenship laws) are uniformly presumed as prior to the everyday. This is most evident in that while Longva examines how ethnicity and sex determine opportunities for employment, she does not problematize the site of work as a space where social subjectivities are enacted and shaped. Her discussion of the intersection of ethnicity and class further homogenizes the impact of citizenship and labor regulations by discounting both class distinctions within ethnic groups and the relevance of intra-ethnic socialization.[41]

On this last point, other scholars have more recently built off and added to Longva'a work by looking at patterns of social relations within migrant groups of a specific ethnicity in other Gulf countries. Writing about the Indian community in Bahrain based on field work conducted in 2002-2003, Andrew Gardner distinguishes between what he calls the "transnational proletariat" of working-class and mostly male migrants and the "diasporic elite" of middle and upper-class non-Bahraini families.[42] He also examines the role of voluntary social organizations within the Indian community in challenging political and legal restrictions by providing a collective avenue to solve shared problems. In doing so, he offers a response to what he views as a shortcoming of Longva's work i.e. "that she focuses more on the inequities in the distribution of power and less on the lived experiences of those dominated by that power".[43]

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[39] Vora and Koch, 545.
[40] Longva, *Walls Built on Sand,* 144-145.
[41] Ibid, 141.
[42] Gardner, 24.
[43] Ibid, 166.

However, the conclusions he draws similarly over-determine the role of ethnicity-based structural violence on migrants' lives, at the expense of the subtlety of analysis his consideration of different socio-economic classes, the media, and community organizations could potentially offer. He argues that elite Indian migrants are, despite experiences and vulnerabilities unique to their socio-economic status, like their co-nationals in the working class, "servants to the Bahraini national project."[44] Oddly, having first demonstrated the intersection of class and ethnicity, he maintains that the "ethnocratic underpinnings of the structure of dominance in place on the island reject the class-based logic of the neoliberal system" of transnational migration and globalization.[45] When speaking of nationality or region-based community clubs as providing a basic social fabric for Indians in Bahrain, he overstates intra-ethnic cohesion by characterizing these organizations as spaces where class identity can be shed in favor of forms of "Indian-ness."[46] The emphasis on ethnic differentiation between citizens and noncitizens thus obfuscates the role of class in creating hierarchies of power with a particular nationality group.

In contrast to this, more recent anthropological work come closer to de-centering *kafala* and ethnocracy by paying more rigorous attention to other factors that shape the lived experiences of Gulf migrants, such as class, urbanization, histories of transitional migration, and state-led neoliberal forms of nationalism. Ahmad Kanna presents the diversity of the voices and experiences of Dubai's South Asians as central to studying the interconnectedness of politics, the built environment, and national identity in shaping the city's 21st century creation and image as a postmodern, urban spectacle. He eschews the lumping together of all Gulf migrants in the monolithic category of expatriates, arguing that some are more privileged than others vis à vis the state. A foreigner's position in this hierarchy then determines the nature of his/her structural conflict with the state, whether it is more economic or political.[47] He describes how middle-class Indians, unlike their working-class compatriots, enact neoliberal forms of belonging through expectations of egalitarian economic opportunities in a free-market Dubai, resenting pure ethnic identification. Coupled with their criticism of dysfunctional social democratic states in India and elsewhere in the Third World, Kanna concludes that the experience of being transient and

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[44] Ibid, 95.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid, 114-117.
[47] Ahmed Kanna, "Indian Ocean Dubai: the identity Politics of South Asian Immigrants," in *Dubai: The City as Corporation* (Minneapolis: Univesity of Minnesota Press, 2011), 176.

economically (rather than politically) included was what mattered more to his middle-class Indian interlocutors.[48]

Writing about the "permanent temporariness" of middle- and upper-class Indians in Dubai, Vora demonstrates how these individuals, of different socio-economic backgrounds and across generations, are in many ways the city's "quintessential citizens" even though they are not legally categorized as such.[49] Her ethnographic research illustrates how elite Indian businessmen in the city engage politically with the Emirati state and exercise asymmetrical forms of governance over other, working-class Indians as a means to maintain ethnic monopolies in industries like retail gold.[50] She explores the ways in which subjectivities of both racial consciousness and consumer citizenship underlie middle-class Indians' understanding of their belonging to Dubai, a space they view as an extraterritorial extension of the subcontinent[51]—rather than the single hermetically-sealed site of inquiry it is commonly assumed to be. By looking across generations in addition to class, Vora is able to highlight the emergence of new forms of urban citizenship among younger Indians. Those born and raised in the country claim forms of belonging that echo the liberal calls for political rights and equality among immigrants in the West. [52] The value of studying Indians in Dubai, she argues, lies in that as exceptions to legal citizenship, South Asians in fact validate the ethnocratic and religious foundational narratives of the Emirate state, while also transforming gendered, ethnic, classed, and religious divisions within transnationalism.[53]

Turning again specifically to Kuwait, Attiya Ahmad's 2017 ethnography on South Asian domestic workers' conversion to Islam offers a very different account of her interlocutors' lives than those found in mainstream news coverage and human rights reports. She explains that these women's conversions to Islam are the linear outcome neither of the hierarchical and dependent relationships with their employers (*kafala* and ethnocracy at play) nor of the growing influence of the transnational Islamic reform movement. These explanations are not invalid but assume that religious conversion is a transformative event constituting a break in previous subjectivities and belongings. Instead, Ahmad interrogates the Muslim Kuwaiti household, where domestic

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[48] Ibid, 181-204.
[49] Vora.
[50] Ibid, 91-116.
[51] Ibid, 117-143.
[52] Ibid, 144-170.
[53] Ibid, 31.

workers both live and labor, as a site of biopolitical control by the state, one where hegemonic norms of the heteronormative nuclear family and ethnonational belonging are reproduced through mundane, everyday interactions.[54] In eventual and recursive ways, these interactions--- with Kuwaitis, with other South Asian and Filipino help, and with female religious teachers--- instigate these women's attempts to become Muslim. They also experience what Ahmad calls an "eerie doubling" of familial and economic relations between their work and family households, a function of their suspended temporariness between Kuwait and South Asia and of them being raised with a malleable disposition. As domestic workers' relationships with their own families become increasingly mediated through the currency and goods they remit back, their relationship with their work households becomes less reducible to wage labor.[55]

The irreducibility of citizen-noncitizen relationships to pure economic motivation and to the legal sponsorship system is also apparent in Abdullah Alajmi's examination of the Hadrami migratory experience in Kuwait. This claim is somewhat counterintuitive because Alajmi explicitly places the *kafala* system at the center of his approach to understanding how his interlocutors define their relationship with their citizen sponsors. However, he distinguishes between legal and social sponsorship, conceptualizing the significance of *kafala* to Hadrami migrants as extending beyond the legal and economic realm.[56] Patterns of personal (and not structural) dependency on their Kuwaiti sponsors are "perceived in terms of loyalty, trust, personal sentiments, pseudokinship, and friendships with binding moral compulsions."[57] This application of the *kafala* concept is far removed from the structurally deterministic way in which it is commonly used in engagement with either a general or scholarly audience.

Recent scholarship has thus moved closer towards what Vora and Koch describe as an understanding of the Gulf as "societies of differential inclusion," and thus quite normal in their governance of nation-building and migration.[58] But Gulf Studies has a significant way to go before it can be said to have truly put ethnocracy and *kafala* in their proper analytic place. One important area of research that needs to be addressed is how residents' everyday, micro-level

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[54] Attiya Ahmad, *Everyday Conversions: Islam, Domestic Work, and South Asian Migrant Women in Kuwait* (DurhamL Duke Univeisty Pess, 2017): 1-26.

[55] Ibid, 37-123.

[56] Abdullah M. Alajmi, "Debt, Peonage and Dependency in the Kafalah System: Hadrami Migratory Experience in Kuwait," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 9, no. 1 (2014)

[57] Ibid, 24.

[58] Vora and Koch, 541.

interactions across nationality lines both shape their subjectivities of belonging in the Gulf and re-appropriate, repudiate, or reaffirm ethnic and class hierarchies. The danger of studying migration too tightly within the bounds of a single ethnic group is exemplified by Alajmi's aforementioned work. Instead of extending the broader socio-historical understanding of *kafala* to other migrant communities in Kuwait, he consistently exceptionalizes the Hadrami case by presenting it as unlike that of other Arabs and Asians, for whom the structural significance of legal and economic sponsorship is assumed to be absolute. [59] Kanna, Vora, and Ahmad also focus solely on South Asian/Indian migratory experiences to the Gulf with little systematic discussion of their interlocutors' day-to-day interactions with Arabs, Westerners, or South-East Asians. But this is perhaps, to some degree, a result more of the need to limit scope than of method.

Additionally, the site of study has primarily been the urban space writ large. Oddly enough, the workplace, where citizens and noncitizens spend a significant portion of their days interacting across ethnicity and class lines, has been largely ignored as a site of study. Ahmad examines the experiences of domestic workers in Kuwaiti households, but what of the vast number of human interactions that take place among workers at construction sites, among cooks and servers at restaurants, among white-collar staff in air-conditioned office buildings? While these may be formally understood through the lens of economic and professional motivations, they also contribute to the operation of class and ethnicity-based macro-level dynamics of identity and belonging. How they do so is worth studying in its own right. While *kafala* and ethnocracy may explain generally observed politeness in how non-Kuwaitis speak to Kuwaitis[60], they don't help us understand how particular migrants choose to interact with specific citizens and foreigners. This is precisely why this project pursues a case study of the network of social and professional relationships among top- and mid-level staff at Sadeer. I explain this focus on the workplace in more detail in the following section

III. The multinational workplace in Kuwait

The private sector in Kuwait hosts an ethnically diverse workforce. Approximately 82 percent of the country's total labor force is employed by the private sector. Of this, 95 percent are noncitizens. Citizens, on the other hand, are largely employed by the public sector with

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[59] Alajmi.
[60] Longva, *Walls Built on Sand,* 179.

approximately 71 percent holding government jobs.[61] However, beyond these aggregate statistics on labor demographics, there is little scholarship that explores the interactions of individuals across nationality lines at the organization level, much less by taking into account the wider cultural and political context within which workplaces are embedded.

Within the broader fields of workplace sociology and economic geography, an evolution from the use of quantitative to qualitative methodology has led, as Janie Fritz outlines, to an understanding of organizations as cultures in themselves. They constitute specific contexts within which relational experiences among colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates are negotiated and given meaning. Moreover, individuals' experiences of organizations are dependent upon their socio-cultural standpoint and hierarchical positioning.[62] These experiences are then discursively co-constructed as individuals interact with those both similar to and different from themselves in their professional milieu. Fritz claims that workplaces are not only spaces of economically productive labor, determined by the effectiveness of employer-employee communication, but also those where people can develop meaningful relationships of mentorship, friendliness, and even romance.[63]

More specifically, the context of these interactions is never solely the organization itself but both it *and* the society within which it exists. For instance, a study of trust within the workplace shows how networks of interactions among people both within and outside these spaces affects decision making and performance in collaborative settings.[64] The study of workplace friendships illustrates that they are shaped by and relevant to more than just organizational outcomes such as efficiency and performance.[65] Understood as contextually contingent social practices and as historically patterned social and personal relationships, workplace friendships are porous and mutable.[66] They contribute to how individuals make meaning of their place in a social world.[67]

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[61] PACI, "Employment by Occupation and Sector," accessed March 25, 2018
http://stat.paci.gov.kw/englishreports/#DataTabPlace:ColumnEmpEduGender
[62] Janie H. Fritz, "Researching workplace relationships: What can we learn from qualitative organizational studies?," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 31, no. 4 (2014): 461-462.
[63] Ibid, 463-464.
[64] Nancy Ettlinger, "Cultural economic geography and a relational and microspace approach to trusts, rationalities, networks and change in collaborative workplaces," *Journal of Economic Geography* 3 (2003): 157-171.
[65] Nick Rumens, "Researching workplace friendships: Drawing insights from the sociology of friendship," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 34, no. 8 (2017): 1149-1167.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

As Nancy Ettlinger, argues, workplaces are situated among a network of spaces connected by social relations. People carry their thoughts and emotions across these spaces—from the home to the office—and behave and make decisions in the latter context in ways that cannot be explained through the unidimensional rationality of workplace routines or objectives. The corollary of this is that while studies of social change tend to be focused on social movements or state-society relations, they would also benefit from a closer look at the micro-level spaces where people's everyday lives play out i.e. the workplace.[68]

In studying lived experiences of ethnicity and class, the unit and concepts of analysis must thus encapsulate organizational particularities as well as socio-political forces permeating larger spatial contexts like the city, the nation, the region, and even the globe. Yet, as explained in the previous section, the workplace has been largely ignored as a site of relevance for understanding national identity and migration in GCC societies. One example of ethnographic research focused on the workplace is Amelie le Renard's 2013 gender analysis of the impact of Saudi labor nationalization policies on reconfiguring norms of femininity, class, and nationality in the Kingdom.[69] Still, the literature on workplaces in the Gulf has been primarily focused on traditional concerns of organizational performance and management. As Mark Neal points out, when it comes to ethnic diversity, most studies:

> Either focus exclusively upon expatriate experiences (morale levels, expatriate adjustment, communication difficulties, culture shock, job satisfaction levels, etc.), or compare the attributes and experiences of local and expatriate workers. Neither approach examines the emerging dynamics of expatriates and locals actually working together.[70]

Consider, a study of employees' attitudes towards diversity in the UAE banking sector conducted by Bakr Ahmad Alserhan, Ingo Forstenlechner, and Ahmad Al-Nakeeb. Rather than examining how individuals relate to colleagues of different national, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, the authors instead survey opinions on the value of a general notion of diversity for workplace productivity.[71] Oddly, having first acknowledged multiculturalism as commonplace in the Emirati workplace, they conclude that the fact their respondents were indifferent to diversity

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[68] Ettlinger, 145-157.

[69] Amélie Le Renard, "Nationalizing Jobs: A Gender Approach. Saudi female Employees in Banks," *International Journal of Archaeology and Social Sciences in the Arabian Peninsula* 1 (2013): DOI : 10.4000/cy.2023

[70] Mark Neal," When Arab-expatriate relations work well," *Team Performance Management* 16, no. 5/6 (2010): 246.

[71] Bakr Ahmad Alserhan, Ingo Forstenlechner, and Ahmad Al-Nakeeb," Employees' attitudes towards diversity in a non-western context," *Employee Relations* 32, no. 1 (2010): 43-55.

provides strong evidence in support of policies aimed at nationalizing the workforce.[72] By failing to examine the historical and structural roots of how citizens and noncitizens interact with and perceive each other, their approach makes conclusions about the impact of diversity solely by measuring non-specific perceptions thereof.

In his own ethnographic study of citizen-expatriate relations at a public sector university in Oman, Neal attempts to bridge organization-specific and sociological analyses by analyzing, "the interactions between colleagues' understandings/actions; and the social processes and structures which they sustained or changed."[73] His findings demonstrate the importance of local culture, humor, departmental power hierarchies, and organizational mission in nurturing social cohesion despite differences in national origins. Yet, his use of the expatriate and citizen categories, particularly in the fundamental assumption that they are likely to be a source of conflict because of given structural inequalities, inadvertently reifies them as the primary facts of individuals' identities. He also fails to situate the workplace within his interlocutors' social lives beyond the university. In doing so, Neal limits the scope of his findings and their implications for further research to the realm of the Gulf workplace, instead of considering how they might contribute to the understanding of migration experiences and state-society relations more broadly.[74]

For my case study on the social and professional relationships among Sadeer's employees, I therefore adopt a conceptualization of the workplace as (a) situated within larger networks of structurally-conditioned (not determined) social relations that are (b) enacted and transformed by individuals on an everyday basis. Rather than assuming citizenship to be an *a priori* determinant of workplace relationships, I attempt to use SNA to examine patterns of communication, collaboration, socialization, and aspirational collaboration through multiple dimensions that span the individual, firm-specific, and socio-political levels of analyses. The communication and collaboration networks map out patterns of actual professional interaction in terms of information flows and mandated cooperation respectively. The socialization network illustrates how Sadeer's employees relate to one another at the informal, personal level. The aspirational collaboration network presents employees' preferences for who they would like to

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Neal, 251.
[74] Ibid.

work with if they had the choice. Analyzing these in parallel allows a comparison with the findings of the anthropological work discussed in section II, work that has foregrounded *kafala* and ethnocracy in its analysis of Gulf residents' subjectivities of belonging in the region.

The advantage of using network analysis in overcoming inadvertent determinism and bridging macro and micro ethnographic contexts is discussed in the followings section, which couches the method within the discipline of relational sociology.

IV. A relational theory and method of network analysis

Like much social science literature interested in the study of sociological change, the study of migration and citizens-noncitizen relations in the Gulf continues to grapple with the dichotomy between individualist and holist conceptions of society. The problem, as illustrated in section II, lies in placing *kafala* and ethnocracy in their proper place in our analysis of how noncitizens and citizens perceive one another, how they make sense of their respective places in society. It would be absurd indeed to argue that these concepts are relevant only in so far as their operations are evident in individuals' observable behavior and preferences. On the flipside, paying them too much attention—as demonstrated in the exceptionalizing tendency of Gulf migration studies---risks portraying individuals, regardless of citizenship, as mere pieces on a chessboard, pawns moved by invisible hands.

I seek to overcome these tensions by centering networks of relations between individuals, rather than either individual actors or structural essences, as the main focus of social analysis. I do this through the use of SNA as paradigmatically grounded in relational sociology. I do not provide here a comprehensive survey of the theoretical debates and developments in relational sociology and in the use of network analysis.[75] Rather, in outlining my understanding of the role and advantages of this approach, I limit my discussion to some of the foundational work of Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin and to the more recent scholarship of Nick Crossley, which seeks to clarify key ideas, principles, and concepts.

Relational perspectives of social action and historical change eschew substantialist approaches that consider things, beings, and essences as the fundamental units of social inquiry.

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[75] For a brief but comprehensive overview of the use of network analysis in relational sociology, see: Ann Mische, "Relational Sociology, Culture, and Agency," *Sage Handbook of Social Network Analysis*, John Scott and Peter Carrington eds. (Sage, 2011).

Relational theorists argue instead that individuals are inseparable from the transactional contexts within which they are embedded. According to Emirbayer:

> The very terms and units involved in a transaction [relation] derive their meaning, significance and identity from the (changing) functional roles they play within that transaction. The latter, seen as a dynamic, unfolding process, becomes the primary unit of analysis rather than the constituent elements themselves.[76]

A social network is in turn one of many possible sets of social relations of a specific content that link actors within a larger social structure.[77] Thus, this "transactional" i.e. relational approach focuses on the dynamics of supra-personal relations that transcend individual actors.[78] In the use of SNA, this translates into what is called an anti-categorical imperative, "rejecting all attempts to explain human behavior or social processes solely in terms of the categorical attributes of actors, whether individual or collective."[79]

More specifically, this imperative rejects non-relational substantialism by resolving the dichotomous incompatibility between holist and individualist understandings of society, social action, and social change. Holist approaches, like those exemplified in the works of Longva and Gardner for instance, are deterministic as they understand the social whole as greater than the sum of its parts and as constituting an ontologically complete object of study. By subordinating actors' (individual or collective) behavior to a systemic whole or to a theoretically appealing teleology, holism precludes an account of human agency.[80] Social arrangements, such as *kafala* and ethnocracy, whose historical contingency is first acknowledged, are then "imputed an ahistorical essence and force such that their durability, where they do endure, is assumed rather than analyzed."[81] This concern aligns with Vora and Koch's reflections about the need to de-naturalize exclusionary framings of ethnocracy and *kafala* in the study of migration to the Arabian Gulf. Most relevant ethnographic/anthropological works, such as those examined in section IIb, furnish the reader with historical accounts of how migration, citizenship, and national identity have evolved in the Gulf. But they also read onto, instead of identifying in, their interlocutors' lived experiences the effects of these socio-historical arrangements.

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[76] Mustafa Emirbayer," Manifesto for a relational sociology," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 3 (1997): 287.
[77] Mustafa Emirbayer and Jeff Goodwin, "Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency," *American Journal of Sociology* 99, n. 6 (1994): 1417.
[78] Emirbayer.
[79] Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1414.
[80] Nick Crossley, *Towards Relational Sociology* (Routledge: New York, 2011): 8-13.
[81] Ibid, 13.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, individualist approaches emphasize that the whole can be explained only through the observable actions and behavior of individual human actors. This is problematic because it denies the existence of processes and structures, which though not evident to our senses, can nonetheless be indirectly illustrated through empirical means.[82] And it is substantialist in that individuals and their beliefs, interests, and values are considered conceptually *a priori* to social life.[83] Studies of Gulf migration have not suffered from this kind of thinking; if anything, they have explicitly distanced themselves from atomizing individuals in this manner.

From a relational viewpoint, however, neither the individual nor society writ large can be reduced to the other. It is human interaction which constitutes the irreducible and fundamental unit of social analysis, shifting the focus away from singular analyses of individuals or cultures towards an interrogation of structures and networks of relations.[84] Methodologically, this approach allows the benefit of many different kinds of groups, relations, and institutions that supposedly organize social processes to be understood in network terms. It also prevents, to some extent, these structures from being "black boxed" as they can be disaggregated into their constituent actors and relations.[85] In studying Gulf's residents' identities and subjectivities of belonging, it is then imperative to first examine the content and underlying patterns of relationships that constitute them. Unlike much current Gulf migration scholarship, a relational network analysis would refrain from inferring the nature of relations between and within different nationality groups based solely on the attributes of socio-political structures (*kafala* and ethnocracy) or individuals (citizenship and class).

Yet in speaking of relations as central to social analysis, we must first define what we mean by them. Following Crossley, this paper defines relations in terms of the actual, concrete interactions between actors. The emphasis on *actual* relations, as opposed to structural ones as defined by Pierre Bourdieu, is important.[86] In explaining the circularity of Bourdieu's privileging of "real" (structural) positions and relations over "empirical" (actual) ones, Crossley effectively argues that the former are not ontologically prior to the latter.[87] To assume the opposite risks

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid 13-15.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1418.
[86] Crossley, 28.
[87] Ibid. 24-27.

reifying one's model of social reality, as is the challenge in much Gulf migration literature when it comes to describing how citizenship and migration regimes affect people's everyday lives. To use Crossley's words, relations are the, "lived trajectories of iterated interactions."[88] When we say that two actors are related, we are claiming that they have both a history of past interactions and an expectation of future ones, which in turn condition their current contact.[89] Social relations are processes comprised of a dynamic series of endogenously linked social interactions across time, extending across decades or mere hours. The interactions can, to differing extents, be characterized with reference to their symbolic, affective, strategic, exchange, and routine/habit-based dimensions.[90]

My analysis of four forms of interaction--communication, collaboration, socialization, and aspirational collaboration—is meant to capture some of this complexity, particularly in understanding social relations among Sadeer's multinational workforce as being a function of more than just individuals' economic and professional motivations. These formal and informal workplace ties, as described in the preceding section, exist between actors who carry their emotions, values, and beliefs across spatial and temporal confines, and across networks. Aspirational collaboration is included as an instance of interaction because, although it accounts for future preferences rather than actual contact, the former are relational in that they are expressed vis à vis other individuals with whom one has past and ongoing connections. Thus, these four forms not only account for the different dimensions of interactions but, considered individually, are composed of historically-sedimented and future-oriented threads of affective, symbolic, and other meanings characterizing a specific interactive instance. The ability to examine these forms alongside one another, in the following section, illustrates how relationships between citizens and noncitizens, contrary to the ethnographic literature's emphasis on oppression and exclusion, are a function of more diverse and complex interactive processes.

But what does this mean for how to appropriately situate ethnocratic frameworks of national identity and citizenship rights in the network of social relations? And what role does the examination of concrete interactions within a well-specified social context play in that regard?

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[88] Ibid, 28.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid, 28-35.

To answer these questions, consider the linkage between networks of relations and structured social worlds. Social worlds "are networks of interaction demarcated by their participants' mutual involvement in specifiable sets of activities,…shared orientation towards specific conventions and common adherence to a shared framework of meaning."[91] These are in turn structured as they comprise patterned distributions of networks, conventions (implicit and explicit rules, norms, and cultural discourses), and resources among relationally-embedded nodes or individuals.[92] As Crossley explains, social worlds are more than their networks of relations. The structures of social worlds constrain and enable social action. But they do not *determine* it. The precise details and effects of an individual's action are determined only as a function of it forming an analytically irreducible interaction vis à vis another actor. And while we act in purposive ways, the resulting consequences may be unintended, incomprehensible (both to us and to an outside observer).[93] They may also be structurally transformative. Additionally, social worlds do not exist in isolation of each other. They are connected through overlapping relations, conventions, and resources, as well as being stratified across time.[94] And so, as Emirbaryer and Goodwin argue, multiple and mutually-penetrating cultural discourses, narratives, and idioms (whether as resources or conventions—to use Crossley's terminology), operate simultaneously and differentially across social worlds.[95]

Specifying this theoretical framing to the present case, the social world of choice is that of Sadeer, with its office, construction sites, reporting hierarchies, organizational structure etc. framing (not determining) employees' interactions within an economically productive context. These employees, from the general manager to the office clerk, each inhabit and traverse a multitude of social worlds, which can be sliced in a variety of overlapping ways based on ethnicity, class, function, neighborhood etc. And the interactions and relationships that they engage in and are embedded within across these worlds are never completely confined by time and space (although they are specific to them). As such, Sadeer's social world is inextricably connected to the wider structures of Kuwait's society, but also to its staff's familial worlds and to a transnational world of private industry. The rules, power relations, symbolic meanings, and

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[91] Ibid, 138.
[92] Ibid; Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1441.
[93] Crossley, 140-143.
[94] Ibid, 173-174.
[95] Emirbayer and Goodwin.

material effects of *kafala* and ethnocracy are then not so much overriding determinants, permeating with equal force through all everyday interaction, as the Gulf migration literature tends to imply, even if inadvertently. While still omnipresent, they operate across the Gulf's myriad social worlds with differing effects and levels of explicitness. They are by no means the only structural forces at play in any given context involving interactions across nationality lines. The implications of this relational theoretical orientation are presented in the next section, which describes the background to the case and the methodology followed by a discussion of the SNA results.

V. A case study of social networks in the Kuwaiti workplace

But first, it is necessary to discuss my connection to the subject of the case study in further detail. During the initial phase of this study, I made several attempts to contact a number of Kuwait-based private sector organizations in industries including banking, financial services, and retail. The initial objective had been to conduct comparative network analyses across different organizations in order to be able to identify patterns that would transcend organocation-specific dynamics of formal and informal interaction. However, these attempts were unsuccessful because of pragmatic barriers related to the Kuwaiti private sector's general view of external researchers and to constraints on the researcher's time and resources. First, I was unable to travel to Kuwait for a period of time significant enough to allow me to visit companies' offices in person, which would have been the most efficient way of establishing a research relationship in the given context. I thus relied on personal contacts within my existing professional network to make introductions for me. Feedback relayed by my contacts, to whom I provided a short but comprehensive brief of the project, either expressed a skepticism about sharing company information with an external researcher or emphasized the bureaucratic difficulties in getting the necessary approval from member(s) of leadership. Rather than table the project altogether, I decided to pursue my research objectives in a more limited fashion by tapping into a familial connection within Sadeer who was able to initiate a conversation with the top management. To mitigate any negative consequences of my personal connection to the company, most communication regarding research design, data collection, and confidentiality has been conducted directly between myself and the general manager's office.

Established in 1973 as a limited liability commercial entity, Sadeer is one of many local construction contracting companies operating in Kuwait. Focused primarily on providing interior

design and finishing services, its portfolio includes work on a variety of commercial and residential buildings, many of which are iconic landmarks of Kuwait's urban space. These include sections of the Amiri Diwan, of the 360 and Avenues shopping malls, as well reconstruction of the Imam Sadeq Mosque, which was destroyed by a suicide bomb attack in 2015.[96] Like many (but not all) other private sector firms, both within the industry and without, Sadeer's ownership is comprised exclusively of citizens.[97] In contrast, its management and staff are largely, though not solely, noncitizens of different national origins—a tiny fraction of the 15 percent noncitizen workforce employed in the construction industry.[98] The firm has approximately 90-100 employees counting all management and staffing levels—from the general manager to the storekeeper. This estimate excludes skilled and semi-skilled construction site workers recruited by the firm for carrying out its various projects.[99]

Formally, Sadeer's organizational structure is segmented into project-oriented work and day-to-day administration with overall management oversight provided by the general manager and his deputy. Project managers lead teams comprised of engineers, coordinators, quality control specialists, site foremen etc. Accounting and finance, procurement, and human resources each operate as separate parallel departments.[100] In practice, as in any organization, the formal decision-making hierarchy at Sadeer provides us with only a limited understanding of how the firm's day-to-day activities in fact take place.

To develop a richer SNA-based understanding of the company's social world, I rely on the results of a survey which was disseminated online to all staff during October and November 2017. Ideally, given additional time and resources, a more comprehensive investigation would have combined the survey with in-person interviews and on-site observation. This was not possible due to constraints on the researcher's time and resources. As such, however, the survey results are sufficient to demonstrate the utility of relational SNA in examining Arabian Gulf societies generally and inter-ethnic migration experiences more specifically. The analysis' indicative findings also illuminate further questions and areas of research for scholars of

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[96] Sadeer Trading and Contracting Co. W.L.L., "Pre-Qualification Document," n.d.

[97] Kuwait's Commercial Companies Law allows businesses to be owned by foreigners, but their stake must be limited to no more than 49 percent. See: PwC, "Doing Business in Kuwait: A tax and Legal Guide," (2015), accessed April 9, 2018 https://www.pwc.com/m1/en/tax/documents/doing-business-guides/doing-business-guide-kuwait.pdf

[98] PACI, "Employment by Economic Activity And Sector."

[99] "Pre-Qualification Document."

[100] Ibid.; "Organization Chart," Sadeer, http://www.sadeer.com/organizationchart.php
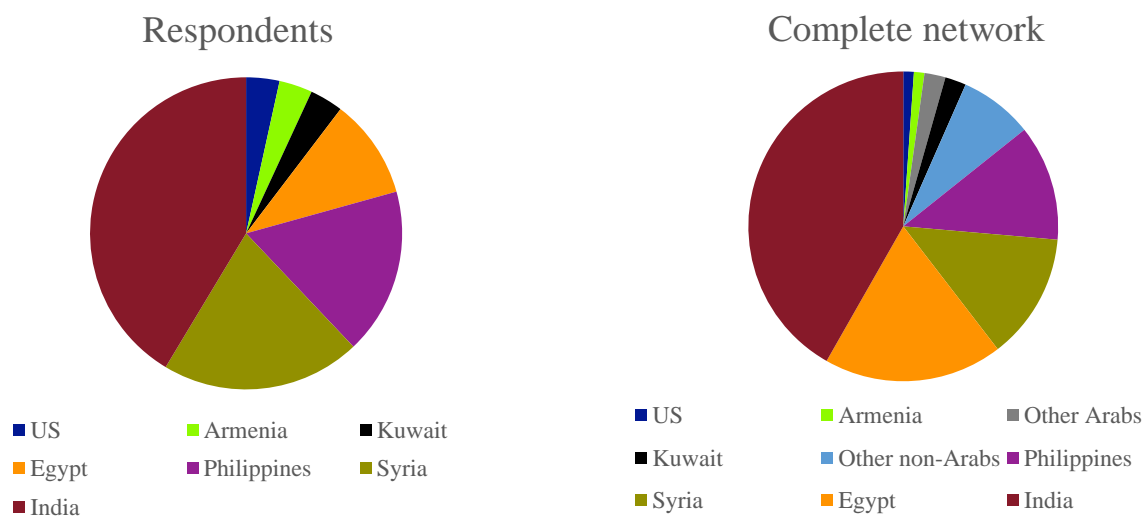
citizenship and belonging in the Arabian Gulf as well as for those interested in these subjects in other geographic contexts.

The survey first asked respondents for basic demographic (attribute) information such as: their name, age, sex, place of birth, citizenship, number of years living in Kuwait, number of years employed by Sadeer, job title, language, whether or not they lived with family, and whether or not they participated in social, cultural or religious activities within communities of their co-nationals outside of work. It then asked them to provide the names of between 3 to 5 of their colleagues in response to each of the following four network questions:

1. *Communication (COM):* Who are the colleagues/supervisors with whom you communicate most frequently about work-related issues?
2. *Collaboration (COL):* Who are the colleagues/supervisors with whom you must collaborate most frequently/regularly during the course of your work?
3. *Socialization (SOC):* Who are the colleagues who you see most frequently for informal activities such as going out for dinner, lunch, visiting one another's homes etc.?
4. *Aspirational Collaboration (ASP):* Imagine you could pick your team for a new project Sadeer has been granted. Who would you choose?

A total of 29 individuals responded to the survey. Of these, 26 were complete useable responses, which provided data capturing the interactions of 91 unique individuals connected by 507 ties across all four networks. Sixteen of the respondents, of which only one is a Kuwaiti citizen, have lived in the country for more than ten years. Thirteen have worked at Sadeer for over ten years;

Figure 2: A comparison of different nationalities' representation among respondents and the full network

Respondents

US Armenia Kuwait
Egypt Philippines Syria
India

Complete network

US Armenia Other Arabs
Kuwait Other non-Arabs Philippines
Syria Egypt India

almost half speak Arabic; and nine are from the upper levels of management. No lower level staff responded to the survey. Figure 2 provides a comparison between the demographics of survey respondents and of the full network broken down by nationality. For a complete breakdown of respondents' aggregate attribute data, see the appendix.

For those individuals who were named by one or more of their colleagues but did not take the survey themselves, Sadeer provided data on their nationality and position within the organization. Thus, although the respondents represent only about a fifth of Sadeer's employees, the overall network includes individuals from across Sadeer's decision making hierarchy in both its project and administrative divisions. In total, the networks include individuals from 13 different nationalities. Due to the incompleteness of the other attribute data collected by the survey, I have chosen to focus primarily on individuals' citizenship and position within the organizational hierarchy for my analysis. Data on citizenship was used to code a new attribute, namely "region", to indicate whether an individual was an Arab or non-Arab national. This, along with the original citizenship attribute, was used to examine the ethnicity-based aspect of interactions. Likewise, specific professional roles were grouped into one of three levels of authority within the organization: top-level, mid-level, and lower-level. This "hierarchy" attribute simplified analysis about the relevance of an individual's occupational role and was used as a proxy to account for socio-economic class.

Before examining the networks in further detail, the COL and SOC networks were symmetrized to make up for the small data sample and, more importantly, based on an assumption that participation in non-professional social interactions and mandated collaboration on the job are perceived as reciprocal by both individuals. If A says she must work with B on a regular basis, B is likely to make that same assessment of at least the nature of her interaction with A. Similarly, if X claims to have engaged in out-of-work activities with Y, such as sharing a weekend dinner, Y's presence in that interaction can be safely assumed. Any difference in the *perception* of having participated in an interaction is here secondary to the fact of being identifiable as having *actually participated in it.* While this assumption of reciprocity could have been extended to the COM and ASP networks as well, the directionality of the interaction is more salient here. It is harder to deduce from X's stated work-related communication to Y, that the reverse is perceived by Y to be equally true, notwithstanding the fact the interaction does

Table 1: Whole-network cohesion measures; *measures calculated on symmetrized networks.

Measure	COM	COL*	SOC *	ASP
Density	0.013	0.020	0.018	0.011
Connectedness	0.053	0.327	0.184	0.038
Components	79	34	38	82
Average distance	2.446	4.084	4.630	2.540

involve both individuals. Similarly, A may wish to work with B, but the desire cannot be assumed to be mutual. Although these are still instances of interaction between individuals, differences in the perceived frequency of communication and variation in preferences of who people would like to work with are harder to discount.

Due to the small number of respondents, the network data cannot be said to present a complete or even near-complete organizational reality. For this reason, network-level descriptive measures of cohesion, usually basic to SNA studies, are of little to no use here. Presented in Table 1, they provide no insight into the overall structure of relations in Sadeer's social world. They merely note the networks' core-periphery or branching distribution (visualized in Figure 3), which is the result of survey response by a small group of individuals well-connected to the general manager's office. Yet, there are two key indicative findings that paint a more complex and nuanced picture of cross-nationality relationships. The first, from more of a categorical than

Figure 3: The COM network (59 nodes and 107 ties) as an example of the core-periphery nature of network structure due to low survey response rate
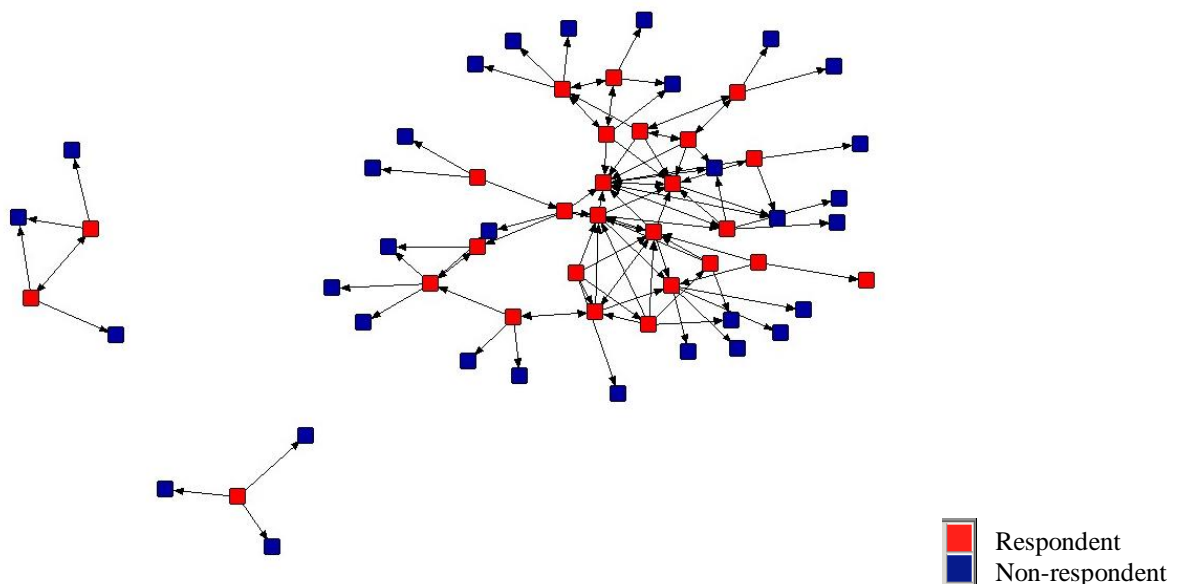
a relational viewpoint, is that there is no neat overlap between ethnicity and class among Sadeer's employees. The two cut across one another, challenging the generalizability of macro-level structural forces across different, albeit connected, social worlds and micro-level everyday experiences. Following from this. the second is that ethnicity and class-based fault lines are much less determinative of relationships among Sadeer's employees than one would be led to assume based on most existing ethnographic literature on Gulf societies. Seemingly banal at first, these findings together renew Longva's call for a de-territorialization of the study of Gulf migration. They do this by demonstrating how, when we consider social relations and interactions as the basic units of analysis, individual and group identities can no longer be taken for granted as the *a priori* points of reference for understanding human subjectivities of belonging.

To understand the workings of Sadeer's social world one cannot resort to analyses that super-impose class over ethnicity or vice versa. Figure 4 shows that relationships among Sadeer's employees, regardless of the form of interaction, exist among individuals who both conform to and defy expectations of the South Asian clerk and the Arab manager. One cannot thus begin the analysis of how these individuals relate to one another by first hypothesizing, due to the reliance on the concepts of *kafala* and ethnocracy as theoretically central, ethnic and/or class-based segregation. If one did, a test of such hypotheses would at best be rejected outright

Figure 4: Joined network with all relations (91 nodes, 296 ties) showing Arabs and non-Arabs occupying different class positions.
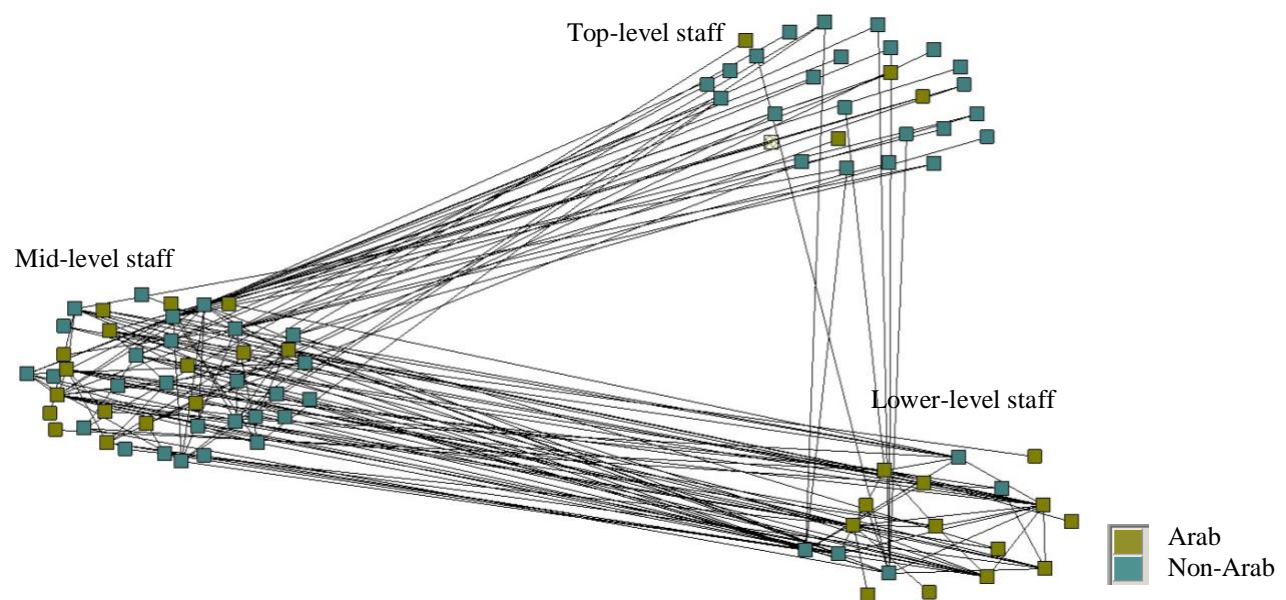
and, at worst, would lead a researcher to claim that the case is itself anomalous, and thus not "representative" of society at large. That ethnicity and class cross-cut one another also provides renewed caution against making generalizations about a specific identity group while having studied only a single ethnic or class subsection thereof, as is so often the case with much mainstream writing about the Arab Gulf.

Moreover, and moving towards the second key finding, an attention to the forms of interactions that comprise social relations also reveals that class and ethnicity are not sufficient predictors of individuals' everyday lives and interactions. Let us look at just class as an example. In figures 5a and 5b, we see that respondents, identified by the larger nodes, have formal and informal interactions across class lines, as estimated by proxy through an employees' position in the organizational hierarchy. This observation is, of course, somewhat less interesting in the case of professional interactions (Figure 5a). Unsurprisingly, people speak and have to collaborate with their bosses, colleagues, and subordinates to get work done. There is significantly less work-related interaction among the top and lower levels of authority. More interestingly, we see the same pattern when looking at how respondents socialize (Figure 5b), with the most interaction across class being between the mid and top levels and the mid and lower levels. Keeping in mind that the SOC network accounts for only a fraction of individuals' non-professional lives, this still indicates a need to shy away from assuming both the class-based

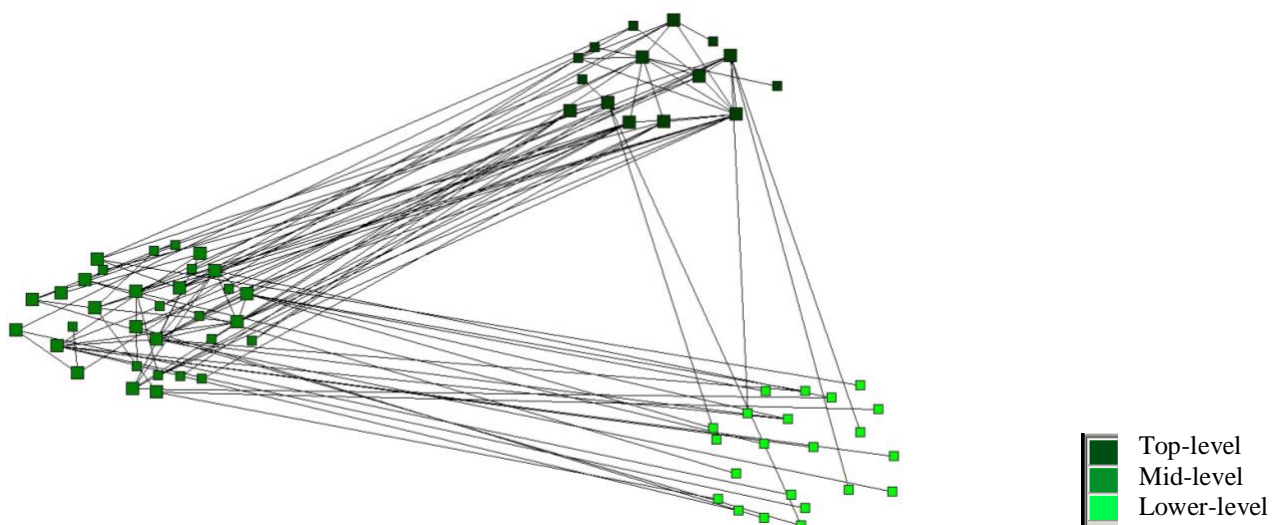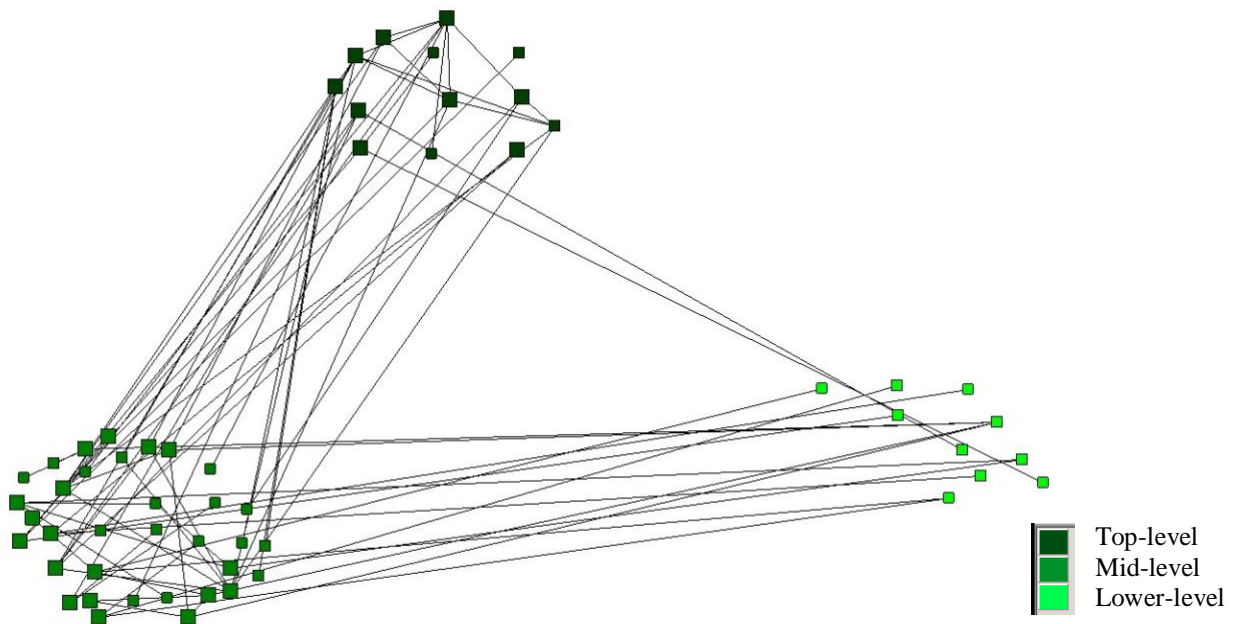Figure 5a: Joined COM and COL networks by class (larger nodes represent respondents)

Figure 5b: SOC network by class (larger nodes represent respondents)

Top-level
Mid-level
Lower-level

homogeneity of all Gulf residents' social circles and the dichotomy between people's work and non-work lives. The same analysis applies if we switch out class with an ethnicity attribute like citizenship or region.

Another way in which to gage the relevance of an attribute in structuring a network of interactions is to test for homophily or the "the tendency for people to like people who are similar to themselves on socially significant attributes."[101] Using what is called an EI Index, we can compare the observed versus expected levels of connectedness based on a specific attribute and given the network size and density of ties. The value of the measure ranges from -1 to 1. An EI index closer to -1 indicates that the preponderance of individuals' (observed or expected) ties within the network are to those who share the particular attribute in question. In other words, the network demonstrates homophily. Oppositely, values closer to 1 indicate that ties between individuals are more likely to cut across in-group and out-group distinctions.[102]

Calculating expected and observed EI indices for the four networks based on ethnicity (Table 2), we can see that interactions in all four of them are heterophilous with very minimal variation. Similar to the preceding observation about SOC ties cutting across the class hierarchy, we see the SOC network being the most heterophilous by both citizenship and region, even if

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[101] Stephen A. Borgatti, Martin G. Everett, and Jeffrey C. Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks* (SAGE: London, 2013): 5.
[102] Ibid, 273-274.

Table 2: EI indices for all four networks; *EI values calculated for symmetrized networks

Network type/EI Index	Expected (by citizenship)	Observed (by citizenship)	Expected (by region)	Observed (by region)
COM	0.529	0.527	-0.053	-0.011
COL*	0.529	0.561	-0.053	-0.098
SOC*	0.529	0.622	-0.053	0.162
ASP	0.529	0.556	-0.053	0.086

marginally so. For the region attribute, the observed positive EI value for SOC is a clear push towards more Arab/non-Arab socialization than what is mathematically expected. Interactions across the Arab/non-Arab region category are evidently less heterophilous than when considering citizenship, but this is likely the result of the drastic difference in the number of categories between the region and citizenship attributes i.e. 2 instead of 13. It is not possible to rule out the chance that factors of cultural affinity, such as a shared language or religion, may contribute to the greater presence of inter-group interactions based on region. But even if this were the case, EI indices for that attribute do not tend too far towards -1 to argue that regional origins are more determinative than just citizenship. Comparing indices across the four forms of interaction, we can clearly see that ethnicity does not play the fully segregating role we expect it to in the everyday lives of Sadeer's employees.

A similar picture emerges through the analysis of individuals' ego networks, but with much more nuance. In what follows, I describe the ego networks of three different Sadeer employees to more explicitly illustrate how individuals' realities consist of ethnically and socio-economically diverse interactions. Comparing their ego networks across the four interaction forms and paying attention to the variation in centrality these individuals possess within each of the four networks also demonstrates the variability of individual experiences, leading us to question the assumed rigidity of ethnic and class categories in themselves. Note that these nodes were chosen primarily because of the completeness of network data available in relation to them.

1. Rashid[103] is a Kuwaiti citizen and belongs to the top level of Sadeer's management. In his early forties, he speaks Arabic and lives with his family. He has lived in Kuwait and worked at Sadeer for over ten years. Professionally, he is what one may call a receiver of work-related

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[103] All individuals, respondents and non-respondents, have been anonymized in order to ensure confidentiality and prevent their direct identification to the largest extent possible.

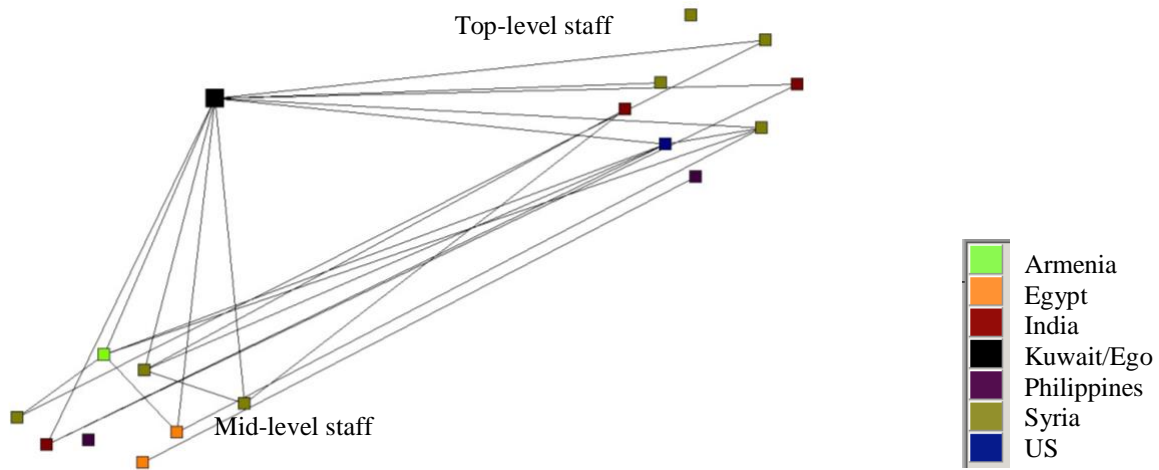Figure 6a: Rashid's (larger node) COL network by citizenship and hierarchy in firm

Figure 6b: Rashid's (larger node) SOC network by citizenship and hierarchy in firm
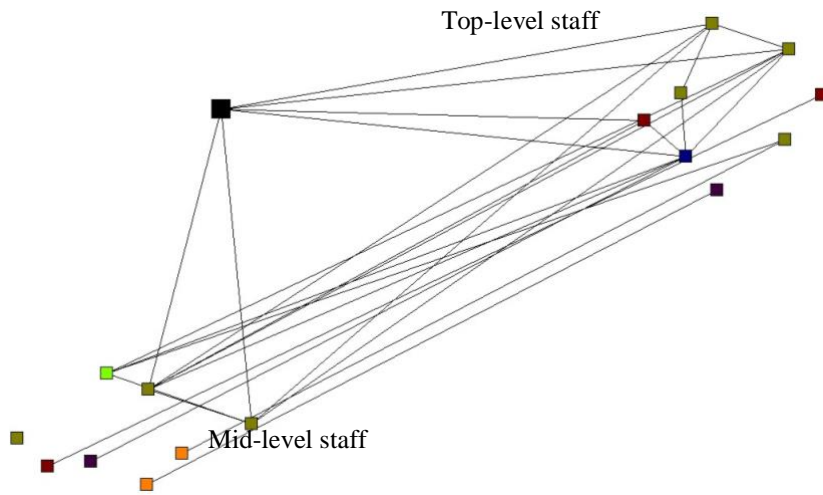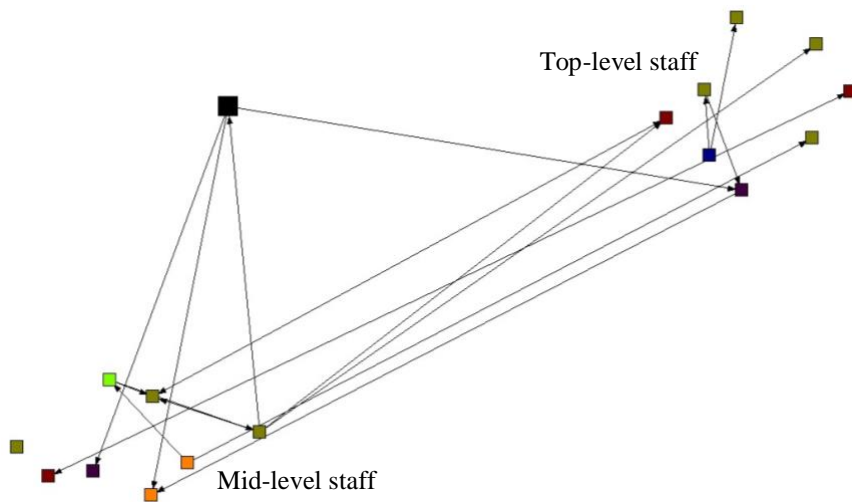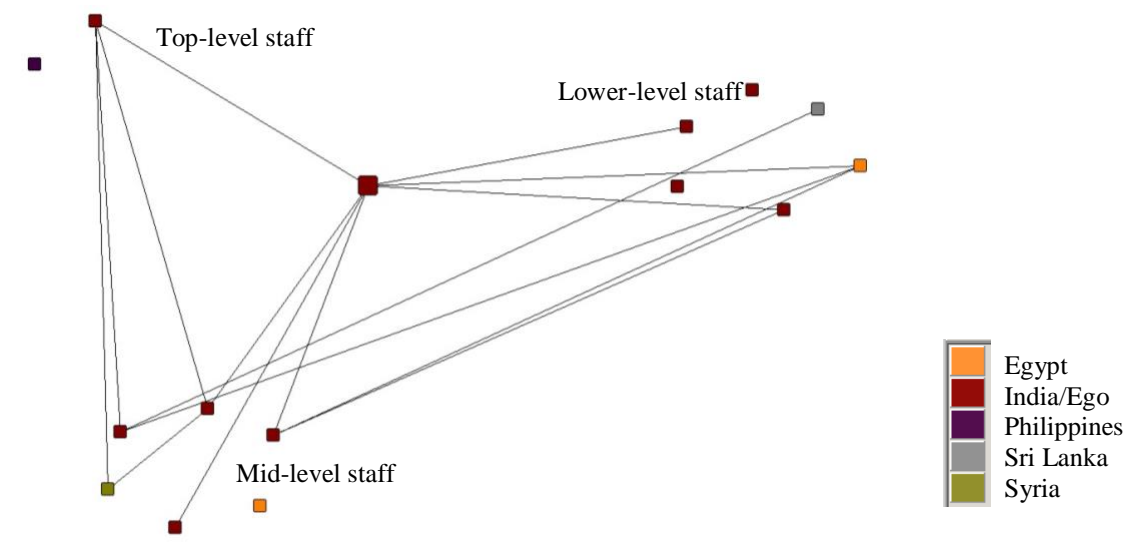

Figure 6c: Rashid's (larger node) ASP network by citizenship and hierarchy in

communication, having the highest number of incoming COM ties. In terms of the network of actual collaboration, Rashid also occupies a highly central position. He works directly with the largest number of individuals (degree centrality of 10), is the one person most other individuals have to go through if they wish to work with someone they have no direct contact with (highest COL betweenness)[104], and works directly with other Sadeer staff who are themselves highly collaborative (highest COL eigenvector).[105] Rashid's professional life, as seen in Figure 6a, involves interactions with individuals from both the top and middle levels of the organization. His interactions also cut across ethnic lines even though Syrians comprise a large subsection of his network. When it comes to informal non-work relations, however, his interactions are somewhat more constrained to those, like himself, in the organization's top management (Figure 6b). And while he still socializes with those who are in turn quite socially active in the SOC network (high SOC eigenvector), he is nowhere as relevant to connecting others socially as he is professionally (very low SOC betweenness). Most counterintuitively, despite his centrality to Sadeer's work life, as partial a view as we have, only one person—a mid-level Syrian employee who has been at the company for just a few years—indicates they would actually choose him to be on their team for a future project (Figure 6c).

2. Afzal is an Indian project engineer (mid-level staff) in his mid-20s. He has worked at Sadeer for between four and six years. Born in India, he now resides with his family in Kuwait, speaks Arabic, and celebrates Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha with friends within the country's

Figure 7a: Afzal's (larger node) COL network by citizenship and hierarchy in the firm

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[104] Borgatti et al. 174-175.
[105] Ibid, 168-169.

Figure 7b: Afzal's (larger node) SOC network by citizenship and hierarchy in the firm
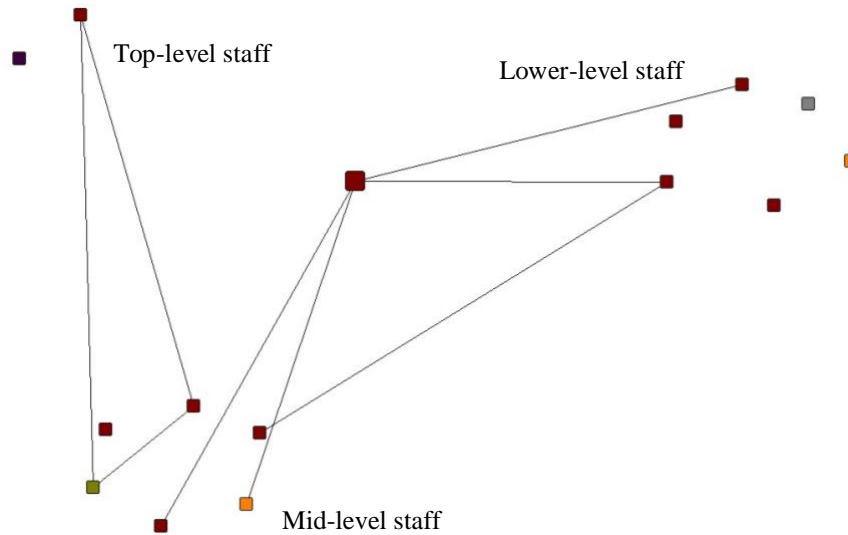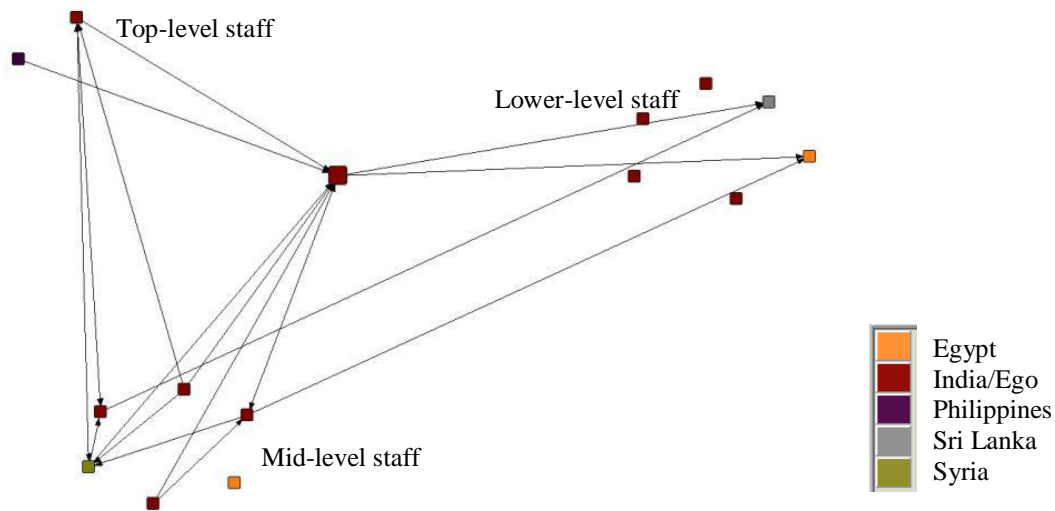
Top-level staff

Lower-level staff

Mid-level staff

Figure 7c: Afzal's (larger node) ASP network by citizenship and hierarchy in the firm

Top-level staff

Lower-level staff

Mid-level staff

■	Egypt
■	India/Ego
■	Philippines
■	Sri Lanka
■	Syria

Indian community. When it comes to professional ties, he is well connected in terms of actual collaboration (relatively high COL degree centrality) and is also the most likely to be a channel for the flow of work-related communication (high COM betweenness). He collaborates, again unremarkably, with individuals from across the company's hierarchy (Figure 7a). His social interactions are primarily with mid and lower level staff. They are, however, also comparatively sparse (Figure 7b). Yet, Afzal's location in the SOC network allows him to play the role of a boundary spanner (high betweenness, low degree) i.e. a good contact for someone else to connect with employees outside their direct social group. He is also one of two people with the highest number of individuals indicating that they would choose him to be on their project team if they could (Figure 7c). These incoming ASP ties are indicated by those from both the mid and

top-levels of the organization. Overall, despite the dominance of other Indian citizens in his professional and social relations, Afzal's everyday interactions too cut across ethnic lines.

3. Hamad is a 30-year-old mid-level architect with Syrian citizenship. He has lived and worked in Kuwait for between four and six years but claims to not participate in any cultural activities with his co-nationals in the country. Within the COL network, he is someone other individuals can go through if they wish to work with a person they have no direct contact with (high betweenness). To a relatively high extent, he also works directly with other Sadeer staff who are themselves highly collaborative (high COL eigenvector). Moreover, in the SOC network (Figure 8b), Hamad is what can be called a high-level-leader. He is a good connector between different parts of the socialization network (high betweenness) and is himself connected to other socially popular staff (high eigenvector). He is the other individual most frequently named by respondents to be someone they would like to work with. Most of his COM (Figure 8a) and ASP (Figure 8c) ties are with staff at the same hierarchy as himself, however he socializes somewhat more with top-level staff. In terms of ethnicity, Hamad's interactions, like Afzal's, are dominated by one noncitizen group (namely Indians), but they are obviously--in strictly categorical terms-- quite distinct from himself.

Undoubtedly, the above analyses, whether at the whole- or at the ego- network levels, could have been enhanced through the use of more traditional ethnographic methods such as interviews and on-site observations. These would have enabled an interrogation of the exact nature of professional and social ties between individuals. Nonetheless, the existence of relationships that defy neat ethnic and class categorizations, expected by a reading of the current Gulf migration scholarship, is in itself a challenge to the claim that *kafala* and ethnocracy are the overwhelming determinants of everyone's everyday lives in the region. Through the use of various SNA tools, the foregoing pages lay out the fact that the interactions occurring in Sadeer's social world, and the relationships that they constitute, are not boxed in by either ethnicity or class. Importantly, while their lives outside the workplace may or may not revolve around relationships within the same socio-economic and ethnic group as themselves, Sadeer's employees, by their very behavior, refute the absoluteness of ethnic or class-based divisions. At least they do so within the social world under study.

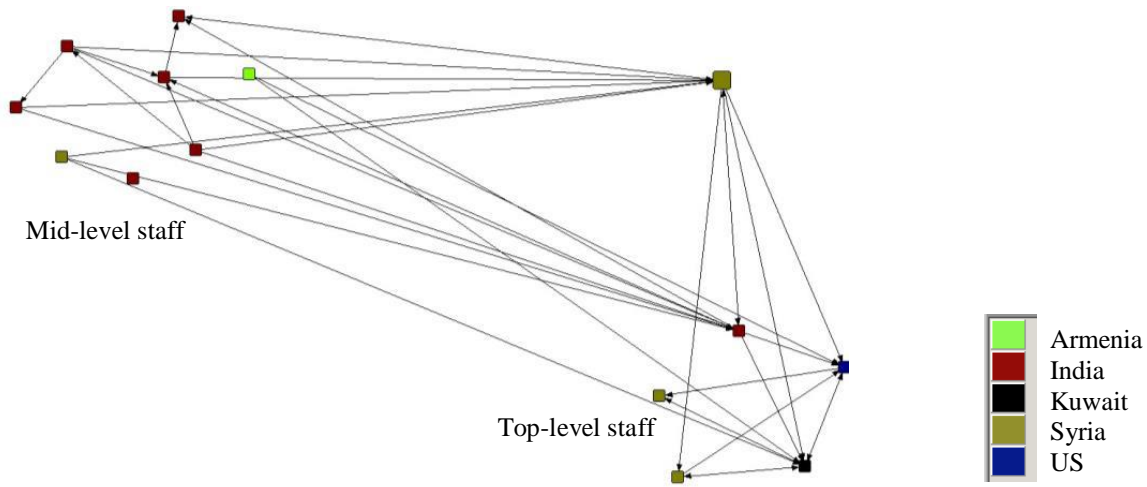Figure 8a: Hamad's (larger node) COM network by citizenship and hierarchy in the firm

Mid-level staff

Top-level staff

	Armenia
	India
	Kuwait
	Syria
	US

Figure 8b: Hamad's (larger node) SOC network by citizenship and hierarchy in the firm

Mid-level staff

Top-level staff
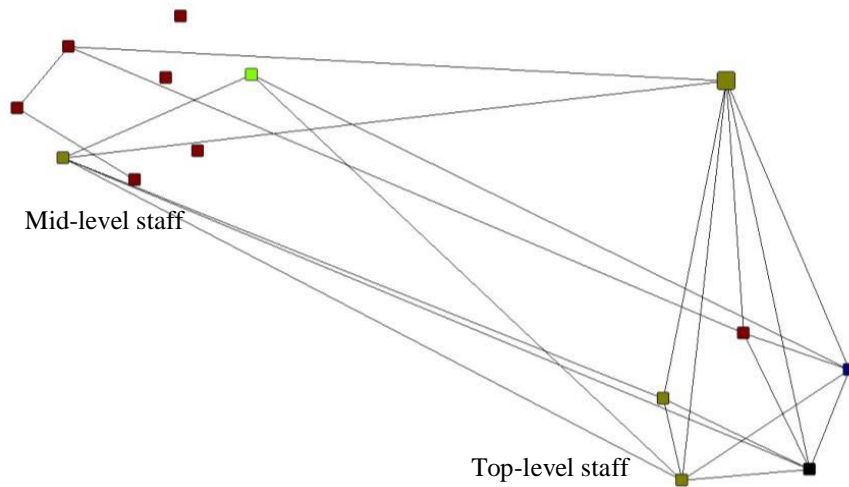
Figure 8c: Hamad's (larger node) ASP network by citizenship and hierarchy in the firm

Mid-level staff

Top-level staff
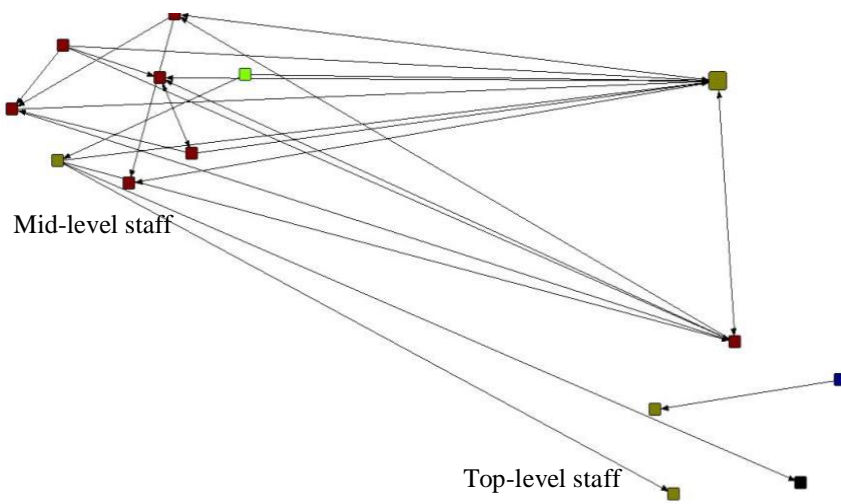
Importantly, in doing so, they are far from excluded or left out of the company's social world. Rather they play a part in making it, be it in a manner that allows for differential forms of inclusion for each individual, contingent upon his or her identity and position within the web of social relations. None of this is meant to imply that the existing scholarship on ethnicity and class in the GCC, and how the two are intertwined at the macrosocial level through the structural forces of *kafala* and ethnocracy, is wrong or lacks rigor. The point is instead that, given the significant variation in individuals' social positions and everyday interactions, the relevance of ethnicity and class must be first observed, rather than deduced, for each differing (not isolated) social world.

Still, if individuals' interactions are highly variable across the myriad social worlds they occupy and move across, and if they are the irreducible units of social analysis, then there is a more far-reaching consequence for how we think of categorical attributes such as ethnicity and class in themselves. This is that they are far from being as contextually and temporally rigid, well-defined, and operatively (not functionally) autonomous as often assumed. The identities of a middle class Syrian project engineer and of a more economically privileged Indian project manager are fixed only to the extent designated on official government and corporate paper. Their content i.e. how they are performed, perceived, and made relevant, is continually shaped by individuals' interactions with one another. Beyond her citizenship papers and given the historical migratory pull of the country, what makes a Kuwaiti a Kuwaiti? In the case of Sadeer, how do staff define their Indian-ness or their Arab-ness in relation to one another?

The research questions that drove this project were: How do employees' nationalities affect how they communicate and collaborate with one another and whether or not they develop friendships with their colleagues? To what extent are workplace interactions shaped by macro-level forces of *kafala* and ethnocracy versus micro-level particularities? To use the preceding analysis to say that citizenship and class have no effect would be both reckless and a disservice to the relational approach adopted herein. That identity categories meant to circumscribe social life do not wholly do so, does not mean they are irrelevant in their entirety. Instead, from a relational viewpoint, one must inquire into these identities' constant refashioning by how their bearers perceive, enact, accept, reject or reshape them through their everyday interactions. The more appropriate question raised, but incapable of being answered by the scope of the current project, is: How are individuals' subjective understandings of citizenship and national belonging

shaped by their everyday professional and social interactions in the workplace? Between identity categories and social relations, it is of course a two-way street. But placing the latter as analytically prior, as attempted in this study, is essential if we are to move beyond narratives of exclusion in speaking of Gulf societies; complicate our analyses beyond the reifying tendencies of *kafala* and ethnocracy; and de-territorialize not only Gulf migrants' movements and experiences but their identities as well.

VI. Conclusion

Media, human rights, and even scholarly discourses about the experiences of noncitizens living and working in the GCC rely overwhelmingly on narratives of socio-political exclusion and economic exploitation. The central emphasis on ethnocracy and the sponsorship system often obscures the multifaceted nature of Gulf residents' everyday interactions with one another, interactions which go beyond the segmenting effects of ethnically-motivated citizenship and migration policies. Building off of existing Gulf migration literature and through a network analysis of relationships among employees at a Kuwaiti construction company, I have attempted to paint a richer picture of how individuals from ostensibly oppositional ethnic and class backgrounds relate to one another through non-exploitative interactions in spaces that are differentially inclusive, rather than exclusive In doing so, I present a challenge to the uniform centering of the conapts of *kafala* and ethnocracy in most analyses of Gulf migration experiences, whether aimed at a scholarly or a general audience.

This does not mean that I deny the prevalence of ethnic and class-based discrimination and exploitation, either at a systemic or interpersonal level, in Kuwait or the wider GCC. Doing so would be a rejection of my own lived experiences. Instead, my objective has been to illuminate a more complex picture of Gulf residents' lives, one that does not condemn individuals or groups to the actions, beliefs, and preferences neatly assigned to them by the state and by state-centric scholarship. It has been to show that exclusion and exploitation are only a part of the story.

In terms of methodology, the case study demonstrates the utility of network analysis in augmenting ethnographic studies of Gulf societies generally and of inter-ethnic experiences in the region more specifically, laying the groundwork for more extensive future research. The insightfulness of future studies can be improved in any of the following ways. A mixed-methods approach, especially one which incorporates traditional ethnographic data collection tools such

as interviews and observations, would help provide the qualitative richness missing from the sole use of survey-based SNA. A comparative study that looks at the social worlds of two or more similar workplaces would help isolate organizational particularities in how employees interact. With more complete survey and attribute data, one would also be able to better analyze the overlap across forms of interactions and determine their role in shaping relationship trajectories.

SNA can help empirically visualize anthropologically grounded relationships of power and how they operate at the micro, everyday level, taking diagnoses of historical and socio-political structures beyond the abstract to the policy-accessible. From a policy perspective, by challenging the rigidity of citizenship in popular and state narratives and highlighting the essential diversity of social relations in these societies, the approach can contribute to a fundamental shift in the narrative about migration to the Gulf. Using SNA to understand the functioning of the Kuwaiti or GCC workplace can highlight the potential for tapping into the vast noncitizen population as a long-term driver of economic and social growth, not merely as a demographic burden. It can also help starkly illustrate the limitations and costs, both economic and socio-cultural, of migration policies that aim for a drastic reduction in the region's noncitizen population.

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Appendix: Respondents' aggregate attribute data

Gender:
- Male: 19
- Female: 10

Age:
- Range: 20-68 years
- Median: 37 years

Nationalities:
- Armenia: 1
- United States: 1
- Kuwait: 1
- Egypt: 3
- Philippines: 5
- Syrian Arab Republic: 6
- India: 12

Places of birth:
- Saudi Arabia: 1
- Kuwait: 3
- Egypt: 1
- Philippines: 5
- Syrian Arab Republic: 7
- India: 12

Region (One non-Arab citizen coded as Arab due to naturalization to non-Arab citizenship):
- Arab: 11
- Non-Arab: 18

Hierarchy:
- Top-level: 9
- Mid-level: 20
- Lower-level: 0

Length of residence in Kuwait:
- Less than 1 year: 1
- Between 1 and 3 years: 2
- Between 4 and 6 years: 5
- Between 7 and 10 years: 4
- More than 10 years: 17

Whether the respondent participates in cultural activities outside of work:
- Yes: 13
- No: 14
- N/A: 2

Whether the respondent lives with his/her family or not:
- Yes: 26
- No: 2
- N/A: 1

Whether he/she speaks Arabic:
- Yes: 19
- No: 10

Length of tenure at Sadeer:
- Less than 1 year: 2
- Between 1 and 3 years: 5
- Between 4 and 6 years: 6
- Between 7 and 10 years: 3
- More than 10 years: 13