

POLICY ADMINISTRATION AND POLITICAL RIGHTS: THE EXPERIENCES OF
HIGH-LEVEL WOMEN IN THE KUWAITI GOVERNMENT

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DEDICATION

To the soul of my father, because I wish I could see the delight in his eyes at this accomplishment. To my mother, to whom I wish good health and God's blessing.

To my wife, who was very patient and gave me full support, love, and encouragement to complete this work.

To my children, Mohammad Mahdi, Hussein, and Kawthar, for whom I wish peace, joy, and great futures.

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HANI A. ALSARRAF

ABSTRACT

Women in Kuwait were traditionally excluded from the formulation of public policy because they lacked political rights. In mid 2005, women received the right to vote and to run for office. There is little known today about the influence of these political rights on women who work with the implementation of public policies in the higher administrative levels of government. Little is known specifically about the influence of the franchise on promotion of women to high administrative posts. The purpose of this study is to lay a foundation for research on the factors that encourage women's access to high positions in government by exploring the experience of high-level women both before and after enfranchisement. The experiences of leading women who work for the public sector are critical to understanding any relationship between women's political rights and their access to high positions. The interpretation of female work experiences provides suggestions to help expand and enhance women's access

to high positions in public administration. This study employs the phenomenological method for data collection and interpretation. The findings of this study support the argument that political participation exerts a positive influence on high-level women in government. This study shows that Kuwaiti high-level women agree that they have started to experience a positive influence in their work since the franchise due to the new political power that they have gained. I argue that whether or not high-level women have personally experienced any positive change in their work due to gaining their political rights, they still affirm the occurrence of this positive change. This study finds that this positive influence is reflected in better representation in official meetings, more interactions with state leaders, an increasing ability to express concerns to top levels, and enhancing their self-confidence to lead. This study notes other significant factors that should be considered by women in order to enhance their numbers in leading positions of government: competency, communication, knowledge, and leadership. Based on these factors, three sets of recommendations are presented: for mid-level women in the public sector, for the Kuwaiti public administration, and for women's organizations in society.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preface

Kuwait is a Middle Eastern country well known for its distinguished constitutional monarchy system, democratic traditions, and developed civil society. However, one critical issue in terms of consistency with democracy and civil society is the condition of women in Kuwaiti society. While women have gained many basic rights in Kuwait, they still suffer from inequality, especially in public administration. Until the mid-2000s, women in Kuwait lacked the right to vote and to run for office. Some believe that the lack of political rights was one of the main factors preventing women from having equal opportunity with men in the government of Kuwait. The dearth of women in high positions in public administration is one of the Kuwaiti government's documented indicators of the inequality between men and women.

However, since women gained the right to vote and run for office in mid 2005, no attempt has been made to explore whether political enfranchisement has changed their work experiences in public administration, especially for women in top-level positions. This dissertation addresses that question. It is based on the presumption that work experiences of women in high positions could not only reveal the occurrence of any change, but could also provide suggestions about how to improve opportunities for more women to enter the administrative levels of government. A better understanding of this phenomenon in Kuwait requires a basic knowledge about this country. The focus of this study on the perceptions of women in public administration, in term of any change that they have observed as a result of gaining political rights, must be understood within the context of women's legal, professional, political, and educational conditions in Kuwait.

The following section introduces this dissertation by giving a background about the State of Kuwait. Some considerable parts of the history of Kuwait are presented with a concentration on the political system, bureaucracy, and political rights and participation. Special emphasis is placed on the conditions of women, especially in regard to their political rights, education, and status in the workforce and government within the context of this history. Providing the knowledge regarding these significant aspects will help to give a better understanding to the framework and the purpose of this study within its local context. After describing the Kuwaiti context, the following sections of this chapter set forth the general

statement of the problem, the research purpose, the research questions, the research significance, and terminologies.

1.2 Background

Around 1716, a group of families and tribes from the central Arabian Peninsula settled in a land that is located in the northwest of the Persian Gulf and was called Al-Qurain (Assiri, 1990). Kuwait was established as a political entity in 1756 when these settlers chose from among themselves a leader in order to govern the community. The political tasks of governing Kuwait were voluntarily left to one family, Al-Sabah, in a division of responsibilities between what has since become the ruling family and the merchant families (Rabi, 2000; Salem, 2007). While Sabah the First was the first ruler who came from the Al-Sabah, two other major families, Al-Khalifa and Al-Jalahema, were responsible for organizing trade and maritime affairs. This organization of the community represented a primitive form of government (Assiri, 1990) and the core of bureaucracy in Kuwait (Al-Khaldi, 1999).

A simple traditional assembly consisting of the ruler and a few other key individuals from the Al-Sabah and other merchant families was responsible for governing the state. Rabi (2000) noted that although the Al-Sabah's authority "was autocratic, decisions were made after consultation with senior families within the Kuwaiti community. Merchant families in particular were consulted" (p.152). Based on that, the Emir (prince), according to Salem (2007), "did not

have absolute power” (p.2), but the merchant class, according to Al-Mughni & Tetreault (2000), “enjoyed a nearly equal status with the ruling family” (p.238). The roots of political participation can be traced to the establishment of Kuwait through the influence that merchant families had on the ruler, who financially depended on them to provide the revenue for his rule. Ali (1989) asserted that some Kuwaiti leaders from merchant families had more authority than the ruler himself.

Traditionally, the ruler sat in his *Diwaniya*, which could be considered the office he uses to meet people and discuss the affairs of his country. The political participation of Kuwaiti men was very simple during this period as it consisted only of meeting the ruler to express an opinion or a problem. The tradition of using *Diwaniya* has been strongly attached to the sociopolitical life in Kuwait, so its meaning should be explained. The local meaning of *Diwaniya* literally refers to a place of assembly. *Diwaniya* is a special large room in any house where men can meet in the evening to talk informally about any subject that interests them (Ali, 1989; Rabi, 2000). Although it is not a rule, generally the *Diwaniya* of a politician would focus on political issues, while that of a merchant family would pay more attention to issues of economy and commerce, and so on. *Diwaniya* played a critical role in the history of Kuwait and still provides a means of expressing public opinion. The social traditions have attached the attendance of *Diwaniya* to men even though few active women have recently started to establish *Diwaniyas* that include both genders. The role of *Diwaniya* has helped

in preserving the social order and developing political participation in Kuwait (Salem, 2007).

The following three sections of this background provide more details on the historical condition of women in Kuwaiti society. As stated earlier, this dissertation focuses on the political rights and the condition of women in the political system and bureaucracy in Kuwait. Based on this point, the history of Kuwait could be divided into three major eras. The first era begins with the establishment of Kuwait as a political entity in 1756 until it received independence in 1961. The main characteristic that distinguishes this era in terms of the condition of women is that Kuwaiti women were almost silent regarding their rights and their role in the society.

The second era, which begins with independence in 1961 to the Iraqi invasion in 1990, witnessed considerable progress in the condition of women. Women had better opportunities to express themselves, especially in education and employment. The third era, which began with the liberation of Kuwait in 1991 to the present time, is marked by the active role of women to gain equal rights, especially political rights. Not only have women in this era engaged in the significant efforts to deal with their unequal conditions in Kuwait, but they also were able to acquire a major part of their demands, the right to vote and to run for office.

1.2.1 Absence Era (1756-1960)

During its first two hundred years, Kuwait functioned as a small port and trade center that connected trade between the east and the west. Kuwait's economy was based on fishing, pearling, boatbuilding, and sea trade with India, the Gulf coastal towns, and the eastern coast of Africa (Almusawi, 1993; Held, 1989; Peretz, 1983). While Kuwaiti women held a very minor role in political life, they played an important role in maintaining social order. In fact, Kuwaiti men spent an average of six months a year on ships, which made the role of women particularly significant in the community (Almusawi, 1993; AlSabah, 1989). However, their influence appears to have been largely relegated to their social role, according to Almusawi (1993), rather than Kuwait's economic or the political life, which was dominated by men (Rizzo, 2005; al-Mughni, 2001). The religious and traditional responsibility of men within the family was to provide financial support without any reciprocal obligation on women to do the same even if they received wages, emphasizing the power and responsibility of men within the society.

It seems that the simple life and politics in Kuwait continued for approximately 140 years, from its establishment as a political entity until 1896, when Mubarak the Great (1896-1915) took power. This was the first time in Kuwaiti history that a ruler took power by force and he was the first ruler from the Al-Sabah family to concentrate all power in his hands (Rabi, 2000). He signed a treaty with Great Britain in 1899 to protect Kuwait from internal and external

threats that could threaten his rule (Salem, 2007). After Mubarak's grandson Ahmed Al-Sabah (1921-1950), took power, the role that Mubarak gained for the ruler was no longer accepted by Kuwaitis. What could be seen by Russel (1989) as the founding agreement of Kuwait, which "established the principle that merchant families would remain outside politics" (p.30) was challenged by the call to establish a shared decision-making process by allowing more political participation in Kuwait.

In February 1921, merchants and nationalists argued for the ruler to establish a council that would participate in running the country (Assiri, 1990; Rabi, 2000). A council was established through a simple election that took a place in one of the merchant families' *Diwaniya* among a limited number of male merchants (Salem, 2007), but it did not exist for more than few months due to internal conflicts among its members (Ali, 1989). Another attempt to participate in decision making occurred during the 1930s when the same group of 1921 called for the creation of "a 'representative' system of government" (Assiri, 1990, 5).

Another assembly was elected in 1938 by a limited number of men with comprehensive executive and legislative powers (Al-Khaldi, 1999), but it could not continue because of its conflicting interests with the ruler and the British. One of the important accomplishments of this assembly was the establishment of what could be defined as an initial constitution for the country. This constitution asserted the notion of political participation by stating that "the people were the source of all authority, that they were represented by their elected deputies, [and] that the National Assembly alone had the right to produce legislation" (Salem,

2007, 3). Women were excluded from any participation in these two foundational political events by not being allowed to vote, to be candidates, or even to express their voice.

Ahmed Al-Sabah considered this popular need for political participation and responded with an attempt to create new public services and reform existing ones, especially in education, health, and city services. As a result, public schools in Kuwait were established and the Kuwait municipal council was created in 1931. Peak (1995) asserted that the British provided “advisers to help create and staff the beginning of a modern bureaucracy” (p.119) during the 1930s. While Assiri (1996) argued that “the history of instituting government departments traces its roots to the reign of Sheikh Mubarak al-Sabah, when the first department was founded (Customs Department) in 1899,” Alomar (1996) stressed that the municipal council was the first modern unit of bureaucracy in Kuwait. Nevertheless, neither governmental units represented a modern structure of bureaucracy, but a merely simple authority in the hands of a few men who were assigned by the ruler to manage a specific task.

In fact, the most important point in the context of this development that directly influenced women in Kuwait was the establishment of the first public school for girls in 1938 (Almusawi, 1993). Not only did this public school offer the opportunity for women to improve their educational status, but it also marked the first step for women to enter the public sector when the first Kuwaiti woman was employed in this school to teach. It should be mentioned that oil was discovered in Kuwait in 1936, but the first shipment was not exported until 1946, after World

War II. This discovery brought rapid development to the country by the oil large revenues (Held, 1989; Rizzo, 2005).

Ahmed Al-Sabah was succeeded by his cousin Abdullah Alsalim Al-Sabah (1950-65). The beginning of this era is marked by the growth of several new public agencies, which increased the complexity of the political and bureaucratic systems in Kuwait. According to Peretz (1983), Abdullah Al-Sabah “undertook major public works and economic development programs” (p.488). In fact, this effort was a part of the ruler’s decision during the 1950s to use the large oil revenues to build a modern structure of administration that could provide welfare for all the citizens of Kuwait. The founding of the modern structure of public administration in Kuwait is traced to the establishment of the Construction Council in 1952 to manage developmental plans and the Supreme Executive Committee that was established in 1954 to organize the growing body of government (Assiri, 1996). These executive units were assigned to major figures from the ruling family and few others from the merchant families in Kuwait; women were excluded from any role.

The major projects during the 1950s entailed “institutions and authorities to handle the requirements and demands of the people and to carry out the services that cope with the increasing governmental burdens and obligations” (Assiri, 1996, 27). The government started to widely employ citizens in the public sector (Al-Enzi, 2002; Al-Fraih, 1993). The opportunities that were made by the government encouraged most citizens, mainly men, to work for the public sector (Russell, 1989). This action by the government led to the expansion of the public

sector in Kuwait and the concentration of the national workforce in this sector (Al-Fraih, 1993). In fact, the male national workforce totally dominated the employment of citizens in the public sector during the 1950s.

1.2.2 Progressive Era (1961-1990)

The treaty of 1899 with Great Britain to protect Kuwait was peacefully cancelled in 1961 and replaced by an agreement between Britain and the ruler of Kuwait to maintain distinguished relationships between the two countries (Ali, 1989). After the declaration of its independence from Britain, the government of Kuwait was willing to establish an institutional identity. Drafting a constitution was one of the major steps that the Kuwaiti government took towards the establishment of a modern political system. The constitution not only established the modern political system in Kuwait but it also created its bureaucratic system.

The notion of redistributing oil revenues through public jobs, based on the experience of the 1950s, was an influential idea when the constitution was formulated in 1962 by the elected constituent assembly. The right to employment is one of the rights granted to Kuwaiti citizens in the constitution regardless gender. Article No. 41 states that “Every Kuwaiti has the right to work and to choose the type of his work... [and t]he state shall endeavor to make it available to citizens and to make its terms equitable.” The traditional understanding of how government “shall endeavor” makes it clear that it is the duty of government to offer every citizen a job in the public sector. The public sector in Kuwait ultimately

employed more than 94% of the national workforce by the end of the last century, according to Salamah and Alanezi (1999). A small portion of the foreign workforce occupied some positions in the public sector, but they are mainly concentrated in the private sector in Kuwait.

The constitution is the main means of organizing the political system and its practices in Kuwait. The constitution states the rights of citizens and organizes the relationship among three separate but cooperative powers within the government of the State of Kuwait. The constitution defines Kuwait as a “hereditary Amirate” with a significant power allocated to the Emir, the head of the government (Assiri, 1996). However, the legislative branch was also given constitutional powers to seriously challenge the power of the Emir. In addition, the constitution maintains the right of its citizens to have political participation, which has deep roots in the political traditions in Kuwait.

In terms of the structure of public administration, the Kuwaiti government, according to Assiri (1996), consists of the traditional three branches under a democratic system, in which “sovereignty resides in the people, the source of all powers.” The legislative branch, the National Assembly, has only one house of representatives. The parliament consists of fifty members who are elected directly by the citizens to serve four-year terms. In addition, the parliament includes the cabinet members, who are considered members of the parliament. The parliament plays a significant role in decision making and public policy. It has constitutional powers to initiate legislation, to question ministers, and to declare lack of confidence in any minister, including the prime minister.

The executive branch, at the top of the Kuwaiti bureaucracy, consists of a cabinet headed by a prime minister, with no more than 15 ministers. The Emir has the right to appoint the prime minister, who should choose some of the cabinet members from the parliament. Practically, the Emir does not practice his “authorities in a direct fashion” (Assiri, 1996, 40) to shape public policy, but works “through his prime minister and cabinet ministers” (Rabi, 2000, 152). Besides the cabinet, there are a number of autonomous public agencies that are politically connected to several cabinet members. The heads of these autonomous public agencies are assigned by a recommendation from the cabinet and an approval by the Emir.

The hierarchy in each ministry consists of a minister, deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, general manager, and so forth. Depending on the size of each ministry, there are usually between nine to twelve ranks in the hierarchy from the top to the lowest-level positions (at least a high school diploma is required to hold a position at the bottom). These ranks are sorted within three main groups: leadership positions, supervisory positions, and general (clerical) positions. All the individuals who are assigned to hold the leadership positions should be approved by the Emir. Practically, individuals who hold the positions of deputy minister and assistant deputy minister stay in office for a long time without any term limits, with the exception of retirement.

With respect to political rights, the constitution, which was formulated by men, states that every citizen (including women) has equal political rights. However, the application of this constitutional article through the election law No.

35/1962 gave the right to vote and to run for office exclusively to male citizens (Ali, 1989; Al-Mughni & Tetreault, 2000; Al-Mughni, 2005; Raby, 2000; Rizzo, 2005). Thus, women did not participate in public policy formulation because they were not eligible to be elected or to vote for representatives who make public policy. Moreover, women were excluded from holding high positions in public administration, especially as ministers, because ministers have to maintain the same requirements that the electorate should have.

This inequality in political rights was not the only inequity between men and women in Kuwait. Alessa (1981) and Alsabah (1989) noted that other religious and cultural forces discouraged and sometime prevented women from working and restricted their educational opportunities. Based on this, the portion of men, that was mainly employed in government during the 1960s, represented more than 93 percent of the total population of the national workforce in Kuwait. However, civil and professional women's associations were established during this decade to provide services or to represent women's demands and wishes. Rizzo (2005) pointed out that efforts of these associations helped women to gain better educational, legal, and social conditions but not political rights.

As a result of the civil associations' efforts, besides the natural development and modernization (Tetreault, 2001; Shah, 1995; Shelash, 1985), women had better and more opportunities to continue their education and to receive advanced degrees during the 1970s (Rizzo, 2005; al-Mughni, 2001). This progress started earlier when "women's access to education began in the 1960s and has since provided Kuwaiti women with opportunities that have enabled

them to become financially independent and pursue diverse careers” (Al-Mughni, 2005, 133).

Table (1): Educational Level of Kuwaiti Female Workforce (percentages) 1965-1995

Educational Level	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1989	1993	1995
Illiterate/no Formal Education	65.6	30.8	13.3	8.3	5.8	2.7	3.0	1.0
High School and Higher	16.7	46.0	58.7	65.2	60.0	72.8	71.6	80.4

Source: Shah (1995) and Annual Statistical Abstracts, Ministry of Planning, State of Kuwait.

Table (1) shows the educational development of the national female workforce since the mid 1960s. The table illustrates that the percentage of women in the national workforce, mainly in the government, who have a low educational level has rapidly decreased from 65.6 percent of the female workforce in 1965 to one percent in 1995. On the other hand, the percentage of women with higher educational levels has been increased in the national workforce from 16.7 percent in 1965 to 80.4 percent in 1995. In other words, while the majority of women in the workforce were illiterate or had no formal education during the 1960s, this majority shifted to women with high school diplomas and advanced degrees by the mid 1990s.

This educational improvement in the status of women can be seen more clearly by comparing them to the educational status of men in Kuwait. Table (2) shows a comparison between the educational status of Kuwaiti women and men within the last 20 years (1985-2006). The table clearly indicates that the number of women who have received university and postgraduate degrees has rapidly increased and exceeded the number of men with the same educational level during the last twenty years. The percentages of women who have received

university and postgraduate degrees among the general population have also increased. The same could be noted about Kuwaiti women who have a college degree in comparison to men. While only 15.2 percent of the total national population of men had college or university degree in 2006, 21.7 percent of Kuwaiti women held the same level of education. These facts are a general indication that women in Kuwait are well educated and that they have a better educational status than men.

Table (2): Educational Status of National Population Distributed by Gender 1985-2006. (percentages by gender)

Educational status	Gender	1985	1988	1995	1998	2001	2003	2006
Persons with above High School & Below University Degree	Men	6,993	9,555	11,834	17,162	19,888	21,659	24,695
	Women	7,583	12,537	11,623	19,006	22,903	25,921	33,191
Percentage of Persons above High School & Below University Degree	Men	4.4	5.0	5.4	6.4	6.8	6.9	7.0
	Women	4.9	6.5	5.1	6.8	7.4	7.8	8.7
Persons with University and Post-Graduate Degree	Men	10,489	14,427	21,921	20,862	24,461	26,892	29,045
	Women	7,428	10,752	19,591	27,445	35,858	42,383	49,387
Percentage of Persons with University and Post-Graduate Degree	Men	6.6	7.5	10.0	7.8	8.3	8.5	8.2
	Women	4.8	5.6	8.7	9.8	11.6	12.6	13.0

Source: Annual Statistical Abstracts, Ministry of Planning, State of Kuwait. Calculations were made by the researcher.

The opportunity for women to continue their education allowed them to compete with men in the limited governmental job market. While only around 1,000 women held jobs in the public sector in 1965, this number increased to 7,292 women in 1975, according to Salamah and Alanezi (1999). This means that the number of females in the workforce increased by a factor of seven within only ten years. It should be mentioned that labor laws in Kuwait ensure women

receive equal payment with their male counterparts. According to Al-Mughni (2005), “a woman who performs the same work as a man must be paid equal remuneration” (p.133).

However, most women worked in clerical jobs in the public sector and few of them held high positions in public administration during this decade (Almusawi, 1993). Alsabab (1989), Almusawi (1993), and Shah and Al-Qudsi (1990) pointed out that women continued to be concentrated in the ministries and public agencies related to traditional female responsibilities, specifically education, health, and social affairs during this period. This situation continued through the 1980s, although with larger number of women joining the public sector in Kuwait. Professional and well-educated women were able to find new opportunities for jobs in the government.

Table (3) shows the development in the number of women in the national workforce in Kuwait over the last twenty years. Obviously, if one considers that the public sector employs 96-97 percent of the total national female workforce (Alsabab, 1989; Shah & Al-Qudsi 1990; Shah, 1995), it could be inferred that the number of women employed in the public sector represents almost the entire female workforce. Al-Mughni (2005) made it clear that the percentage of women in the workforce reached 40 percent “with the majority of the increased number of female employees filling positions within the public sector” (p.133).

Table (3): The Development in the Number of Employed Kuwaiti Women and Their Percentage of the National Workforce and the Total Female Population

Year	Number of Employed Kuwaiti Women	Percentage of Kuwaiti Female Workforce to the total National Workforce	Percentage of Employed Kuwaiti Women to the total National Female Population
1985	24,333	25.4	10.6
1995	41,416	28.0	13.0
1997	66,305	33.3	17.3
1998	72,571	34.3	18.2
2001	84,443	35.4	19.4
2002	92,817	35.9	20.6
2003	98,596	36.1	21.2
2004	105,960	36.4	22.0
2005	119,553	38.2	24.1
2006	133,235	39.7	25.9

Source: Annual Statistical Abstracts, Ministry of Planning, State of Kuwait. Calculations were made by the researcher.

There are some indicators that should be observed by giving more attention to the increasing numbers in this table. Table (3) indicates that the number of Kuwaiti women who participate in the workforce rapidly increased from 24,000 in 1985 to 133,000 in 2006. This table also shows that the percentage of Kuwaiti women in the national workforce, mainly in the government, represented almost 40 percent of the total national workforce in Kuwait in 2006. In addition, it shows that while only 10 percent of total Kuwaiti women participated in the workforce by the mid 1980s, their portion of the total female national population increased to more than 25 percent in 2006. This means that the portion of women who work increased in both the national workforce and among the total number of Kuwaiti women.

While significant progress occurred for women in terms of education and employment, not much advancement occurred regarding the status of their political participation. A single attempt made by men to give women their political rights happened in the beginning of the 1980s. According to Tetreault (2001),

“[t]he 1981 parliament rejected a proposal to enfranchise Kuwaiti women” (p.213). This attempt to give women their political rights was supported by few representatives, and its rejection in parliament did not provoke women to take any further action.

1.2.3 Activist Era (1991-present)

As a consequence of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the workforce structure changed due to changes in the population (Looney, 1994). According to Russell and Al-Ramadhan (1994), around 1.3 million people or 60 percent of the total population, with a considerable portion of foreigners, left Kuwait as a result of the invasion. Thousands of the foreigners who left Kuwait did not return or were not allowed to do so. Kuwaiti citizens, especially females, filled many jobs that were occupied by foreigners before the invasion. While the portion of women in the national workforce was 19.9 percent in the mid 1980s, their share increased to 32.5 percent during the 1990s (Salamah & Alanezi, 1999), mainly in the public sector (Shah, 1995).

This increase and concentration of women in the public sector put additional pressure on the government to allow women to hold high administrative positions. Al-Mughni and Tetreault (2000) pointed out that during the 1990s, “many women have succeeded at traditionally male-dominated jobs” (p.253). Thus, the doors were opened during the 1990s for more women to be administrators in the public sector. Although the number was limited, women

started to hold high positions in public administration. Kuwaiti women witnessed changes in their position in the government by assigning female administrators for new high positions that were restricted on men. Women have become deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, ambassadors, and a president of Kuwait University, the only university in Kuwait at that time.

Not only the position of women in public administration changed during the 1990s, but their political interest also evolved to active participation. In fact, the roles that many women held during the Iraqi invasion, especially their participation in the civil and armed resistance to the invasion, offered them another opportunity to express their voice and to call for equal political rights. Although, “[w]omen’s suffrage had been a demand of reformers since the 1960s” (Salem, 2007, 7), their active demand for political rights did not start to be effective until the 1990s. Al-Mughni (2005) described the efforts of women during this decade to gain their political rights:

Kuwaiti women have used every opportunity to bring their demands for political rights to the attention of the National Assembly. They have organized and held public demonstrations to protest against gender discrimination and have marched to the polling station to protest their lack of equal political rights during parliamentary elections. (p.135)

Unfortunately, the influence of these serious efforts was not enough to push the government to expand women’s political rights. In fact, the highest expectation of women during this period was to have the right to vote, even if their right to run for office was strongly opposed by some political groups for religious reasons (al-Mughni, 2001; Rizzo, Meyer, & Ali, 2002). It should be made

clear that not all women and their organizations were supportive of women's political rights (Rizzo et al., 2002). Kuwaiti women were divided between a group that supports women's political rights, a group that opposes it, and a third group that does not care about this matter (Rizzo et al., 2002). Even the group that supported the political rights of women did not define their political rights in the same way. According to Katulis (2005), some Kuwaiti women believe that women can vote but should not run for office or hold any leading position in the government. However, it is hard to argue which group represented the majority of women since no accurate polls were held to evaluate the position of women on this issue.

What is important about the role of women in this decade is the increasing political participation that they practiced. The National Democratic Forum, an activist political group, was established in 1997 to support liberal perspectives in public policy. Women were a main part of its founding members, and two of them were elected to its executive board (Al-Mughni & Tetreault, 2000). Prior to this time, women rarely participated in any political events or debates that occurred in Kuwait. For instance, the ruling family faced serious political instability when the political participation of men was eliminated in the second half of the 1980s due to the absence of the parliament. Thousands of citizens held general meetings in major *Diwanias* to protest the regime (Rabi, 2000). As a reflection of the limitation on political participation, some activists suggested that "the status of the royal family should be reduced to that of a constitutional monarchy, as in Britain" (Rabi, 2000, 156). Although this political event was a key point in the

history of Kuwait, women did not play a role in the calls to maintain the political participation of citizens. Women did not seem to express any support of the efforts of men to protest restrictions on their basic political rights.

Another example reflects how the government did not allow Kuwaiti women to engage in any political participation. During the invasion, the government of Kuwait called for a conference in Saudi Arabia in October 1990 to legitimize the rule of Al-Sabah and to show the unity of the citizens of Kuwait with their government. While the invitations were sent to influential members of the ruling family and around one thousand leading Kuwaiti men (Rabi, 2000; Salem, 2007), the women of Kuwait were excluded from participating in this conference. These two examples show that neither the government nor women themselves considered women's political participation in political life prior to the liberation of Kuwait.

By the end of the 1990s, the Emir of Kuwait supported a legislative draft that gave women equal political rights with men. Al-Mughni (2005) noted that "in May 1999, during an interregnum between parliaments, the Emir promulgated a decree granting women the right to run for office and to vote in parliamentary and municipal elections" (p.134). Unfortunately, the legislative draft did not pass in the parliament although it received support by almost half of its representatives (Alawadhi, 2006; Rizzo, 2005). In 2000, another attempt was made by a group of women to challenge inequities in political participation. According to Rizzo et al. (2002), "the Constitutional Court rejected four cases that challenged the constitutionality of the ban on women voting in the election law" (p.643). In 2003,

the prime minister passed a bill to the National Assembly that granted women the right to run and to vote only in municipal council elections, but the bill was also rejected in the parliament (Al-Mughni, 2005). However, women continued their efforts and political pressure to receive the franchise.

In 2005, a new legislative draft passed that gave women their political rights. The cabinet appointed two women to the Kuwait Municipal Council, which consists of ten elected and six assigned members. A few months later, the prime minister appointed a woman as a minister in the cabinet, making her the first woman in the history of Kuwait to hold such a high administrative position. The 2006 elections for the new parliament did not bring any women to the office, but two women joined the cabinet (Salem, 2007).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Based on the historical presentation of the status of women in education and employment, the problem in this study should be determined by focusing on the current conditions of women in these two fields. It is clear that, educationally, Kuwaiti women are better qualified than their male counterparts. This fact is based on indicators that show Kuwaiti women have better educational outcomes than men in terms of their numbers. For instance, the number of registered Kuwaiti students in Kuwait University, which is the largest and the most prestigious school in Kuwait, for the first semester of the 2005-06 academic year was 17,756. Female students represent 69 percentage of this number (12,306).

The number of Kuwaiti students who graduated from Kuwait University in the same academic year was 2,644, including 1,906 female students (72%). In the College of Graduate Studies at Kuwait University, the number of Kuwaiti students for the same academic year was 629; 68 percent (429) were female.

Not only do Kuwaiti women perform better in education, but they also have a higher rate of employment in the public sector as well. According to recent records about the number of women in the national workforce, women (96-97% in government) represent 40 percent of the total number of the national workforce, which was 322,754, in 2006. If one excludes the estimated 30,000 men who work for the armed forces, a sector in which women are not allowed to work, and men who work for the private sector, the percentage of Kuwaiti women in the public sector jumps to around 50 percent of the total civil servants in Kuwait.

However, women do not have equal status with men in public administration (Aljaweir, 2002). Although women have almost similar access to different professions and training opportunities, their ability to hold high positions in public administration is very limited (Almusawi, 1993). One indicator of this imbalance condition of women in public administration is the number of women who hold high positions in comparison to the number of men. According to the Ministry of Planning, only 20 women held "leading positions in government" out of 344 leading positions in 2004, which represents less than six percent. This situation indicates that there is probably a "glass ceiling" that prevents Kuwaiti women from reaching high positions in public administration. Recently, a few

women attained high positions in the government of Kuwait. However, it is still unknown whether or not this is a change caused by the political rights women have gained since 2005.

Traditionally, it is believed in Kuwait that a considerable cause of this problem was connected to the lack of women's political rights. There is a significant, implicit or explicit, assumption that the lack of women's political rights weakened their role in public administration (Aljaweir, 2002; Almusawi, 1993). Women were not able to reach top administrative levels in government because they did not have the political rights to help them to be legally eligible to hold some high positions or to be politically considered by elected policy makers. Alawadhi (2006) clearly argued that the lack of women's political rights in Kuwait weakened their ability to hold high positions in government. She emphasized the problem of under-representation of women in the top levels of government. Alawadhi (2006) even criticized the limited number of high positions that some women hold because they were offered these administrative positions in the less important ministries in the government of Kuwait. Based on this presentation to the statement of the problem, this study is based on the following main assumptions:

- Women in Kuwait are educationally better qualified than men;
- The national female workforce in Kuwait represents almost half of all civil servants, and women workers are highly concentrated in the public sector;

- Women in Kuwait do not have equal opportunities with men;
- Kuwaiti women's opportunity to hold high positions in public administration is limited (glass ceiling);
- Some women have started to be assigned high administrative positions since women received their political rights.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

There is not much known about the role of women in public administration in Kuwait. The connection between the status of women in public administration and their political rights can be inferred from the lack of women in high positions in government in the era before they gained political rights. However, the issue of whether women perceive changes in their working lives in government after the franchise has never been studied in Kuwait. Therefore, since women only recently [2005] received their political rights, now is a great opportunity to explore how women perceive the change in their work experience in government after the franchise, especially those occupying high positions.

The purpose of this study is to lay the groundwork for research on the factors that encourage women's access to top positions in public administration by exploring the experience of women who have been in top positions both before and after the franchise. Based on the understanding of their working experiences, the ultimate goal of this study will be to assess what women's

experiences suggest regarding how to increase women's access to high positions in public administration.

1.5 Research Questions

Given that this study aims to understand how women observe the change that their political rights bring to their experiences in public administration, the main research question is:

Since gaining their political rights, what changes do women in high administrative positions perceive in their experiences as high level administrators?

Other related questions that have been addressed in the discussion to capture different dimensions of this study and to focus on women's access to high positions are:

- 1) How do women describe their experiences of working for government?
- 2) From their perspective, what changes they have perceived since the franchise and how they have affected the way women do their work?
- 3) How do men in comparable administrative positions describe the differences they perceive within administrative agencies before and after women gained their political rights?

4) What lessons do women draw from their experiences that might suggest ways to increase the portion of women in similar positions?

1.6 Research Significance

This study examines a new topic that has not been covered in the Kuwaiti context, which adds a critical contribution to the scholarship in public administration. This study is important in terms of interpreting the change that women's political rights bring to their experience in public administration from their perspective. By using Kuwait as a case study, this research offers an attempt to understand the connection between women's political rights and their experiences in high levels of government. The significance of this study can be seen in several ways.

First of all, this research makes a contribution to the field of public administration by studying the influence that political rights may have on female administrators in public administration. Although the context of this study focuses on a developing country in the Middle East, this study attempts to provide a better understanding about how female administrators in general may perceive changes in their work because of their political rights. In fact, little is known in the literature of public administration about this specific topic.

Besides this point, this research is the first attempt to comprehensively study the connection between the political rights of women and their experience in public administration in the context of Kuwait. To the best of this researcher's

knowledge, this study is unique in terms of the focus of its topic within the context of Kuwait. It is the first comprehensive study that concentrates specifically on women in the government in Kuwait and allows them to express their perceptions about women's involvement in the public sector. In addition, it is also the first study that allows individuals who hold top positions in Kuwait, especially women, to express their voice in regard to the political rights of women. Finally, it is one of the first studies to present the change that the political rights of women have brought to one of the important aspects of the lives of women, their working lives.

1.7 Definitions

- Workforce: all the citizens in the human resources pool between the ages of fifteen to sixty four who are employed. This term includes both employers in public management and those who involved in manual labor. This definition does not include volunteers or unpaid trainees.
- High positions: the civil service law of 1979 determines leadership positions in the Kuwaiti government by three positions: Grade 1, deputy minister, and assistant deputy minister.
- Political rights: the equal rights to vote and stand as candidates in any kind of election that all citizens, males and females, have.

1.8 Indication of Chapters

Chapter one builds the theoretical framework for the dissertation by trying to introduce the local context of its problem with the aim of reducing unfamiliarity with the local circumstances. This introductory chapter presents a historical background of public administration, political rights, and the conditions of women in Kuwait in order to put the study in its local context. The statement of the problem and the purpose of the study are introduced in this chapter as well as the research questions. This chapter also addresses the significance of this study as well as its limitations. The definitions of the major terms, which are used in this study, are addressed in order to clarify their exact meaning when they are used.

Chapter two includes a literature review, which helps to tie the topic of this study to the body of the literature in the field. The literature review covers readings about the status of women in public administration including such issues as under-representation, glass ceiling, and other barriers that women in the public sector face. The literature review also presents some of the articles that discuss women's political participation and its connection to their position in public administration. This review serves as a facilitator to connect the local context of this study with the general body of literature on these topics in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

Chapter three, Methodology, focuses on the logic of inquiry and the methods used in this study. This chapter is introduced by a background of interpretivism and phenomenology in order to demonstrate the appropriateness

of their use based on the nature of this study. A detailed presentation is given in regard to choosing informants, design of interviews, questions, process for conducting interviews, and the basis and process of data interpretation.

Chapter four discusses the analysis and findings based on the interpretation of the data. This chapter presents the emerging main themes that are found by the total number of interviews and how these themes serve to answer the research questions.

Chapter five, the conclusion, includes a summary of the central themes and a map for the complete work of this dissertation. This chapter also presents some recommendations to improve the conditions of the women in public administration in Kuwait. Finally, some suggestions are introduced for further research in regard to the political rights of women and their positions in government.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The topic of this study is very new in Kuwait, where very little has been written about women in public administration. Most of what has been written recently about women in Kuwait focuses on their political rights. However, the topic could be tied to many contributions in the body of literature regarding women's political rights and women in public administration in developed countries, including the United States, as well as developing countries. Since most of the available literature concentrates on women in public administration within the American context, this study attempts to adapt this literature to explore the situation of women in Kuwait. This review concentrates on two main aspects: the role of women in public administration, especially in high positions when available, and women's political rights.

According to Shah and Al-Qudsi (1990), Kuwait faces the same problem of inequality between men and women in public administration that is seen in some developed countries (Kerr, Miller, & Reid, 2002; Lepper, 1976; Mano-Negrin, 2004; McDougall, 1998) and in many developing countries (Honour, Barry, & Palnitkar, 1998; Nath, 2000; Omar & Ogenyi, 2004; Turner & O'Connor 1994; Zafarullah, 2000). Zafarullah (2000) argued that the under-representation of women in public sector, which is evidence of inequality, is a common problem in developing countries. He asserted that in "most countries of the Third World, the disparity between male and female representation in public service is wide" (Zafarullah, 2000, 197). Nevertheless, there is clear evidence in the literature that developed countries face the same problem as well (Bayes, 1991).

During the 1970s, interest in discrimination against women in public administration became a concern in the United States (Stivers, 1998) and Western Europe (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). Omar and Ogenyi (2004) noted that a considerable part of the debate in the feminist movement is whether women in administration should be seen as different from men or essentially the same. While some writers argued that women should be seen as the same as men in order to reach gender equality, others argued that the focus should be shifted from similarities towards the unique ways in which women approach public administration.

Stivers (2000) presented the case of settlement women as an example of how women are able to offer an alternative way of reforming public administration. However, regarding inequality in public administration, one of the

most relevant aspects to this study in regard to the gender debate was discussed by Stewart (1976), who tried to respond to the question about why only few women had top jobs in public agencies. Stewart (1976), studied political, biological, and sociological these to provide an explanation to this phenomenon and found the last one to be the most relevant. She asserted that “the concept of role differentiation holds the key to the difficulties faced by women when entering high-level positions in the organizational world” (Stewart, 1976, 360)

In all of these studies, this question continues to be come up time and again in different forms. In her effort to introduce how women could advance public administration, Stivers (1993) was concerned with why women in public administration are “on tap but not on top” (p.11). While the number of women has rapidly increased since the first women entered the public sector in the United States 150 years ago, men have continued to monopolize the top administrative positions. Stivers (1993) pointed out that “women still constitute only a small fraction of the personnel in top civil service jobs” (p.23). She stressed that the image of leadership in public administration is culturally masculine, which is in conflict with the expectations about the behavior of women. This false image prevents women from getting high positions in government because they will not be seen as qualified to hold these positions. Of course, this masculine image of leadership, which does not allow equal opportunities for women to make it to the top, definitely contributes to the problem of a “glass ceiling that keeps a disproportionate number of women from top positions” (Stivers, 1993, 33).

2.2 Glass Ceiling

Much attention was given in the literature to the problem of the glass ceiling as a major barrier that women face in organizations. This barrier could be considered one of the most relevant concepts that are related to the topic of this study. The term “glass ceiling” was introduced by *The Wall Street Journal* in 1986 to refer to the invisible barrier that prevents women and minorities from access to top managerial positions (Jackson, 2001; Weyer, 2007). The glass ceiling and under-representation of women in the American public sector are widely known in the literature. The glass ceiling was studied at the federal level by Naff (1994) and Hsieh & Winslow (2006) as well as at the state level by Kelly, Guy, Bayes, Duerst-Lahti, Duke, Hale, Johnson, Kavar, and Stanley (1991), Newman (1993), and Ried et al. (2004).

Naff (1994), for instance, concluded her study by asserting the existence of this barrier in the United States. She stated that there is substantial evidence of “a glass ceiling in the federal government” (Naff, 1994, 513) in the form of informal understandings and practices that prevent women from having the same opportunities for high administrative positions. Ried et al. (2004) as well found that in the state government bureaucracies, “women are underrepresented in top level administrative and professional positions” (p.377). This well-known status of women in state and federal governments led Kelly et al. (1991) to claim that women’s conditions in the public sector “do not reveal that the United States is an international leader or a particularly good model in promoting gender equity

among the civil service elite” (p.403). Based on these studies, one could conclude that women in the United States have experience the glass ceiling that prevents them from reaching high positions in the government.

Internationally, the glass ceiling was studied in other developed countries by Albrecht, Björklund, and Vroman (2003), Connell (2006), and Simon (1995) and in developing countries by Nath (2000), Omar and Ogenyi (2004), and Zafarullah (2000). Albrecht et al. (2003), for instance, found that the simple answer to their question regarding whether there is a glass ceiling in Sweden is “yes.” What makes this case troubling is that “this glass ceiling phenomenon is not diminishing over time... the glass ceiling is much more pronounced in the 1990s than it was earlier” (Albrecht et al., 2003, 171). This means that the arguably condition of women in the public sector in this developed country is getting worse.

In terms of developing countries, Zafarullah (2000) studied the status of women in Bangladesh and affirmed that “executive positions are generally occupied by men” (p.197). In Africa, Omar and Ogenyi (2004) found that “the literature evidence shows that there is a gender divide existing in Nigeria, which obstructs women aspiring for top managerial position” (p.364). One of the relevant findings in this study refers to the different perceptions between men and women in regard to the ability of women to hold leadership positions (Omar & Ogenyi, 2004). The different perceptions between men and women regarding the position of women in public administration should be taken into consideration in this study to put the perspectives of women in a context, as will be discussed

later. Generally, the literature affirms that the glass ceiling is a common problem that women in the public sector face in developed countries as well as developing countries, which prepares the common ground for this problem in the context of Kuwait.

It should be mentioned that the literature seems to lack a critical element in the conclusions of many studies that discuss glass ceiling in public administration. In fact, one can observe that most studies are descriptive of the problem; they handle the glass ceiling from different perspectives; they emphasize different dimensions to its consequences; they suggest different explanations to the sources of the problem; they present different example to affirm its presence and persistence; they create different connections to exam related independent variables; but they rarely present practical solutions to cope with the glass ceiling in public administration. Among the few recommendations to handle the glass ceiling in government, one can point out: social structure change (Weyer, 2007), quota system (Zafarullah, 2000), and improvements in the criteria of job advancement (Naff, 1994). Discussing these recommendations in detail is beyond the capacity of the literature review part. The main point that needs to be stressed here is that the glass ceiling literature presents some few practical suggestions to deal with this problem, which increases the significance of this study's recommendations.

2.3 Other Barriers

The problem of the glass ceiling is a very well known barrier that women all over the world face in public administration. However, this argument does not mean that the glass ceiling is the only major problem that women in public administration encounter. It is an agreed-upon issue in the literature “that women encounter a number of possible obstacles in their attempt to become fully integrated into the elite ranks of public bureaucracies” (Newman, 1993, 381). In fact, the literature provides many examples of other common barriers that discourage the advancement of women in government. While recognizing the other barriers is useful to becoming fully aware of the conditions of women in the public sector, discussing these barriers and the suggestions to eliminate their effects in detail is beyond the capacity of this study. Therefore, only a brief review will be given regarding some of the other main barriers, as indicated in the literature, which hinder the advancement of women in the public sector.

By studying the conditions of women in the public sectors of six developed and developing countries around the world, Bayes (1991) found that female administrators in all six countries tended to encounter specific barriers to their advancement in public administration, which are categorized within three major groups. The first group includes the social factors that women in every society face such as the lack of education and training for women, lack of family support, and lack of childcare programs. In addition, Bayes (1991) pointed out that the second group includes the factors that are related to the structure and practice of

public administration. This group, according to Bayes (1991), consists of barriers such as

unwillingness to be flexible enough to accommodate women trying to raise children; recruitment and promotion practices that discriminate against women; masculine traditions and networks; lack of positive female role model; and unwillingness of men to give women “good” positions or assignments that could help the women advance. (p.115)

Finally, it was found that some barriers are related to women themselves, including lack of self-confidence, commitment to family responsibilities over job responsibilities, lack of experience, and unwillingness to take risks (Bayes, 1991).

Newman (1993) discussed what he saw as the three major groups of barriers preventing women in American public administration from reaching upper-level management positions. The first group includes the human capital barriers such as insufficient education, domestic constraints, and insufficient experience. The second group includes socio-psychological barriers such as gender-role socialization, gender-role stereotypes, and negative perceptions of women’s capacity for managing. The third group of barriers that do not allow the advancement of women in the public sector include systemic barriers such as gender segregation in the labor force, limited access to professional training, limited access to informal networks, sexual harassment, and lack of female role models. These barriers are known to be the same common barriers facing women in developing countries, according to Omar and Ogenyi (2004).

The literature provides some important explanations to demonstrate the origins of these barriers and some suggestions that should be taken into consideration to deal with them. Guy (1992) was one of the writers who suggested some recommendations for women to deal with these barriers. Her recommendations include job enhancement, mentoring, job restructuring towards family obligations, and policies to promote childcare leave. However, presenting detailed recommendations that help women in the public sector cope with these barriers is beyond the scope of this literature review, as indicated earlier.

In general, most of these studies focus on the barriers that prevent women from equal representation in high positions in the public sector. However, this study does not discuss the existence of the glass ceiling problem in Kuwait, which is already documented, nor does it intend to focus on the barriers that prevent women in Kuwait from advancing in government. This study focuses specifically on the change that political rights may have brought to women in high positions in public administration in Kuwait. It seeks to know whether women's political rights have made a positive change on their condition in the public sector by advancing more women to high positions.

Interestingly, Stewart's (1976) question "why, when women constitute nearly 40 percent of American's labor force, have so few women made it to the top?" (p.363) is still valid in the context of Kuwait. It should be made clear that the glass ceiling problem provides a deep understanding of the inequality of women in government which helps to employ the work experiences of women in high positions for the ultimate goal of this research, the access to high positions.

Instead of focusing on the glass ceiling, this is an attempt to explore the change that a specific major political event, franchise, has brought for women already in high positions in Kuwait and how their experiences may offer suggestions to reduce the effect of the glass ceiling on women in Kuwait.

2.4 Political Rights

Understanding what the political rights of women can do for their future in public administration is an important issue, especially in Kuwait, since women have only recently gained these rights. The conversation about political rights in this study should be tied to political participation because it represents the practice of these rights. According to Ali (1989), “most studies of conventional participation equate citizen participation in politics with the act of voting” (p.32). The basis for connecting the political rights of women with their status in public administration is grounded in western literature because women’s political rights in European countries and the United States have deeper historical roots. The influence of women’s enfranchisement and the consequences this has had on their condition in society and in public administration has been heavily studied in the United States and Europe. In general, a considerable portion of the literature asserts that the women’s right to vote in the United States, which allowed them to participate in the formulation of public policy through the election of their political representatives, has shaped their position in society generally and in government specifically.

Based on this, it is argued that women would have the advantage of being best represented if they elect women to the legislative branch. Saint-Germain (1989) and Dodson and Carroll (1991) found that female decision makers focus on women's rights and concerns more frequently than male decision makers. Saint-Germain (1989) argued that women legislators are more likely to present bills on issues related to the inequality or the other problems and concerns of women. Dodson and Carroll (1991) agreed that women's concerns are on the top of the agenda of female legislators. They postulated that the increasing number of women in public office would lead to a stronger response to women's concerns in government. Carroll (1994) affirmed that the growing numbers of women who hold offices would lead to a greater attention to their conditions in society and "their impact will be more widely felt" (p.18). Dodson and Carroll (1991) pointed out that "as more women enter public office, their impact on public policy and the governmental process will become increasingly evident" (p. 19).

Newman (1993) took a further step by indicating that as "more women gain political office, the nexus between political experience and career advancement is expected to strengthen" (p.376). This means that the more political experience gained by the participation of women in public policy, the more opportunities they have to hold higher positions in public administration. In other words, women's collective experience of practice in political office is more likely to enhance their ability in government to reach top positions. This point is made clear by Kelly et al. (1991) who affirmed, from studying three states, that female political participation and high-level positions in public administration are

highly connected. For instance, they found that, in Texas, “the linkage between increased electoral participation of women and increased number of women in the upper levels of public administration is clearly evident” (Kelly et al., 1991, p.405). This argument supports the assumption that the political participation of women, based on their gaining political rights, is more likely to increase the number of women who hold high positions in public administration, which is the core of discussion in this study.

However, the argument that the political rights of women increase their opportunity to enhance their conditions generally and in public administration specifically is challenged in the literature by those who do not see the influence of women, as a voting bloc, on their conditions in government. In other words, the assumption that women’s political rights are more likely to change their position in the public sector may not be the correct presupposition because the influence of the political participation of women did not always play a positive role in supporting women in public administration. Alpern and Baum (1985) argued that when women in the United States received the right to vote, no notable difference occurred in their status in society. Unfortunately, “female voters, by and large, did not vote for female politicians who campaigned for greater opportunities for women” (Alpern & Baum, 1985, p. 62).

Internationally, there is clear evidence from elections around the world that women do not always vote for women. For this reason, McDougall (1998) called for further efforts to deal with this problem in the United Kingdom where “women comprise half of the electorate and still just one-fifth of the elected

representatives” (p.71). This negative situation of women’s political participation as voters makes it harder for them to impose any change to empower their condition in public administration. This situation is even worse if one considers the argument in the literature of political participation that women are less likely to vote than men (Ali, 1989). From a different perspective, Ottaway (2004) suggested that women’s political behavior is critical in terms of their ability to make a change because they only become an effective voice when they vote as a bloc. Practically, women do not vote as bloc and their political participation is not in same level of men, which creates a serious challenge to any change.

In the same international context, there is evidence in the literature that disconfirms the connection between women’s political rights and their position in public administration. Bayes (1991) observed that “although Finland was the second nation in the world to give women the vote as early as 1906, Finnish women have been prevented from holding certain top administrative jobs in certain areas in the recent past” (p.11). This point could be used to argue that women in developed countries have not seen a considerable positive impact of political rights on their condition in government, especially if one takes into consideration the long history of women’s political participation in these countries. This view seems to seriously challenge the portion of the literature that supports the existence of a positive change and makes the findings of this study more important in terms of affirming one aspect or the other.

From a different perspective, based on an administrative perspective, Saidel and Loscocc (2005) examined whether female heads of public agency

have priorities that advance the interests of women. They concluded their research by challenging the assumption that women in high positions always advocate women-related agendas based on the finding that half “of women department heads did not identify a policy priority intended to help women” (Saidel & Loscocc, 2005, 167). All of these perspectives affirm that neither women’s political rights nor women’s participation in the highest levels of public administration necessarily make any change in the conditions of women in government. However, it seems that by connecting women’s political rights and their position in government, these articles explore this issue in terms of producing more women-supportive public policies rather than increasing the number of women in top administrative levels. In other words, these articles do not concentrate on how women’s political participation would push more women to hold high positions in public administration, but how to advance women-related issues to the top of political agendas.

On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the supposed positive effect that the political participation of women would bring to their condition in public administration could be seriously challenged by the fact that women are basically underrepresented in most elective offices and legislative branches throughout the world (Zimmerman, 1994). Reynolds (1999) examined the governments in 180 nation-states in the world as they were constituted in 1998. Out of 33,715 members of national parliaments, only 4,209 (12 percent) were female. In addition, there were 3,486 cabinet ministers in the 180 governments, but only 302 (8.7 percent) of them were women. The finding of this study raises a

serious question regarding how the political under-representation of women helps their administrative under-representation. This question seems to be a dilemma that needs further attention, which is beyond the scope of this study.

What should be observed in this context is that women were assigned “the softer socioculture ministerial positions rather than in the harder and politically more prestigious positions of economic planning, national security, and foreign affairs” (Reynolds, 1999, 564). This means that even when women hold top positions in public administration, they still do not have same opportunities as men in regard to the type of position they receive. In addition, it should be observed that some of the barriers that prevent women from receiving equal political opportunity to be represented, as discussed in the literature, seem to be very similar to the barriers presented earlier that prevent women in public administration from advancing. Some of these common obstacles to women’s political participation identified by Rule (1994) include narrow gender roles, unequal educational opportunities, and discriminatory socioeconomic conditions.

2.5 Connection to Kuwait

To sum up the literature review, women in the public administration of Kuwait face problems regarding inequality with men in top positions. The problem of the under-representation of women in high administrative levels is common in developed and developing countries. During the 1970s, concerns about the conditions of women in public administration were raised in the United States and

Europe. One of the most relevant aspects of these concerns is the so-called glass ceiling, which prevents women from reaching higher positions in organizations. Women in developed countries, including the United States, and developing countries are not only encountering the glass ceiling, but also face other common barriers that prevent the advancement of women in public administration. One of the factors that would help women cope with their underrepresentation in top administration is the political rights that may lead to effective participation in policy formulation. Connecting women's political rights to their positions in public administration is a debatable issue in the literature. While some articles argue that women's political participation has a positive impact on their condition in public administration, others argue that there is no influence of this participation on women in government. In addition, some articles argue that even women in top positions do not consider women-related issue as priorities.

The debatable positions on this issue within the United States and Europe increase the importance of what this study contributes to the field. Studying the change that the political rights of women bring to their experience in public administration is critical in the case of Kuwait, because women have only recently received their rights to vote and to run for office. In fact, the body of literature lacks comprehensive studies regarding the status of women in public administration in Kuwait, as mentioned earlier, but related studies about Kuwait and the other Arab countries could give some signs as to the conditions of women in the public sector in the Arab region. It should be mentioned that the

conditions of women in Kuwait share the same characteristics of women in the other Arab countries, especially the Gulf countries (Russell, 1989).

One study compared the attitude of women towards leadership authority in three countries in the Middle East, Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Lebanon, and stressed that women “are increasingly entering the workforce in Arab states and rising to leadership positions in the public and private sectors” (Neal, Finlay, & Tansey, 2005, 478). This argument is generally accepted, but a closer and a more careful look shows that the increasing number of women who hold leadership positions is still far away from equal representation in the top administrative levels. El-Ghannam (2003) found that only “in a few Arab societies, women have held the position of government minister” (p. 40). As a matter of fact, El-Ghannam (2003) gives an accurate description about the status of Arab women in government by stating:

In Arab societies, despite some increase in women’s representation... [in government,] they are a minority among top leaders and their power is generally more limited than that of men. Even when they do have great power, they cannot utilize it to the same advantage as by men. Women are unable to exploit their power in the same way that men do. Women do not have access to the same positions of power that men have. There is presumptive evidence of structural barriers that impede their access. (p. 42)

To focus specifically on Kuwait, a study regarding the female workforce conducted by Shah and Al-Qudsi (1990) refers to the under-representation of women in administrative levels in the public and private sectors in Kuwait. This study mentioned that women in Kuwait “are not given an equal opportunity to occupy senior positions” (Shah & Al-Qudsi, 1990, 31). In fact, it should be

mentioned that the local literature is inconsistent with the general literature in terms of identifying the common problem of the glass ceiling that other women around the world encounter in public administration. However, no researcher attempts to closely track the under-representation of women in top administration as a consequence of the lack in women's political rights. No article has attempted to make any connection between women's political participation and their unequal conditions in the public administration in Kuwait.

The most relevant article that discussed the connection between political participation and women in the governments of the Arab World was done by El-Ghannam (2003). His main argument is that "the percent of women in Arab parliaments and in governmental organizations had significant direct effects on women's participation in political life" (El-Ghannam, 2003, 38). However, this study observed the converse, because it supposed that the increasing number of women joining government leads more women to political participation. On the other hand, this study did not consider the number of women who specifically hold high positions in the public sector but studied women in general who are employed by government.

In fact, excluding the literature in Arabic, many articles were written about women's political rights in Kuwait including the work of al-Mughni (2001), Katulis (2005), Rizzo et al. (2002), and Rizzo (2005). However, no article deeply examines the influence that women's political rights specifically have on their position in government. Most of these readings are concerned with the barriers that prevent women in Kuwait from practicing their political rights, the different

perspectives about women's political rights, the role of women's organizations, and some suggestions to enhance the role of women in gaining their political rights. While some of these studies cover women's political rights from a feminist perspective, none of them discusses the issue from a public administration perspective.

Based on that, connecting these articles about Kuwaiti women to the debatable body of literature regarding the impact of women's political participation on their condition in public sector is difficult, because no studies have been conducted to discuss this new topic in Kuwait due to its recent occurrence. Women received their political rights only a few years ago, and no work has been completed to evaluate the change that this factor could have on female administrators. In fact, this is the gap in the literature that needs to be given the attention by providing further understanding of the influence of women's political rights on their condition in government. It should be made clear that this study discusses the involvement of women within the context of the feminist theory of public administration, which "interprets or explains public administration or its various aspects from a feminist perspective" (Stivers, 1998, p.881). This study works to fill the gap in the literature by studying the change that women's political rights bring to them in public administration, especially for those in high positions. Women in high positions are able through this study to express their perspectives in regard to their involvement in public administration before and after the franchise and whether they have witnessed any change in

their work. Their experiences will lay the foundation for suggestions as to how women can increase their access to high positions in government.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between the status of women in public administration and their political rights in Kuwait. It should be made clear that since little is known about Kuwaiti women in public administration, the experiences of women who work for the public sector, especially those in high positions, are critical to understand any relationship between women's political rights and their access to high positions in government. This study hopes to understand the change that the franchise brings to women in government in general and specifically attempts to understand the link between the political participation of women and their condition in high governmental positions in Kuwait.

High-level women were given the opportunity to articulate their perspectives about perceiving the change that their political rights have made on their status in public administration. Because of a lack of available information, this study attempts to describe the link between political rights and women's status in government entirely through what women in high administrative positions have learned on the job. Its aim is to build an understanding of the issue from the ground up, so to speak. Given that this study seeks an in-depth understanding of the experiences of women in the public sector, interpretivism is the most suitable theoretical perspective for the research. The interpretative logic of inquiry has been applied through the phenomenological approach in research because this study not only depends on understanding, but it highly depends on lived experiences. Phenomenology so addresses people and things that they can show themselves in their own terms. This study is based on the experiences of women in public administration regarding how they define any changes that happened and what meaning they give to those changes. A background should be given about interpretivism and phenomenology in order to clarify the logic of inquiry and the methodology of this study before presenting how the data were collected and analyzed.

3.2 Interpretivism

Interpretive theory is one of the major schools of thought that participate, as a logic of inquiry, in producing knowledge in social sciences. Interpretivism,

according to Harmon and Mayer (1986), has “arisen in reaction against the positivist orthodoxy of American social science” (p.290). White and Adams (1994) stressed that the role of interpretation has been ignored by positivist social scientists, who focused on deductive logic and scientific inference to provide explanatory research and power of prediction. Addressing this claim, interpretivism was presented to challenge the “metaphysical assumptions of [positivism]... that there is a real social and culture world capable of being objectively studied by scientific method” (Levesque-Lopman, 1988, 14). In fact, interpretivism has its own rigorous research tools, and “is no less systematic than positivist-informed research” (Yanow, 2006, 9). In fact, interpretivism and positivism are based on different philosophical grounds and have different views about epistemology. Yanow (2006) illustrated this difference:

Interpretive philosophers argued that the analogy drawn by positivists between the natural and physical worlds and the social world (and calling, therefore, for a single form of scientific practice) is a false analogy. The latter cannot be understood in the same way as the former because of an essential difference between them: Unlike... rocks, animals, and atoms, humans make, communicate, interpret, share, and contest meaning. We act; we have intentions about our actions; we interpret others' actions; we (attempt to) make sense of the world: We are meaning-making creatures. Our institutions, our policies, our language, our ceremonies are human creations, not objects independent of us. And so a human (or social) science needs to be able to address what is meaningful to people in the social situation under study. (p.9)

The roots of the interpretive theory can be traced to the writing of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Early interpretive thinkers, according to Yanow (2006), “turned to Kant’s central idea that knowing depends on prior knowledge. The individual was understood to bring prior knowledge to

his or her experience, thereby giving shape to the myriad sensate stimuli... vying for attention” (p.9). Therefore, individuals do not perceive the world around them as an abstract but within a pre-recognized conceptual context. Kant’s philosophy was later applied to phenomenology by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938).

Husserl is considered one of the influential figures who contributed to the development of contemporary interpretive theory (Harmon & Mayer, 1986; Levesque-Lopman, 1988). Levesque-Lopman (1988) pointed out that “Husserl was disappointed by what he felt were degenerative tendencies... that favored the views of positivism or scientific objectivism as providers of the only possible kind of knowledge” (p.15). Husserl, the founder of contemporary phenomenology as well, focused his philosophy on the study of consciousness itself. He shared Kant’s view that “consciousness is neither separated from the events of the world nor a passive receptor of sensory information,” but that it is intended “towards the objects of its attention” (Harmon & Mayer, 1986, 291). According to Gubrium and Holstein (2000), “Husserl’s project is to investigate the structure of consciousness that make it possible to apprehend an empirical world” (p.488). More of Husserl’s thoughts are discussed later when the discussion presents phenomenology as a method of producing knowledge.

The aim of the interpretive logic of inquiry is to ensure a clear understanding of the meaning conveyed in human actions (White, 1999; White & Adams 1994). Fay (1975) asserted that interpretivism aims “to discover the intentions which actors have in doing whatever it is they are doing” (p.73). Understanding the meanings beyond human actions is the main concern for

interpretive theory. White (1999) agreed that the common concern for interpretivists is not to explain human behavior but to understand it. White (1994) stressed that “interpretation seeks to understand the meanings that actors attach to their social situations, to their own actions, and to the actions of others” (p.45). Rubin and Rubin (1995) shared the same view that interpretive research focuses on “how people understand their worlds and how they create and share meanings about their lives” (p.34).

In this sense, interpretive theory differs from positivism that focuses on explanations, predictions, and establishing causality. White (1999) noted that “instead of seeking causal explanations of behavior, interpretive research enhances our understanding of, among other things, the beliefs, meanings, feelings and attitudes of actors in social situations” (p. 48). For Fay (1975), the interpretive “scientist is not concerned with what would be the proper thing to do... but with understanding” (p.77). White (1994) illustrated the practical distinction of interpretive theory from positivism by giving this example:

A positivist might attempt to explain why a particular job-enrichment program is failing to provide expected results by examining established hypotheses about motivation and job design. An interpretivist would enter the situation and ask the workers what they think about the program, what it means to them, what they are doing, and why they are doing it. The goal is to discover the meaning of the program; how it fits with prior norms, values, rules, and social practices; how the program may be in conflict with their prior definitions of the social situation; and what the emerging norms, rules, values, and social practices might be. (p.59)

Interpretivists believe that reality is not detached from research but is shaped by the lived experiences and social values of the informants as well as

the researchers. However, since different people have different views about reality, there is not a single reality that could be reached. Rubin and Rubin (1995) asserted that in interpretive theory “[t]here is not one reality out there to be measured; objects and events are understood by different people differently, and those perceptions are the reality – or realities – that social science should focus on” (p.35). This reality is understood through the interaction between researchers and the actors under study to reach a shared meaning, which is a critical component of interpretive theory.

Interpretive research, according to White (1999), should “enhance mutual understanding between the researcher and the actors and self-understanding among the actors themselves” (p.49). Based on interpretive theory, researchers should not observe from outside, but be involved within the research and the world of the informants. It is hard for interpretivist researchers to have a clear understanding if they keep themselves distant from the background, the environment, and the social values of the informants under study. Yanow (2006) stressed that “[u]nderstanding is not possible from a position entirely outside of the focus of analysis” (p.10). Of course, this is a significant point in interpretive research because a lack of interaction between researchers and informants will not meet the purpose of this interaction, which is the actual “meanings that people attach to norms, rules and values that regulate their interactions” (White, 1994, 48). Thus, interpretive researchers should understand how people view their world and the intended meanings they attach to their world through mutual, participatory interaction with them.

Interpretive researchers bring understandings, norms, and values with them into the research setting, but they are obligated to take steps to keep these as much as possible from biasing their work. White (1994) emphasized that the interpretive researcher should be careful “not to impose a prior understanding of norms, rules, and values upon others, but rather to understand their beliefs and actions from their point of view” (p. 49). Meanings are produced based on the interpretation of the informants’ experience given through the researcher’s sense-making activity. To reach an effective interpretation, researchers should bracket their own values as much as possible and strive to approach their conversations with informants with an open mind. They should be involved in conversations with the informants to reach a shared meaning and a common understanding (White, 1999; Fay, 1975). However, bracketing does not have the same meaning of objectivity as in positivist research. Levesque-Lopman (1988) explained that bracketing “changes our attitude toward the world, allowing us to see more clearly. We set aside preconceptions and presuppositions— what we already “know” about the social world; we refrain intentionally from all judgments related directly or indirectly to the experience of the social world” (p.19).

Interpretive researchers should convey their interpretations of actors’ comments back to the actors in order to ensure a common understanding of meanings that are interpreted by the researcher (Schutz, 1967). According to White (1999), a successful dialogue that reflects how the interpretation conforms to the intention of the actors gives validity to any interpretive approach. This validity is reached by letting the informants have an opportunity to read and

comment on the researcher's interpretation of their story (Schutz, 1967). The key point is whether the informants judge the researcher's account of their world as plausible.

3.3 Phenomenology

Phenomenology fits the nature of this study quite well, because it provides a rich understanding of the deep meaning of a phenomenon based on a description of human lived experience. The focus of this study is the change that may have happened after the franchise of women in Kuwait as seen through the experiences of women who hold high positions in the government.

Understanding the influence that political rights may have on women administrators requires a deep understanding of their perspectives about any change in their positions in the public sector and the meanings that they give to this change.

Martin Heidegger says that the word phenomenology includes two Greek words: phainomenon, that which shows itself in its own terms if properly addressed, and logos, word. (Heidegger, 1962). As a branch of interpretivism, the phenomenological approach in science is a research method that emphasizes the study of lived experience (Kridler & Ross, 1997; Van Manen, 1990; Yanow, 2006). According to White (1999), phenomenology can be defined as "the philosophical movement that seeks to describe the structures of

experience presented to human consciousness without relying on theories or assumptions from other disciplines, especially the natural sciences” (p.48).

As indicated earlier, Cruise (2006), Velkley (1987), White (1999), and Yanow (2006) noted that the writings of Husserl in the nineteenth century are considered to be the philosophical foundation of contemporary phenomenology. This philosophical contribution makes Husserl, according to Waugh and Waugh (2006), “the ‘father of pure phenomenology’” (p.488). Levesque-Lopman (1988) noted that Husserl construed science not as “empiricism and statistics but, rather, a philosophy that was rigorous, systematic, and critical. In utilizing science in this way, phenomenologists could ultimately arrive at absolutely valid knowledge of the basic structures of consciousness” (p.16). Levesque-Lopman (1988) asserted that the phenomenological processes for Husserl

referred to his attempt to describe the ultimate foundation of human experience by inquiring... the world of phenomena as given in immediate consciousness... [which] is in the world of our pretheoretical experience... [that means] in the world that we ordinary experience before we begin to theorize about it. (p.16)

Van Manen (1990) asserted that the goal of phenomenological research is to ask “the question of what is the nature of this phenomenon... as an essentially human experience” (p.62). However, lived experience itself is not the purpose of phenomenology, but it is the instrument to understanding reality in the social world of the informants. According to Van Manen (1990), the phenomenological approach aims

to ‘borrow’ other people’s experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding

of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole human experience. (p.62)

Lived experience is a critical element in this approach because the “meaning making takes place in the ‘lifeworld’” (Yanow, 2006, 12). Yanow (2006) asserted that the argument building in phenomenology is “experienced by those making and hearing them and how they become ‘factual’ reality to them” (p.12). Waugh and Waugh (2006) asserted that Husserl’s argument defines human experiences as the inseparability of the activity of consciousness and the object of consciousness, which means that they are not separate from each other. The separation of objects from activities is one of the arguments that support the positivist perspective “to treat consciousness as an empirical phenomenon amenable to investigation by the quantitative methods of natural science” (Waugh & Waugh, 2006, 488).

In fact, it should be made clear that the phenomenology of Husserl “argued that the analysis should focus not on the phenomena of lived experience themselves... but on the perceptual processes or mental constructs humans create in order to make sense of those experiences” (Yanow, 2006, 12). The phenomenological approach seeks to explore insights based on the perspectives of informants in order to gain a deep understanding of any phenomenon in the lived world. Yanow (2006) asserted that the phenomenological approach

requires accessing what is meaningful to social, political, cultural, and other groups, and to individuals within them, as well as understanding how meaning is developed, expressed, and communicated. In the phenomenological approach, much of everyday life is seen as consisting of common-sense, taken-for-granted, unspoken, yet widely shared and known ‘rules’ for acting

and interacting. It is the articulation of these 'rules' that constitutes one of the central concerns of phenomenological analysis and of methods informed by this perspective. (p.12)

Of course, Husserl confronted the positivist perspective that is not able to capture the essences of human experience through experiment or scientific observation. This concern was affirmed by Waugh & Waugh (2006), who refer to how "[t]he natural scientist can bracket or draw boundaries for his own relevant part of the social world... but the social scientist cannot interpret the behavior of others without knowing what their realities are—what their lived-worlds are like" (p.494). Phenomenology was represented by Husserl as the means "to describe the ultimate foundations of human experience by 'seeing beyond' everyday experiences in order to describe the 'essences' that underpin them" (Levesque-Lopman, 1988, 17). Capturing essences come from bracketing, or setting aside the researcher's own ideas and allowing the experience of the informants to lead to pure consciousness and doing so cautiously, without imposing any prior understanding.

The phenomenological approach does not seek to find causality or to reach generalizability about a reality that exists "out there." Husserl supported the notion of subjective interpretation of reality rather than any objective reality. For a phenomenologist, "[r]eality is not restricted to those things that can be empirically verified or logically inferred; rather, reality is based on a common-sense knowing or *verstehen* [understanding] of the social world" (Waugh & Waugh, 2006, 493). Husserl challenged the sense of reality in the positivist view, asking how reality "out there" could be objectively measured when the only reality that individuals

experience is the one that they see through their consciousness. In fact, there are no universal laws in the sense claimed by positivism because different individuals may interpret social reality in different ways (Krider & Ross, 1997).

Yanow (2006) argued that not only

universal or cross-case laws are not possible in the same way in which positivist laws claim generalizability... but also that social 'reality' may be constructed differently by different people: the social world we inhabit and experience is potentially a world of multiple realities, multiple interpretations. (p.13)

In the mid twentieth century, Alfred Schutz (1899-1959) tried to use Husserl's philosophy as a basis for an appropriate theory for the social sciences. Schutz brought this European dogma to the United States and provoked the discussion of phenomenology near the end of 1930s (Waugh & Waugh, 2006). Schutz concentrated on finding the answer to the critical question of producing valid knowledge. According to Levesque-Lopman (1988), much of Schutz's work "was devoted to the question of how it is possible to grasp subjective meaning structures by a system of objective knowledge" (p.19). Levesque-Lopman (1988) admitted that Schutz followed Husserl's steps by challenging the dehumanizing elements that positivism imposes on the social sciences. In this context, one of the main points that Schutz focused on is intersubjectivity. Waugh & Waugh (2006) pointed out that our perceptions, for Schutz, are based on the way we observe the world and our participation in social relationships. These relationships provide a "great potential to understand truly the motives and interests of others" (Waugh & Waugh, 2006, 493).

There are several different phenomenological schools of thought that trace their perspectives to the contemporary phenomenology of Husserl. The different phenomenological schools that came after Husserl may even cause confusion for some researchers in finding a straightforward definition for this term (White, 1999). However, Vilkley (1987) asserted that “[n]ot all forms of twentieth-century phenomenology are Husserlian, yet nearly all phenomenologists after Husserl owe something to his formulation of the ‘ideal’ of phenomenology, and to his suggested programs for realizing this ideal” (p.872). One example of the major phenomenological schools of thought is the one led by Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), who had serious disagreements with Husserl, according to Waugh and Waugh (2006).

However, it should be made clear that this study is founded within Husserl’s perspective of phenomenology that is continued by Schutz. This kind of phenomenology focuses on the meanings that people give to the situations in which they find themselves. The main point of this phenomenology is to present a detailed description of a particular kind of culture, as it is seen by the people who are involved in it. According to Levesque-Lopman (1988), Schutz was interested in the pure form of consciousness, “but as it is constrained by the larger culture with its language, typifications, and recipes” (p.20). This description helps the phenomenological researcher make a clear interpretation of what those people say in order to construct the major themes.

It should be mentioned that there is a step-by-step procedure that is to be followed in phenomenological research, especially in terms of interpreting

collected data. Based on its systematic approach, phenomenological research is considered one of the most rigorous methods among interpretive and qualitative methods of research.

3.4 Data Collection

Women in high positions, particularly in the Kuwaiti government, were targeted in this study because their limited number is a strong indicator of women's unequal status in public administration. This study is based on interviews conducted to collect raw data from the informants. Interviewing is a suitable tool used to gather the experiences of people. Rubin and Rubin (1995) asserted this point by stating that "[q]ualitative interviewing is a way of finding out what others feel and think about their worlds. Through qualitative interviews you can understand experiences and reconstruct events in which you did not participate" (p.1). This method is also highly recommended for conducting phenomenological research because it is based on the experiences of others. In-depth interviews are well known to be an adequate means of capturing the thoughts, insights, and feelings of informants, and that is the aim of this study. Van Manen (1990) stressed that conversational interviews are a suitable method of collecting lived-experience data for phenomenological research.

This study depended on conducting interviews as the tool for collecting data about the experiences of Kuwaiti women in public administration. The informants in this study were chosen from women and men who hold high

positions in government, mostly those who have the position of assistant deputy minister. The participation of men in this study is not to compare their perspectives with women, but to understand the perceptions of women within a context. In other words, the responses of men help determine if women have a different perspective of the public administration, which is dominated by men.

The female informants were chosen from different ministries in the government of Kuwait. Some of these ministries employ large number of Kuwaiti women, such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. The purpose of choosing these specific ministries where women are concentrated is the assumption that women would have a better chance of holding a high position in these ministries. Additional female informants were chosen from the other ministries with a smaller concentration of women. The purpose of interviewing women from these ministries is to encompass the views of women in ministries with many female employees as well as those that have relatively few, in case there might be important differences between them.

No more details could be given about the distribution of the female informants among the ministries in order to maintain the confidentiality of their identification. The limited number of women who hold high positions in the public administration of Kuwait makes it simple to recognize their identity because, with the exception of the Ministry of Education, all of the ministries that have women in high positions employ only one female assistant deputy minister. A total of ten female informants were interviewed.

Two male informants were chosen from the same ministries from which the female informants were chosen. Ten women and two men from different ministries were invited to be interviewed, bringing the total number of participants in the study to twelve. The number of female informants is adequate for in-depth interviews according to the maximum acceptable number of participants in phenomenological protocols (Groenewald, 2004). Interviewing ten women from the total of women who hold high positions in the Kuwaiti government, which is currently less than twenty, is a sufficient number to represent their perspectives even in quantitative methods. It was very important to take into consideration, as much as possible, that the participants held their positions before the date women gained political rights. In fact, interviewing someone who was promoted to a new position after Kuwaiti women gained their political rights does not allow the informant to determine the kind of change that the political rights may have made in the quality of the participation of women in public administration.

An open-ended set of questions was prepared to use among other questions in semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview is the appropriate method to be used in this study based on Rubin and Rubin's (1995) argument that when rich background materials are not available for the study, less structured interviews work better. For this study, most of the questions asked during the interviews came from the prepared questions. As much as possible, questions were open-ended and indirect, to elicit the most honest response and to avoid any bias that may occur from the researcher directing the questions. This indirect way of asking questions also helps to deal with any

concerns regarding the possibility of any sensitive questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Forming the questions is a critical part of any interview because they should be able “to capture some of the richness and complexity of their subject matter... [which] needs to be designed in the pattern of questioning” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, 76). To ensure that the questions were compatible with the purpose of this study as well as the phenomenological method that it follows, the questions were reviewed and revised by the dissertation committee members.

A pre-testing or a pilot study for the questionnaire might have been useful to handle the potential of misunderstood questions. However, this study depended on the advantage of semi-structured interviews to deal with this problem through generating additional questions during the interview in order to fix any misunderstanding. The semi-structured interviews also helped to offer the researcher the opportunity to get more in-depth responses through the additional questions that might be asked for more clarifications, as introduced in the literature by Rubin and Rubin (1995). In fact, the few new questions generated during some of the interviews did not exceed the scope of the main concepts and research questions of the study in order to avoid any difficulty in comparing the answers of the different informants during the process of interpretation.

The prepared questions were divided into two main groups. The first group included general questions to help the informants to feel comfortable and mentally prepared for the interview. These questions did not have a direct relationship to the purpose of this study, but they were very important in facilitating the other questions that are connected to the purpose of this study.

The questions in this group were about education and tenure in the informant's position. The second group included the questions that were directly related to the purpose of this study. All the questions in the second group were driven from the research sub questions. The prepared questions from the second group include:

- Can you describe the kind of work that you do? Can you tell me a story from your experience that illustrates the work that you do?
- What is the best experience you have ever had in your work and what is the worst one?
- Have you noticed any changes in your work after the franchise? Can you describe them?
- When you think back, are there any lessons you have learned in your work that suggest ways of opening top positions to more women?
- If you could change anything about your situation in public administration, what would you want to change?
- Can you think of an example that illustrates how women would be able to improve their positions in public administration?

3.5 Data Interpretation

There is not an agreed-upon number of steps in the procedure of explicating data in the phenomenological approach. While a Methodologist like

Hycner (1985) presents a fifteen-step procedure, other methodologists present shorter procedures of only three steps, such as Krider and Ross (1997), or five steps, such as Groenewald (2004). However, these different procedures seem to have the same path with more or less details. In the phenomenological procedure of interpreting the data in this study, the researcher followed a modified model of the fifteen-step procedure suggested by Hycner (1985). Although Hycner (1985) did not make it clear that his procedure is based on the traditions of Husserl and Schultz phenomenology in social sciences, his phenomenological approach is consistent with their perspectives of phenomenology. The procedure of dealing with the interpretation of the interview data in this study included:

- 1) Transcription: Transcripts were created for all the interviews including the researcher's notations of communications. It should be made clear that all the transcripts in this study were prepared by the researcher in order to ensure the accuracy of the interviews and to maximize the confidentiality to the participants.
- 2) Bracketing and Reduction: the researcher approached the transcripts with an open-mind to whatever meanings emerged from the informants. The researcher suspended any presuppositions or interpretations and was prepared to enter the world of the informants.
- 3) Reading Interviews for a Sense of the Whole: each interview was reviewed by the researcher many times in order to build a context to each

interview as a whole. This context helped to clarify the units of meaning and to help eliminate irrelevant units of meaning, and to assure that the main themes are compatible with each other.

- 4) Delineating Units of Meaning: the researcher went comprehensively through every word, sentence, paragraph, and note in order to extract the informant's meaning. The researcher observed the essences of each unit of meaning that was expressed by the informant. Through this process, the researcher determined whether each unit of meaning was essential to the interview and was a part of the response to the research questions. This process required, according to Hycner (1985), that "each unit of general meaning would be evaluated against the entire context of the interview to determine the units of relevant meaning" (p.285).
- 5) Clustering Units of Meaning: the researcher chose the units of meaning that could be clustered together in order to explore the emergence of the main themes. In order to concentrate on the main themes, irrelevant units of meanings were eliminated. However, that the idea that "the actual number of times a unit of relevant meaning was listed since that itself might indicate some significance" (Hycner, 1985, 287) was taken into consideration.
- 6) Determining Themes from Clusters of Meaning: the researcher examined all the clusters in order to parse out the central themes. All the clusters were checked to ensure their compatibility with the context of each interview as a whole. During this part of the process, the researcher

focused on Van Manen's (1990) question of "[w]hat *does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?*" (p.93).

- 7) Informant's Checks: the researcher wrote a summary that noted the main themes in each interview. The summary and the main themes were returned to the informants in order to check whether they agreed that the researcher's summary and main themes were accurate and captured the essence of their experience.
- 8) Identifying General Themes for All the Interviews: the researcher focused on the themes common to most or all the interviews. In other words, the main themes were generated based on the whole context of responses across all the interviews.

Briefly, after collecting the lived experiences based on the purpose of this research, the textual interviews were carefully studied one by one in order to find the commonalities among each participants' perspective. Each interview was interpreted independently to figure out the main themes. Then, the responses to each question were interpreted in the same context as the responses to the same question in all the other interviews. Based on this, the researcher interpreted the general themes of this study from the informants' commonalities. The informants were later offered the opportunity to check a summary of the interviews and the main themes in order to strengthen the validation of the study.

All the informants were offered the opportunity to read and comment on the final product of this study upon request.

Before the end of this section, it is important to clarify how the study understands the term “phenomenological theme.” According to Van Manen (1990), the word “theme” “refers to an element... which occurs frequently in the text” (p.78). Based on this, the theme analysis is based on the presentation of some selected terms that are frequently repeated in the text. However, phenomenological interpretation does not depend on frequencies and categorical statements but depends on the process of insightful discovery or disclosure to understand the meanings of lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, in light of describing lived experiences, the “[p]henomenological themes may be understood as the structure of experience. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience” (Van Manen, 1990, 79).

3.6 Limitations of the Research Method

The main limitation and concern in this study was the interviewing approach. The concern was that the female participants may not feel comfortable expressing their experiences and ideas especially to a male researcher. On the one hand, female participants may not feel comfortable having a discussion with male researchers based on traditional or religious constraints. This problem should not have been considered because the female participants who hold high

positions in public administration are used to interacting with men officially on a daily basis. Any traditional or religious constraints are tempered by the academic purpose of the interview as well as by conducting the interviews within the formal setting of government offices.

However, cross-gender interviews may be considered as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. Rubin and Rubin (1995) argued that interviewers who conduct these types of interviews should not be afraid of cross-gender concerns because coping with gender gaps is not the problem it is anticipated to be. The cross-gender interviews hold the advantage of “sharing the life and experiences of someone with a background quite different from your own” (p.111). There is some evidence in the literature that support cross-gender interviews as an effective means providing the kind of knowledge that matching-gender interviews do not have, according to Rubin and Rubin (1995). In fact, Rubin and Rubin (1995) made the argument that “interviewing people similar to yourself can pose difficulties, because the interviewees assume that you know what they know. [Thus, t]hey may not explain taken-for-granted meanings in the way they would to an outsider” (p.111). This point can be an advantage for this research because its phenomenological approach is based on the experiences of people. A part of the advantage of conducting cross-gender interviews is the argument that the “interviewees strive to explain their... [different] experiences to those who do not share them” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, 111).

The other potential reason that might have prevented the participants from freely expressing their experiences and thoughts was the fear their supervisors’

reaction to their opinion. However, assuring confidentiality to the participants eliminated this concern. In addition, the fact that no permission was required to conduct these interviews, with one exception, made the participants feel comfortable about expressing their opinions. It was presumed that individuals who hold high positions in government are able to evaluate the level of sensitivity their answers carry and could deal with each question properly. It was assumed that participants who hold high positions in public administration would be well-educated individuals with long tenure in public service, giving them a reasonable margin of freedom to talk about politics and policies. It was supposed that individuals with these qualifications had the ability to express themselves in an appropriate way. In addition, the nature of the topic does not have a direct connection on measuring or evaluating the performance of the participants' public organizations.

One of the actual problems that this study faced during the process of conducting the interviews is what Rubin and Rubin (1995) attached to elite interviews. The interviews of this study are categorized as "elite" because one of its criteria is conducting interviews with individuals in high positions. Rubin and Rubin (1995) addressed the barriers that this kind of interview imposes on research: "elites may assume interviewers are like journalists, who are to be manipulated or used but never be fully trusted. Second, elites often limit the length of the interview, because their time is too valuable to spend in long discussions" (p.113). This study dealt with this limitation by showing knowledgeability and building relationships, both suggestions offered by Rubin

and Rubin (1995). This researcher tried to show the interviewees that he was knowledgeable about the issue under study without appearing threatening. The questions were presented in a way that reflected the need for rich experiences rather than formal statements. It was also taken into consideration to build a relationship with the informants through any available means of communication. The follow-up questions were intended to eliminate this limitation and to gain more in-depth experiences from the informants.

Needless to say that in spite of the attempt to eliminate these limitations of interview-based research, it is hard to claim that the research method of this study is free of shortcomings. However, it should be made clear that this is a qualitative not a quantitative study and it should be seen within this context. Thus, no limitations associated with quantitative research methods should be seen in any part of this study. Rubin and Rubin (1995) reminded qualitative researchers in a few words about the rigorousness of their research methods, which should be always observed:

The tone of your method discussion should be quietly authoritative. Make sure you do not sound apologetic for not having carried out a quantitative design. If you apologize for having only 10 interviewees or for an inability to generalize because your interviewees were not picked at random, you come across as if you do not understand either the qualitative interview model or the quantitative one. (p.264)

It should be mentioned that all the interviews were conducted in Arabic. The process of interpreting these interviews included translating the relevant units of meaning and the main themes into English. All the quotations used to build the arguments in the next chapter were translated into English as well. One

full interview has been translated into English and is included in the appendix. This translated interview will help readers get a direct sense of what was said during the conversation and how the interpretation was done. There are inevitably nuances of meaning that are changed when a person's words are translated from one language to another. However, the researcher's fluency in both Arabic and English has helped to bridge this gap. It should also be made clear that all the words that may affect the identification of any participant were eliminated during the translation.

3.7 Ethical Issues

All the participants in this study were told that participation in the study was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. They were assured that no personal identification would be revealed and no specific ministry would be named or connected to a specific theme or individual. The project was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Cleveland State University. Although this research was exempted by the IRB, a consent form was presented to all the participants prior to the interviews with the recommendation to read it carefully and sign. The form included the purpose of the study, permission to use a recorder, an assurance of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw as well as the right not to answer any specific questions. In general, this study observed the ethical principles that represent the guideline for major scholarly associations, according to Christians (2000).

CHAPTER IV

DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study, which are constructed using the researcher's interpretation of the experiences of women who hold high-level positions in the Kuwaiti public administration. This chapter first presents the main themes, which have been gleaned from the participants, their follow-up comments, and the researcher's notes. The study separately parses out the themes in each interview based on the interpretation of the entire conversation. An overview of all the themes from all the interviews determines the main themes of this research. Therefore, the main themes in this study were derived from the conversations with public administrators based on the researcher's judgment of which perspectives touched most closely and faithfully the essence of the participants' experience. Each main theme is stated in this chapter, and further

explanations are given to illustrate what that theme means for women in high positions.

Most of the themes have several dimensions that are discussed to clarify the interpretation of each one. It should be made clear that a considerable portion of this study is intended to lay the foundation for research on the condition of women with high positions in public administration. Specifically, this purpose justifies the attempt of this study to present as many women's perspectives as possible to allow further research to build on the findings of this study. Therefore, many interesting points are considered as dimensions within each of the main themes. Each main theme recurred again and again throughout the interview material, and dimensions of each theme were revealed in specific comments that found parallels across interviews.

The following section is based on the participants' responses to the interview questions. This section discusses the main issues anticipated by the research sub-questions, such as the experiences of working for the government, changes in work due to women gaining political rights, and lessons to improve women's conditions. The discussion in this segment focuses on the main themes that emerged from the interviews in order to respond to the research sub-questions. The discussion then shifts to focus on the experiences of male counterparts in order to emphasize the perspectives of women in public administration and help to put them in context. The whole discussion of the research sub-questions provides the foundation to the interpretation of this research. The interpretation concentrates on answering the research main

question regarding how women in high positions perceive the change in their work due to women's acquisition of political rights.

4.2 Identifying Themes

The main themes considered by this study came from the participants, who were asked to describe their jobs in government, their best and worst experiences in work, the changes in work that they have perceived since the franchise, the lessons they have learned due to the franchise, the changes that they wish to consider, and their suggestions to improve the conditions of women in public administration. The participants' responses articulated some common concerns and issues, which are presented as the main themes.

There are eight main themes that are identified by this study: Gender, Accountability, Social Challenges, Competency, Communication, Knowledge and Experience, Leadership, and Change. It should be emphasized that these themes are based on comments that were elicited by very general questions for the high-level women about their experiences. In other words, these themes are not the product of "opinion poll"-type questions like "what is the role of leadership?" or "how do you define accountability?" that might have imposed on them.

Also, it should be made clear that some of these themes are highly interrelated. This point will be seen through some quotations that are used under a specific theme but may fit under another theme as well. Distributing the

quotations among the themes in this context represents the researcher's judgment based on the interpretations of the themes and quotations. It should be mentioned that this interrelationship among the main themes strengthens the clarity of the whole picture of the findings in this study, which helps to answer effectively its research questions. The following discussion presents more explanations about these main themes.

4.2.1 Theme No. 1: Gender

The experiences of gender for women who hold high positions in the public sector have a variety of dimensions, including some contradictory ones. Gender, in general, refers to cultural norms and expectations about appropriate behavior for men and for women. Gender is socially constructed rather than based strictly on biology. The first dimension emphasized by the participants is that men dominate the leading positions in the Kuwaiti public administration. There is an agreement among the high-level women that Kuwaiti women do not have the same opportunity to hold high positions as their male counterparts even though one of the participants affirmed in this context that "there are no certain obstacles to women due to their gender."

The discrimination against women in high administrative levels is affirmed by most of the participants who mentioned, for example, the limited number of women who hold leading positions in the government of Kuwait. In the discussion of promotions to higher positions, one of the women stressed that "many unfair

decisions give opportunities for men... only because they are men.” Another informant stated that “the leading positions... whether for assistant deputies or general managers... most of the time ... are dominated by men.” Another informant described the hard pressure and unfair conditions that women face in the process of promotion to high positions because of gender:

There is a problem with holding leading positions... there is a war in terms of holding the leading positions. Any woman must be very distinguished and highly qualified in order to find her opportunity to hold a high position in government... but for any man... his strong relationships, communications, and connections are enough to assure him a leading position. Some ministers do not accept the existence of a woman beside them... one of the ministers did not prefer to have a woman, especially in our field. The effective performance of women is not taken into consideration, but every woman needs to affirm her effective work over and over. Society is masculine, and only the voice of men is heard.

Another participant contended the same view by referring to her personal experience when she was assigned her position as an assistant deputy:

Before getting this position, there were some whispers about the person who would take the position. There was a kind of fear of appointing a woman as assistant deputy minister... there were some doubts about the potential of women and their competencies. Even after being appointed, there were some people who were not satisfied by appointing a woman in this position. The reason for that was either because they were willing to get this position or because they continued not to trust the potential of woman to occupy leading positions.

Obviously, there agreement that women struggle because of gender through what is described as “a war” to reach high positions. However, women do not agree on the reasons that men discriminate against them. One participant stated that

The main problem is the rejection of being led by a female leader. Some men were cooperative, but also some of them were following

and focusing on mistakes. There was jealousy and envy because I was the only woman among men.

On the other hand, another participant expressed disagreement with this view by emphasizing that “there are many men who do not admit women, but that is not because of jealousy and envy since men are confident that they have the priority in promotions to the high positions in government due to their masculinity.” It seems that masculinity itself is considered the only license necessary to enter the world of high administrative levels in public administration in Kuwait.

Another important dimension that is emphasized in terms of gender in public administration is whether women should be seen and treated equally or differently comparable to their male counterparts. Kuwaiti women who hold high positions have contradictory perspectives in this regard. While a few of them think that equality between men and women is the major factor that should be observed in order to have effective performance, most participants believe that women have their own intellectual, emotional, and social qualifications that should be positively taken into consideration to have more effective performance in the public sector. It should be mentioned that some of the participants individually have contradictive views about this issue. One participant emphasized equality in work by stating that “there is no difference between men and women in their job performance.” Another woman stated that, “what was demanded in all the ministries is the principle of equality.” Based on these views, it could be interpreted that equality between women and men in the public sector

is seen by these participants as a general demand of women in the government based on practical experience.

On the other hand, many participants refer to the advantages of the special qualifications that women have in their performance generally and in leadership positions specifically. For this group of participants, the focus should be on how to benefit public administration through women's unique qualities rather than on equality. One of the participants expressed what she believed as special qualifications of women by stating that "women are more honest and more organized than men." Another woman asserted the uniqueness of women through her experience:

I might have the courage to make some hard decisions that my men counterparts might hesitate to make... women add some of the female qualities that are not possessed by men. Women have some visions that are different from men... Being a woman was an advantage in my effectiveness on the job. I think that there are some roles that can be done better by women than by men.

Other participants stressed additional female characteristics that help women perform more effectively. For instance, one participant said, "the nature of women enables them to make appropriate decisions in a shorter time than men." Another participant pointed out that:

When women love their jobs, they give without limitations... they will perform with enthusiasm because their work will compose all of their lives... Also women are very accurate in their work... Women usually have more interests and give more time for work.

Another woman emphasized the advantage of female uniqueness that women in high positions should maintain. She argued that women should act as women rather than trying to imitate the behavior of men:

Women who seek to reach high positions must distinguish themselves as women... they do not have to take male characteristics... It is not acceptable for women to act as men in their jobs. Reaching high positions by any woman should be in a harmony with her nature and characteristics as a woman in this society.

The last dimension that is emphasized by women in high positions is the relationships between women and their supervisors in terms of gender. This issue also did not find consensus among the participants. While a group of women emphasize the advantage of having a women in leading positions in order to empower their female subordinates, other participants think that women prefer, for different reasons, to work under male supervisors. Some of the participants stressed that part of their jobs as women in high positions relates to their commitment to allow women to express their needs, concerns, and problems.

One participant pointed out: "When I was assigned this position, many female employees in this ministry welcomed my coming because they thought that I would be the best one to represent them." She asserted one advantage of having a female superior for women by stating that "Women working in the ministry are hesitant to present their problems, especially to men bosses. They might need help in delivering information about their professional problems to their supervisors. Some problems might not be reported to their male

colleagues.” Another woman contended that “the absence of women in ministerial positions leads to the ignorance of giving women equal opportunities with men to hold high positions.” She described her experience with other women when she was assigned her position

The best experience that I have is the honor that I received from the women in the ministry... because women in general feel that they are standing under the glass ceiling that prevents them from promotions in all the ministries... The opportunity to receive a promotion is not available or not suitable for most women. When I came to this position, they felt that there was a woman who is able to represent their voice and to treat with justice their unfair conditions.

Nevertheless, other participants disagree with this perspective and believe that women prefer to have male supervisors because they have a better ability to deal with women. One of the participants referred to the questions regarding “whether the Kuwaiti women are willing to occupy leading positions? Do women accept being supervised by other women?” She responded to this question by stating that, “I think that the Kuwaiti woman prefers to have a man, regardless his defects, to be her boss.” Another female administrator stressed that “in general, things may be changed, but the women in our society do not want to have a female boss... A lot of women prefer men rather than women.” One participant illustrated the relationship between female superiors and female subordinates by stating:

Women should believe in providing support to other women. I have dealt with many men and women subordinates... Men trust their female subordinates more than women trust their female subordinates. Men give more opportunities to women, and I prefer to deal with men because they have a peaceful manner rather than an aggressive one with women... Two women on the same path

towards a high position means that the competition between them is going to be tough.

To sum up this theme, gender is a commonly discussed issue among the women who hold high positions in the government of Kuwait. High-level women in public administration discussed different aspects of gender in the public sector, but they do not have an agreement on each one of them. High-level women confirm, in general, the existence of discrimination against them in the government. Few women think that pure equality between men and women should be observed in order to have effective performance, while most of them believe that women have their own qualifications that should be positively considered. The interviewees believe that women in high positions benefit from their uniqueness because they are honest, organized, courageous, accurate, with high enthusiasm and ability to make appropriate decisions in a short time. High-level women are divided in terms of the advantage of having women rather than men in leading positions in order to empower their female subordinates.

4.2.2 Theme No. 2: Accountability

Women in high positions offered their rich experiences about their conditions in public administration, such as the different responsibilities that come with being an accountable public administrator in implementing public policies. Accountability is seen by women in high administrative levels as the obligation to consider different responsibilities when they apply their authority in

light of their commitment to effective performance in their positions. These high-level women see accountability as relating to two aspects of policy implementation, one is to take care of the generic administrative duties that support policy implementation, such as budgeting, personnel, or planning and the other aspect is to interface directly with the legislature.

In general, there are some typical responsibilities that were mentioned during the interviews including administrative, legal, and political responsibilities. Most women in top-level positions connect the effectiveness of implementing public policies to those job responsibilities that need to be met rather than accomplishing specific goals of their ministries. This emphasis is understandable in the public sector because of the difficulty in measuring the effectiveness and efficiency of public agencies' performance and goals. More details about this issue will be discussed in the following part. There are two dimensions of accountability that are discussed in the section, the responsibilities of high-level women in implementing public policies and the question of to whom women see themselves as accountable when the political responsibility is mentioned.

Some of the high-level women in public administration described their jobs of implementing policies in terms of their responsibilities dealing with the traditional administrative functions of public managers such as planning, organizing, directing, personnel, or budgeting. When participants were asked about the nature of their job as a key player at a high administrative level, one of them stated simply that, "We have to manage public projects. We have to

prepare long-term plans to the cabinet. We have to give professional consultation to the minister” Another participant also had a traditional view of her position:

I am working in a job that I love. The true nature of my job is personnel management... I have the ability to manage my subordinates... I also like to work with budgeting... I see budgeting as the core in any administrative work.

This view of holding a high position does not differ from the traditional functions that a third participant saw when she said:

I think that a leadership position faces an increasing responsibility where communications, meetings, and supervision of big bureaus are intensified. This responsibility obliges the leader to depend in large part of personnel who can assist in providing information, making decisions, and fulfilling various tasks.

Another interviewee added that “the nature of my job is administrative and technical work... preparing studies and plans.” One participant emphasized that her job at a high administrative level is nothing but following procedures. She stated:

What I am doing does not differ from the routine work that is done in all the other ministries... We have to work according to rules, regulations, and routine procedures... so the financial and budgeting decisions must be made in accordance with the general procedures of the Ministry of Finance and the administrative decisions must be made in accordance with the general guidelines of the Civil Service Commission.

What was described by these participants mainly refers their typical managerial functions, which are connected around performing administrative and financial tasks according to the legal procedures of implementing public policies in government. On the other hand, political responsibility was mentioned by some

participants who considered the political dimension of their high positions in the government. Political responsibility in this context is seen as the obligation to be accountable to a superior authority, which determines the appropriateness of any public official's actions. Some participants referred to their responsibilities as specific job tasks and some of them emphasized their connection to the legislative branch.

For example, one participant emphasized the connection with the legislative branch by describing that a part of her job is "to deal with parliamentary inquiries and demands." Another women asserted that a portion of her job focuses on "establishing a relationship with the cabinet" and that her "communication with the ministers and the parliament members was going smoothly." A third participant introduced her high position through its political dimension by emphasizing that "the leading position is a political position," which implies the connection to politicians as well as professionals. Additional women who hold high positions mentioned their direct relationships with representatives in the parliament, which will be seen later.

What can be interpreted from these women's description of their work as high-ranking officials is that they do not all have the same view regarding accountability. While a portion of them think that a part of their job is to deal with the parliament or the legislative branch, others do not refer to this responsibility. The women who mentioned the relationship with the parliament indirectly affirmed that they are accountable to the legislative branch besides their accountability to the executive branch. On the other hand, the group of women

that did not mention any political responsibility talked instead about competency, standards, hierarchy, technical knowledge, and procedures. Although these women do not state that they are accountable to their professional standards as public careerists, this perspective could be inferred from the context of their interviews. One of them, for instance, asserted that “the woman administrator who is not involved in politics would perform her job in a more professional and technical way... This practical way of doing the work would improve performance in public administration.”

To sum up this theme, high-level women in the government describe their experience of accountability in leading positions based on typical responsibilities that are identified through the managerial functions of public managers in implementing policy. While some women narrowed their accountability to their profession, others emphasized that they are accountable to the legislative body besides the executive branch of the government of Kuwait.

4.2.3 Theme No. 3: Social Challenges

One of the main factors mentioned by high-level women in government is the role that the social condition of women in the society plays in order in encouraging or discouraging them from reaching leading positions in public administration. While some women asserted the significance of maintaining support from their social surroundings to hold high positions, others emphasized how Kuwaiti society discourages women from reaching leading positions. One of

the participants referred to the positive influence of family on her performance as a high-level administrator by stressing “the understanding of my role as a high-level women in my social surroundings... this when you have a husband and kids who understand and a cooperative family.”

On the other hand, other participants refer to “the local traditions, customs, and social obligations that might hinder a women’s ability to reach higher positions.” One of the participants argued that the perspectives of some conservative groups prevent any progress in the development of women’s conditions including their ability to hold leading positions in the public sector. She asserted that “if the tribal structures are not changed in the society, it will be too hard for women to take a distinguished role.” Another high-level women echoed the same point, stating: “unfortunately, the social structure of society... and some social groups in society do not accept women in leading positions.”

Another participant referred to the social barriers that give men the freedom to build social relationships, which supports their professional needs, while at the same time restricting women from the same action. She stated that “men are able to find proficient cadre through their social relationships that is not available for women. Men can benefit from their social relationships... but women cannot because they are not allowed.” Another high-level woman also noted this point, stating: “I cannot expand my relationships because I am a middle-eastern woman in a conservative society.”

From a different perspective, other women consider the difficulty in combining the responsibilities of their office and the responsibilities of their

family. In fact, high-level women recognized the problems that many women face due to their obligations to their roles as wives and mothers. One high-level woman stressed that “social concerns of life do not give a woman the chance to think of reaching a high position in the government because she is exhausted by her social duties within her family.” Another participant called on society to taken action to support women:

women are exhausted by their responsibilities and men’s social responsibilities... she is wife, mother, and employee at the same time... society should prepare all the conditions for women, taking into consideration their social responsibilities in order to improve their performance.

In short, this participant argued that the society as a whole should play a role in removing the social barriers that prevent Kuwaiti women from reaching high positions in the government. It seems that many high-level women think there is a need for public support to encourage the progress of change in the social and political condition of women in society. Specifically, high-level women asserted that the need for public support is socially and politically significant to help more women to reach high administrative positions in government. In general, participants emphasized the role of the government, the media, and women’s organizations in leading the empowerment of women in the public sector. One of the participants argued that

The government has to have a role in encouraging women. The state’s current mechanism to implement [policies to support women]... is ambiguous. Women have to be supported by the media... Women should be given the opportunity to enter the field of work and politics freely. Without achieving such circumstances, women will struggle. Women should be encouraged to fill senior and leading positions, but what is going on is that women are

discouraged by many entities. ... Women still need assistance from society, but what we see is that some entities fight back against women's motivation and their efforts to be leaders. There are some women who might give up their rights to reach a higher position because of the negative propaganda that they might face.

This high-level woman indicated the social barriers imposed by some conservative groups that prevent women from leading positions in the government. This argument is also stressed by other participants, such as the woman who emphasized the need for public support to encourage women:

the feminist leaders must be united... When women in non-governmental organizations as well as the media and the parliament initiate cooperative efforts, it will be hard for state decision-makers not to pay attention to the demand for more women in leading positions.

Another participant felt that the government should offer to support those women who have difficulties due to their role as mothers. She said: "the government should provide women with the means of assistance, such as affordable daycare or considering the needs of nursing mothers, this would improve the condition of women in the public sector." The improvement of women's conditions in the public sector, in general, could lead to better performance and greater focus towards high administrative levels.

To sum up this theme, the participants believe that the social conditions of women influence their conditions in the public sector. While the positive effect of family support is mentioned, high-level women in public administration concentrate on dealing with the social barriers that hinder their ability to hold high positions in the government. These social barriers are imposed on women by the

society's traditions and by some conservative groups. Women are exhausted by their familial responsibilities and are restricted from freely establishing social relationships, which does not give them the same opportunities as men to improve their performance. The participants think that these barriers should be removed through public support provided by the government, media, and women-oriented non-governmental organizations.

4.2.4 Theme No. 4: Competency

All the women who hold high positions in the Kuwaiti public administration emphasize competency without exception. The critical role that all the participants give to this concept is understandable because any evidence of a lack of competency in their ministries could cause serious damage to the public programs that they implement and/or to their future as professional public careerists. In general, competency could be seen as being intellectually and professionally qualified through skills, actions, and technical knowledge to achieve the goals of a particular job based on certain acceptable standards of performance.

The women who hold high positions in the government of Kuwait focused on the competency of their performance before and after holding the leading position as the main criterion of selection for their position. It should be noted that, in the context of these interviews, competency in the performance of public officials in high positions is described as a matter of effectiveness rather than

efficiency. This segment discusses competency from two main dimensions that could be interpreted from the conversations. These dimensions of competency are: competency as the main element in their performance and competency as a criterion of selection to the leading positions.

Competency is seen by the women who hold high positions as the main element in evaluating their own performance. They believe that maintaining their competency helped them achieve their high position and allowed them to continue in office. A participant asserted that her competency was the decisive criterion in the decision to take the high position. She said: “what distinguished my performance was the high competency... I depended on showing the superiors my capabilities and competent performance.” Another participant stressed the same point of view by focusing on her competent performance as the key to holding a leading position: “I was competent and reached this position before the franchise.” These women refer to competency as the main factor that pushed them to the position but also mention competency as one of the elements that help them remain in their positions. One of the participants made it clear that “the position of any leader requires personal competency.”

In terms of focusing on competency as the main criterion of selecting the nominees for high positions in the government, most of the participants emphasized that the process of selection must be ruled by competency in order to promote the best person to any leading position. It should be mentioned that a couple of the participants referred to their preference for giving women priority in promotions, which could be seen as contradictory to a commitment to

competency. One of these two participants defended this view by stating: “I pushed more women to reach high positions in the government. I made this selection not because they are women but because I tried to right the unfair conditions of all women.” Another woman said: “We should give priority to more women to hold high positions in the public sector because only a few of them are allowed to reach high administrative levels.” However, these women reverted to a commitment to competency as the main criteria later on in the same conversation.

What was common among the participants is the point of view that competency is a critical element in the selection for high positions. One of the participants asserted that competency should be the only criterion of selection by stating, “in my opinion, competency is the only reliable basis for selection... competency leads to the appropriate performance.” Another participant thought that providing fair conditions in promotion to high positions would encourage more women to consider these positions. She emphasized that “when there is a standardized process of selection for promotions to high positions that is based on the principle of competency, this would give incentives to women to consider opportunities in promotion and leadership.” Besides the loyalty of high-level women to the principle of competency, one of the participants added an interesting view to this issue through her experience:

First of all, anyone who holds a leadership position has to create a competent cadre regardless of the hindrances of gender. There should be a focus on those who have distinguished qualifications. There must be certain qualifications and standardizations that must be met by these selected employees. If we take being female as our only consideration, men will be exposed to injustice. There will

be a mess as men will be biased towards men in promotion and recruitment and women will be biased towards women. I will support promotions only for women who deserve such promotion, not just because they are women. If there were more qualified male employee... he would be given priority for such a promotion. I encourage women to be promoted but only if they have the potential.

Another participant made her argument in the same way, emphasizing competency over the narrow interests of women in the public sector:

I do not see a leading position based on the gender of the person who holds it... If there are women who are qualified, they should be given the opportunity to reach high positions without oppressing men... the opportunity should be given to the competent person who has the qualifications... When I distinguish the person who has the qualifications to hold a leading position, this should be determined through competency rather than gender... If there are five women who are not qualified and one man who is qualified, I will push the man because he is competent.

These two perspectives not only confirm the significance of competency, but also provide a remarkable point of view in terms of the relationship between competency and gender. The interesting perspective presented here by a woman who holds a high position in public administration is the willingness to treat male subordinates in a fair manner that is based on competency. Regardless of the fact that these high-level women noted discrimination against women in high positions, they are committed to applying the criterion of competency in the promotion on men and women. One participant emphasized this view:

the position of assistant deputy minister is connected to policy making, and it must be introduced based on criteria... If we find a man with better qualifications than a woman... this man should be given the position because the criterion is competency rather than anything else.

Another high-level woman also emphasized the same view: “any subordinates could perform competently regardless of gender if the appropriate conditions are created for him\her... the most important thing is to push competent subordinates.” Experiencing from unfair treatment and conditions in the public administration did not provoke any desire for vengeance. The honesty of the women could be presented here because they committed themselves to criteria rather than treating men in a retaliatory discriminating manner.

However, the concentration of competency as the main criterion for promotion does not mean that the high-level women who focused on this aspect do not care about encouraging more women to hold high positions. In fact, these participants do care about pushing women to leading positions through the belief that a commitment to competency itself will lead more women to hold high positions in government. One of the participants presented this perspective:

to push more women to hold any high position in the public sector, there must be certain criteria and qualifications to describe this high position... also to the individuals who are qualified to hold this position. There should be one ruler [standard] to be used and applied to all men and women... Only by following this standard will there be not only more women in high positions but also effective administration that is free of unfairness... The best and the most competent will reach high positions regardless of gender.

This participant asserted that a commitment to competency in selecting candidates for high positions will automatically lead more women to high administrative levels. In other words, the obligation to competency will eliminate the unfair conditions that permit men to be promoted while at the same time blocking women from promotions. This belief is supported by many participants,

such as the one who stressed that, “if the fair basis is established to rule the competition between women and men in a practical way, most high positions will be held by women.” Another high-level woman argued that “the more equal opportunities are given to women, the more women will have manifestation... Equal opportunities due to criteria will push more women to high positions.”

To summarize, the role of competency is a common factor noted by women in high positions. They think that competency was a critical element in their personal experiences in terms of attaining high positions. They also presented competency as the major element that should rule the criteria of achieving high positions in government. The participants stressed the priority of competency even when they have to make a selection between men and women. However, this perspective does not mean that they are not concerned about promoting more women to high administrative levels. They believe that if the criterion of competency is applied to the selection process, more women will hold high positions due to fairness in promotions.

4.2.5 Theme No. 5: Communication

The concept of communication was critical in all the interviews with the women in high administrative positions. The interviewees noted the significance of the different dimensions of communication including formal and informal communication, vertical and horizontal communication, and internal and external communication. This segment discusses how high-level women in the Kuwaiti

government present their perspectives regarding the role of communication in their work.

First of all, formal and informal communication is emphasized by the participants as a means of helping them perform their job effectively. Formal communication refers to the channels that allow information to flow through the hierarchal chain of authority in any ministry while informal communication refers to the flow of information outside this chain of authority. Obviously, the role of formal communication is implied in the women's perspectives about procedures, routine, hierarchy, and relationships with subordinates when the entire context of the interview is observed. One of the participants clearly asserted her dependency "on a large basis of personnel who can assist in providing information." Formal communication does not seem to have a distinguished view to be discussed because women in high positions do not have a problem with. In the words of one interviewee: "regarding the way of receiving and using the information within the ministry, there are no specific problems for women."

However, the interesting thing that can be interpreted from the experiences of these women is the role of informal communication, which is demonstrated by how women in high positions find out the information they want. The intriguing element added to the concept of communication relates to the willingness of high-level women to leave the office in order to seek out a piece of information, even with an employee at the bottom of the hierarchy in their sectors. Some of the women emphasized that they do not mind bypassing the hierarchical chain of authority in order to reach a useful piece of information. One

of the participants stated “I have no problem going by myself to any neglected employee at the bottom of my sector to ask him or her a question.” These women are motivated to find the information they need regardless of the formal procedure of information flow. As another woman put it: “I insist on learning even from those who are lower than my administrative level in the hierarchy. I do not depend on others to bring me a piece of information but I seek it out.”

This enthusiasm to seek out information not only goes through vertical channels of communication but through horizontal channels without considering formal restrictions in any ministry. Another participant emphasized this point by stating: “I will go to the other assistant deputies in the ministry and do not wait until they come for me.” All of these efforts to communicate take place within each ministry, which is considered internal communication.

The other dimension that is interpreted from the interviews relates to the significance that women in high positions give to external communications as well. This kind of communication depends on an informal style of communication. High-level women generally felt that many of them lack equal opportunity to establish and use a considerable part of the external web of communication because of social restrictions due to their gender. A major issue that many participants asserted in this context is the role of attending *Diwaniya*, which represents a significant aspect of their external communications. The meaning of *Diwaniya* that is explained in the background of this study should be mentioned briefly again to clarify the following few quotations. The local meaning of *Diwaniya* refers to a place of assembly in any house, where men can meet in the

evenings to talk informally about any subject that interests them. When she was talking about the significance of external communications, one of the women in high positions pointed out that

women in leading positions do not have the ability to defend their perspectives and decisions in *Diwanis* when their professional performance or decisions are criticized. I was appealing to men whom I trust to represent my point of view... Women should reconsider their ability, power, and political influence in this society in order to treat the lack of communication through *Diwanis*.

In the same way, another participant also emphasized the limitation imposed on her ability to have full communication for better decision making by stating that

Men benefit from attending *Diwaniya* by receiving information and thoughts that help them to make appropriate decisions... but women are not able to do the same thing. I have to find another practical way to establish a basis of information for decision making.

A third participant added that “*Diwanis* in Kuwait enable men to express their voice and to enhance their decision-making ability but women are not able to have that.” Later in the conversation, she considered the flow of information that men receive from *Diwanis* as an advantage that gives them preference in the promotions higher positions in the government.

On the other hand, some of the participants considered the lack of communication with the major *Diwanis* in society as an advantage. One of the women stressed that her performance benefits because she does not face the political pressure imposed by unprofessional inquiries on her decisions. For instance, in the context of showing the positive influence of not attending

Diwaniya on her decisions about recruitments, a participant asserted that “the favoritism was minimized in the recruitments because of the difficulty faced by men in contacting me as a woman in order to put pressure on my decisions... I do not attend or have *Diwaniya* to meet men.” Another participant clearly stated that “women do not visit *Diwaniyas* and public meetings... so they are less influenced by the political alternations. They do not face the uncomfortableness that men may face when they enter any *Diwaniya*.”

In summary, communication is considered a major theme in this study because women in high positions commonly refer to its significance in their work experiences. Besides the formal channel of communication through the chain of authority, high-level women expressed their enthusiasm for maintaining the flow of information through vertical and horizontal informal channels of communications within their ministries. In terms of external communication, while they agree on the influence of this kind of communication on their work, they did not agree whether it has positive or negative impact on their performance and decisions.

4.2.6 Theme No. 6: Knowledge and Experience

Many women who hold high positions in public administration emphasized in the interviews the importance of technical knowledge and practical experiences in effectively performing their positions. The technical knowledge is seen as the specialization determined by educational qualifications, the

professional knowledge gained through continuing learning while in office, and the general knowledge that is learned throughout one's life. The term "practical experience" could be seen as the cumulative experience that is gained over time by practicing a certain job in addition to the professional training in this job. The high-level women noted different methods of improving the scope of the practical experience of those who hold high positions, which could be categorized under capacity building and interactions with leaders.

High-level women in the government emphasized the critical role that technical knowledge and practical experience play in their ability to retain a high position and perform well in that position. When describing the type of work that they do in a leading position, one of the participants stated, "my hierarchical promotions in the same sector and the tasks that I was doing in my administrative work prompted me to learn and gain detailed knowledge about the business of the ministry." She recognized the advantages of learning the technical knowledge that she gained through performing her work tasks as one of the keys that allow her to perform in her position. It should be added that more than one participant note the role of hierarchical promotions within the same sector in supporting her technical knowledge and practical experience.

Another high-level woman supported the same view by criticizing a lack of educational qualifications in some of the men who hold leading positions by stating that, "the most important thing is the educational qualification... There are a number of assistant deputies who do not have any educational attainments."

Another high-level woman stressed that learning is a part of her work experience by arguing that

women should be a good audience and learn from others and benefit from their experiences... including their subordinates. Learning technical knowledge from other people who have the same specialization or a different one is very important for women in high positions... whether others who are in a higher administrative level or a lower one.

Another participant emphasized the balance that she tries to maintain between involvement in her administrative tasks and her willingness to maintain technical knowledge. She emphasized this argument to remind public administrators that the administrative part of their functions should not dominate the intellectual portion:

I am not diverted from gaining technical knowledge by focusing on administrative work... Seeking for information is the key to building up your knowledge... also meeting other experts and learning from them. I am not ashamed of asking and learning from others... even those who are in lower administrative levels... You may learn a lot of things that you need as a human and as a manager... I consider a willingness to learn as an advantage to public administrators.

This participant continued to describe her personal experience and how one could build self-confidence through the continuous learning of technical knowledge. She said, “knowledge is very important... I read and prepare myself for any meeting in order to be prepared and confident... The more woman gain knowledge, the more confidence the state will have in her abilities.” In the same context, another participant emphasized the role of technical knowledge in preparing her to hold a leading position. She stated that “I was established as a leader through a course that was given by the Commission of Civil Service about

Civil Service Law... I started my career based on a strong foundation that has helped me lead”

In terms of practical experience, high-level women stressed two ways of building their experience in leading positions, capacity building and interactions with other leaders. Capacity building could be seen as anything that enhances an individual’s abilities and skills in order to achieve the goals of their jobs and ministries. The high-level women asserted the significance and the positive influence of training on women in the public sector, especially those who are seeking or hold high positions. One of the participants stated that “to improve the condition of women in the public sector, there are workshops and training courses that are designed for leaders” The significance of training was noted by another participant who stressed that one of the elements of improving performance in high position is “training and supporting the professional experiences of women to meet work priorities and personal needs.” A third participant argued that leading

women should be established through training courses... These courses should includes final exams with pass or fail to evaluate... not only listening and getting certificates... Women in leading positions should be supported by training courses that renovate their style of thinking.

Another interviewee emphasized that the women in government should be given the opportunity to gain practical experience by “allowing them to learn from their responsibilities and practice in office.” She emphasized the weight that she gives to the role of practical experience by referring to her eagerness for “participation in specialized conferences as a practitioner... this continues work in

my technical field besides my administrative tasks... I attended many training courses at my own expenses to maintain my technical skills” This enthusiasm to continually improve her practical experience is echoed by the positive influence on women in high positions where “hierarchical promotions in the ministry have given me the practical experience that sharpens my vision of the future and my ability in strategic planning.”

Besides training, one of the important sources of practical experiences that women in high positions are encouraged to consider is interaction with leaders. Some of the high-level women described how useful it was for them to deal with other individuals who hold high positions in the government as a way of gaining practical leadership experience. One participant asserted that a

woman should seek opportunities to interact with other leaders in her ministries and other ministries... I had the chance to interact with other individuals who hold leading positions in different ministries... This interaction gives women many leadership and administrative skills.

A participant emphasized the importance of allowing women to be responsible for dealing with leaders in the other ministries. She said:

high-level women must be given more authority to represent their ministries to the other ministries... and this could be considered as an examination for their leadership abilities... Women should be offered the opportunity for interactions with assistant deputies in the other ministers.

An additional high-level woman appreciated the opportunity that she was offered to attend meetings with the state leaders. She emphasized that

one of the factors that helped me hold this position is the confidence that my bosses gave me... They wanted to highlight the

role of women in the ministry through attending high meetings with the leaders of the state... Many times, I was the only woman.

Another women referred to some of the women's concerns regarding limiting their capacity building to theoretical learning rather than practical experience. She argued that

women are given some training courses but these courses practically do not reflect their actual needs... Women are not educated and trained about how to deal with other leaders in the government... those who can provide valuable information about leadership experiences. I was pushed by my seniors to attend the higher meetings of the state leaders... to gain the practical leadership experience and knowledge... Courses and workshops are important means but they must be accompanied by practical experience.

To summarize this theme, women who hold high positions in public administration emphasized the critical role of technical knowledge and practical experience for those who hold high positions in government. They think that women should be aware of their educational qualifications, continue learning and training during service, and interact with other leaders. Some of the interesting points that they emphasized are the need to have a balance between administrative tasks and learning and the need to maintain a balance between theoretical learning and practical experience.

4.2.7 Theme No. 7: Leadership

Leadership was a major theme in terms of its significance to participants' high positions in the public sector. They saw that their leadership characteristics

distinguished them in their high positions and helped them to perform effectively in these positions. Leadership is seen as one's ability to influence the willingness of people to achieve certain goals. Before going further to present the experiences that high-level women gave regarding this theme, it should be made clear that the high-level women's view of leadership was made in a classical way, which is based mainly on authority. This means that what is interpreted from the perspectives of high-level women is that they saw leadership as a function of management rather than using management as a means to facilitate the visions of leader. There are many interesting dimensions of leadership that the high-level women in government considered, including personality, role models, and collaboration, which are discussed here in detail.

First of all, women in high positions introduced themselves as leaders based on their own personal characteristics. A participant stressed that one of the main factors that should be considered in holding high positions is "the personalities of individuals... the personalities that fit leading positions." Another high-level woman mentioned that "any manager may perform well, but he cannot be an effective leader without leadership qualities" High-level women emphasized their own leadership characteristics that were observed by their superiors and that helped them to be distinguished among their colleagues in order to be promoted to a leading position. A high-level woman emphasized that "supervisors concentrate on active women to hold leading positions." Another participant asserted: "I was a distinguished women... it depended on my supervisors' recognition of my performance... I was very active while women

usually are not.” Another woman also mentioned that she was “a distinguished woman,” while a fourth participant referred to her “self-confidence” as the main factor in her promotion to the position. One high-level woman said: “I was a distinguished woman before reaching this position... leadership is a part of my personality... I am courageous in making decisions and handling responsibilities.”

One of the main characteristics that helped high-level women distinguish themselves from the other women is their high self-motivation. Women who hold high positions in government are usually provoked by high willingness to be leaders and high motivation to initiate actions. They are influenced by high willingness to exert their effort towards certain goals of their organizations and to push other individuals to support this effort. This self-motivation is shown in these women through love of work, desire for achievement, taking an active role, commitment to integrity, and high ambition. While some of the quotations elsewhere in this chapter present this motivation, additional ones here focus on this notion. One of the high-level women stated: “I chose the field that complies with my ambitions... I love my work.” Another participant added:

One of the major factors that helped me to fulfill the tasks of my work is my passion and love for my job... I think that anyone who holds a leading position must have a self-motivation based on the belonging and love of our country... love of work... love of people.

In fact, the focus on leadership personalities by the women who hold high positions could be seen as well through the concentration on themselves as leaders rather than women. High-level women asserted the leadership

characteristics that have marked them as leaders regardless of gender. One of the high-level women said: “when I meet other public officials, I meet them as a leader who holds a high position regardless of gender.” Another one of the women asserted that “I do not see the position based on the gender of the person who holds it.” These quotations show that male and female leaders are defined through their personality, which legitimates their role. Another one of the participants stated:

each one has to forget that I am woman, as work is the most important issue in this regard. I am a leader, and leadership is not correlated with the gender. I might be able to make a decision that men might be hesitant to make. When a woman holds a leadership position, everyone should forget that she is a woman... she becomes a leader... I am a leader... Leadership is all about thinking and decision making regardless of the gender of the position holder... I may have the courage to make some hard decisions that my male counterparts might hesitate to make.

Introducing women as leaders opens the discussion to the next dimension of leadership, which is the need for a female role model. High-level women noted the significance of finding female role models who can set examples of successful leadership for women at high administrative levels. One of the participants argued that gaining leadership skills requires women to “have interactions with distinguished role models, whether in the public or private sectors.” The same view was presented by another participant who suggested that “women have to learn from successful female experiences... they have to find models even in the private sector.” The need to find a role model could be satisfied by some of the women who hold high positions in the public sector. One of the high-level women argued that “the view of state leaders has been changed

because of the high competence of some female leaders in the public sector.”

This means that the needed role model does exist in government. This point is affirmed by another woman who represented her work experience as an example for other leaders by stating: “I have received support even from those who resisted women’s political rights because I have represented a successful role model for a female leader in government.” In general, what could be interpreted from this part is that high-level women believed in the significance of having a role model who can represent an example of effective performance for high-level women through her leadership experience.

Since leadership is all about the ability to influence the other people, the last dimension that could be seen through this theme is the significance of concepts like collaboration, partnership, teamwork, and participation that high-level women asserted as a general principle and as major factor in their managerial style. Women in high positions presented what seems to be a participative leadership style of management, which emphasizes participation and sharing decision making with subordinates. This style of leadership could be seen through the experience that one high-level woman described

I am willing not to close the door of my office, but to see the subordinates... this experience increased my recognition of the problems and concerns of the subordinates, which helped me to change their negative work conditions... When I came to this office, the employees had a problem with some new changes that were implemented in the security checks procedures at the main gate... Their complaint was taken into consideration without brandishing punishment... I listened to them, and we smoothly found a solution that was acceptable by all... and the new changes were accepted.

The same manner of leadership that considers the enhancement of group work was emphasized by another participant. She asserted some of the main factors that have helped her in her position such as

the good manner... encouraging the spirit of teamwork among the subordinates... Success should not be attributed to the leader but to all of us because we are one team... Also showing respect to subordinates and considering them as partners in decision making.

In the same context, one of the high-level women described her way of treating her subordinates, which represent the idea of teamwork:

as a leader, I treat my subordinates as being my sons... I give them the feeling of collegueship, confidence, and show them good manner. I do not crack the whip to scare them; I use conversation with them... Conversations are needed between superiors and subordinates to facilitate work. I am willing to know the problems of any employee in my sector and this increases his productivity.

What is interpreted from these women is their concentration on openness towards subordinates. This common factor is needed in order to facilitate collaborative relationships between superiors and subordinates and reach shared decision making. On the other hand, a lack of collaboration hinders women in leading positions from performing effectively. A high-level woman spoke of this problem;

My worst work experience in the leading position is a lack of collaboration. When I came to this position, I called for a meeting with all the individuals who hold leading positions under my supervision. I told them that I came to this position without my personal team... You are my team and I do not know how to perform without teamwork. Unfortunately, I found after a while that they do not have the ability to work as a united team. I tried to connect the different sectors through a collaborative effort to reach the ministry's goals, but that took a long time and a faced strong resistance.

The significance of collaboration requires women in leading positions to insist on finding effective ways to deal with it. One of the participants argued that although men may not initiate cooperation, “we have to work as a team because if my opinions are not accepted by men, it will be hard to work... The work in any ministry is a collaborative effort regardless of gender.” The significance that high-level women gave to collaboration is not only seen by the descriptions of their managerial styles, but it also seen through their calls for women in the society to collaborate.

High-level women thought that collaboration is a general principle that should be followed by women in order to improve their condition in society as a whole. In consequence of improving women’s conditions in society, their opportunities to hold high positions will be increased. One of the high-level women argued, “We have to establish a generation who believe in collaboration and sharing responsibilities.” Other women talked about collaboration in terms of the efforts that should be united to support the improvement of women’s conditions. One of the participants asserted that “women-oriented non-governmental organizations should be involved to support more women for leading positions... there should be a conformity and collaboration among them on specific demands.” However, other women criticized the true condition, which lacks the needed collaboration among women-oriented non-governmental organizations. A high-level woman raised legitimate questions concerning the lack of women’s collaboration in the society when she said: “Have they

collaborated? Have they organized their efforts? Have they agreed on their priorities?” One of the participants asserted that “even the women’s organizations were not united and they did not have a common linkage to organize and orient their work and activities as a team.”

To summarize this theme, all of the women, basically, asserted the role of leadership in helping them to reach a high administrative level and to perform effectively in their positions. One leadership dimension asserted by the participants is the intellectual and personality characteristics that should distinguish the individuals in high positions. In addition, an interesting leadership dimension refers to the need of high-level women to learn from a female role model whether from the public or the private sector. Additionally, women who hold leading positions in government emphasized collaboration as an effective means of helping their performance and a principle to support the women’s goal of increasing their numbers in high administrative levels in government.

4.2.8 Theme No. 8: Change

This theme seems to represent the core of this research in terms of determining whether women who hold high positions in the government have perceived any change in their experiences at work and in society due to the political rights that they received in 2005. In fact, there was no full agreement among high-level women in terms of the occurrence and the kind of change that

was discussed. There are two main dimensions that are discussed under this theme: change in the political role of women and change in work experience.

In terms of the change in women's political role, there was agreement among the high-level women in public administration that there has been a change in their societal condition since the franchise in 2005. Women, in general, have started to have more political interest and awareness. One of the high-level women summarized this change in their political role by referring to the point that "ordinary people have started to give more respect to woman because they vote now and should be counted." Another woman put more emphasis on this aspect by asserting that the perspectives about the political role of women have been changed even for those who did not support women's political rights:

Women have gained political power after they received the right to vote... even those [men] who voted against women's political rights in the parliament have started to reconsider the role of women's votes in the next election.

In the same context, another high-level woman described the new power that women gained after the political change by stating that:

The woman's vote has started to be a major factor for any candidate who has the ambition to be a representative to parliament... Without a doubt, the new changes gave influence to women in Kuwaiti society.

What is understood from these participants is that women in Kuwait have taken hold of a power and identity that was once dominated by men. Another participant described the kind of change that happened to the political role of

women, which forced society to take women's needs and demands into consideration as a consequence of this change:

Yes, there is a difference. Before gaining political rights, women were not taken into account... But after the political rights, everything has changed. The perspectives of parliament members regarding the role of women has changed... more attention has started to be paid for women's demands and needs... women have started to gain political weight.. and the political awareness of their votes has started to take place... The political support that women can provide for candidates to public office has started to be noticed by men.

There is clear agreement among women who hold high positions that women have started to gain an effective political role because they represent a considerable political weight as voters. What seems interesting in this aspect is that none of the participants mentioned any change in the political role of women as counterparts to male candidates. What could be interpreted is that high-level women continue to see women as voters rather than as candidates in the political process. Maybe this view could be associated with a lack of political awareness, which was asserted by a participant who stated that "women should believe in their importance in society, especially in the political process. Unfortunately women lack an interest in politics... even educated women." Perhaps this notion of inferiority inspired one of the participants to encourage women to evaluate their political experience by stating "women's condition and performance in the political sphere should be improved. Women had a short experience with the election because it was the first time for them... therefore they have to revise their own programs and agendas."

In terms of the second dimension regarding the change in work experience, there are two different aspects that should be mentioned. There was agreement among the high-level women regarding the first point, which asserts that no change has happened in routine work and procedures. This point was made clear by one participant who said: “regarding the nature of my work in the ministry... I do not think that there are changes after women got their political rights because ministerial work has stable bureaucratic procedures.” Another participant also affirmed that “there was not any change in the administrative work and procedures.”

However, women in leading positions did not have clear agreement about the second aspect of the change in their work experience. This aspect focuses on changes in work relationships that could provide support for women who are already in high positions or those who are going to hold high positions. High-level women were divided in terms of the occurrence of this kind of change in their work experience, especially with the other individuals who hold leading positions in government. While some of the participants asserted that there are positive changes that have taken place since the franchise in 2005, others argued that no change has been seen since that time. What should be taken into consideration in terms of this division is that the group that agrees on the change presented coherent perspectives in their interviews while the other group presented what may seem to be ambiguous perspectives about change. A deep interpretation of the opposed perspectives shows that these women did not notice a change in their work experience, but at the same time did not reject the possibility of having

the change due to the political rights of women. Further discussion is given after introducing the work experiences of the women in each group.

Several high-level women concentrated on the change observed in their relationships with the other leaders in the public sector after gaining their political rights. The main argument of this group of women is that “the change occurred in the relationships among people rather than in the nature of work.” One of the participants discussed the positive change that happened in her relationships with high-level men in the ministry, which is reflected through the additional support that she started to receive in official meetings in order to express her opinion

Regarding my work experience... I think that men’s support and assistance to ‘the female Assistant Deputy’ began to increase. There is an growing mutual respect between ministers/deputy ministers and female assistant deputies. I feel that that there is an increase in respect and support... during the formal meetings, for example, there is a growing interest in women’s opinion and demands.

An additional participant also referred to her experience when meeting with other leaders by stating “in the public meetings and discussions, women have started to have a louder voice... their activity level and ambitions have increased.” Another high-level woman referred to the same notion when she described how women in leading positions were treated before and after the franchise. She stressed that there has been a positive change in her relationships with politicians and the leaders in government;

The political right has influenced the nature of our relationships with members of parliament. Also, in terms of other men who hold high positions in the public sector... in the past, we were not invited to

any meeting if the prime minister was there... After the political rights, we [as women leaders] have started to be considered as a source of glory and honor to the ministry.

In the same context, another participant discussed how women were discouraged from expressing their opinions or concerns to the high administrative levels in public administration. She stated:

Definitely there is a change... Women were not able to reach the individuals who hold high positions or talk to them... there was no chance for women to see any minister or any leading position holder... but there is now a positive change in the work experiences of women.

Based on this point of view, women have started to find better opportunities to express their problems and demands to the high administrative levels in the government, which they were blocked from reaching before the franchise. From a different perspective, women were also encouraged by the political change to rethink their ability to hold a high position. One participant argued that:

There was a psychological screen of fear between women and leading positions... there was a doubt that women are able to lead... This screen was removed like the demolishing of the Berlin Wall... This changed revealed that there is a potential energy of competent women who are able have great performance and accomplishment.

One of the participants clearly indicated that “women who were qualified for high positions had to wait for at least four years to be considered... now everything has changed and competent women have better opportunities for promotions.” What is clearly seen through these perspectives is that these high-

level women have noted a change in their work experience in terms of their improved ability to articulate their opinions in official meetings, to have better interactions with state leaders, to express their concerns and problems to the top-level administration, and to gain the confidence to reach high positions. In fact, the change in the work relationships with other leaders may have happened due to the new way that men started to treat women or due to the change in women's attitude towards other leaders and leading positions. One of the participants emphasized the latter view by stating that "the political rights gave support to women... some women were leaders before the rights, but the franchise gave them self-confidence." This self-confidence and belief in their leadership abilities have encouraged women to reconsider their condition in high administrative levels in the public sector.

In general, the high-level women who saw change in their work relationships affirmed the significance of employing their political rights to control the change in a way that serves their demand to have more women in high administrative levels. The connection between women's political rights and the improvement in their number in the top level of administration was made clear by one of the participants who stated that "women should be pushed to be aware of the high positions after their political rights." She saw a mutual relation between political rights and high positions because the former would encourage the latter.

Another high-level woman asserted the same view:

The development of women's conditions in the government requires establishing a connection between political experience and public professions... Many women are aware of the future of their kids or the efficiency of the public health system... The same level

of awareness should be given to educate women about the political change that happened in order to improve their condition in the public sector.

On the other hand, some of the high-level women did not see a definitive change in their work relationships due to the political rights they gained in 2005. One of the participants asserted that “there has not been any change in my relationships with the other leaders in the government.” Another participant added that even though few women were assigned leading positions in the government, this does not mean that a change is taking place. She argued that “there was not any change... only a few female ministers joined the cabinet... Some of the state leaders believed in women’s political rights... they used these rights as a bridge to assign specific women whom they believed in.”

This participant described what seems to reflect the lack of improvement in the condition of high-level women in public administration: “even the number of women who hold leading positions decreased... The number of assistant deputies decreased and the change was not as expected... There is not any improvement.” Another interviewee argued that women had participated in the decision making through their leading positions before the franchise, which means that there is nothing new about allowing women to hold leading positions. This participant said: “I think that obviously there has not been any change after the political rights in terms of performance, work relationships, or outcomes because women in Kuwait have practically participated in the decision-making.”

However, a deeper interpretation of the position of those women who were in opposition to the occurrence of change in their work shows that they did not

argue against the connection between political rights and high positions. In fact, while these high-level women did not make an explicit connection between the change in their political role and the change in their conditions in government, the interpretation of the whole context of the interviews made an implicit connection between the two aspects even for those who did not clearly confirm it. This implicit connection could be justified based on the argument that any positive change in the circumstances of women in any field would lead to the improvement of the general condition, including in public administration, of women. One of the participants summarized this argument by these few words: “women should be supported through their political rights... this support will accordingly promote higher numbers of women in leading positions.” This means that the more women practice their political rights, the more they will gain opportunities to reach high positions.

In addition, even those who did not support the occurrence of change in their work experiences did not clearly rejected the connections between the political rights and a change in women’s conditions in government. This argument could be interpreted from a part of a conversation with one of the participants who did not agree on the occurrence of any change in work relationships. This participant said that “women’s political rights should be employed to push more women to hold high positions in government.” This means that although she did not see a change in her work experience due to the political rights, she affirmed the connection by arguing that these rights should be used to push more women to reach leading positions. One of the high-level

women presented contradictory views when she rejected the occurrence of any change in her work experience yet affirmed later that “the view about woman whether as a citizen in society or as a leader in government has changed.” This could be understood as confirming that there is a kind of change that has happened to high-level women in government even though this participant did not personally witness this change.

All that can be said is that these high-level women did not see a current connection or have a personal experience of change, but there might be a connection that they could not see or that may happen in the future. The same thing could be said about another participant who did not agree there had been a change. Although she thought that no change had occurred in her work relationships, she came back to argue, as mentioned earlier, that political rights “will accordingly promote higher numbers of women into leading positions.” In addition, the significance that the high-level women gave to the notion of change in their political role as a response to questions about change in work experience also implies a connection between political rights and the change of women’s conditions in government. These high-level women initially talked about a change in their political role within their answers to the questions regarding any change in their work experience.

To sum up this theme, high-level women think that a positive change has started to happen in their political role since the franchise because of the new power of their votes. In terms of a change in their work experience, the participants agree that there has been no change in their routine work due to the

franchise. However, high-level women are divided in terms of their work relationships, especially with the other leaders in government. Several participants affirm that there has been a positive change as far as better capability in official meetings, interactions with leaders, expressing concerns, and confidence to lead. Few participants disagree with this view and state that there is not any change due to the political rights. Nevertheless, a deeper interpretation of the opponents' perspectives reveals that even if they did not personally experience a change, they agree on the general principle that the change might happen due to the political rights.

4.3 Men's Perspectives

The interviews with two men who hold high positions in government help to put the perspectives of women into a context. This segment does not attempt to compare the perspectives of men with their women counterparts, but it tries to provide a better understanding of the views of women in public administration. This better understanding comes through highlighting the distinctive views of these high-level women. In fact, while high-level men hold some views in common with their women counterparts, they also have some differences, which are discussed in this part.

In terms of the common perspectives that women and men in high positions have, it is interpreted that they all put emphasis on accountability, competency, and communication in their work experiences. High-level men

referred to accountability based on the typical responsibilities that are identified by the managerial functions of public managers. Their experiences with work in high positions did not exceed managerial functions such as coordinating, organizing, and personnel. High-level men, like their women counterparts, noted the significance of communication in their work as well. They concentrated on formal communication channels that are based on the chain of authority without emphasizing any kind of informal communication. They also did not put any emphasis on the channels of external communication.

In addition, men and women in high-level position share a common point of view about the importance of competency. Men believed that competency is a critical element that should rule the criteria of holding the high positions in government even though they did not refer to this criterion as a factor that helped them to earn their positions. When they talked about competency, they did not address it in a way that specifically supports the demand of women to hold high positions. They presented competency as a general criterion to evaluate the performance of public managers, regardless of gender.

High-level men did not put any emphasis on some of the major themes that were asserted by their female counterparts such as the role of gender, knowledge and experience, leadership, and social challenges. Although some of these themes were insignificantly indicated in the conversations with high-level men, these themes clearly did not represent key issues for them. It should be mentioned that in terms of social challenges, one of the men echoed the

women's desire for public support by the government and the media to overcome the social barriers that women face.

On the other hand, the high-level men noted other issues that were seen as critical in their work experiences such as the shortcomings of bureaucracy and routine procedures as well as the negative influence of external interventions by politicians. These main issues were mentioned by a few high-level women as well, but they did not represent main concerns for them. Finally, high-level men believed that there is a positive change in women's conditions in the government as a consequence of gaining their political rights. One of the men asserted that:

Definitely there is a change in all the ministries... It is affirmed that additional women are reaching leading positions such as deputy minister and assistant deputy... I think that this change is happening because women have gained their political rights.

4.4 Discussion

Based on the data interpretation in the previous part, which provides the main themes in this study, this segment uses these themes to respond to the research questions. Three main issues are discussed in this section regarding the experiences of high-level women in public administration: the perceptions of women about change in their work due to the franchise and the perceptions of their male counterparts about the change. The discussion of these three issues represents the response to the research sub-questions that establish the foundation to answer the main question of this study.

4.4.1 Working for Government

First of all, women in high positions presented rich experiences about holding a high position in public administration. The most interesting issues that could be presented here as a response to how high-level women described their experiences of working for government are accountability, gender, and social challenges. Each one of these three issues was previously analyzed in detail, but this part gives final touches to connect them to the research sub-questions.

One of the interesting experiences that women related about working in the public sector is the critical role that gender plays in their ability to hold high positions and their capability to perform competently. Basically, high-level women affirmed that there is discrimination against women in government. Although this discrimination does not clearly appear in the lower levels of the bureaucratic structure in each ministry, it starts to appear whenever one goes towards the top of the administrative pyramid. This means that as more women in the public sector reach higher levels of administration, the more they feel the pressure of the glass ceiling, which prevents them from holding high positions. This point was shown in the introduction through the almost equal number of female to male in the public sector but the limited number of women who hold leading positions in the government of Kuwait.

The role of superiors is very critical in terms of helping women be promoted to leading positions in government. Obviously, women should show their competent performance and effective personalities to their supervisors in

order to strengthen their opportunities to reach high positions. However, women were divided in terms of their experiences with the gender of supervisors. Of course, it depends on the personal work experience of every high-level woman to determine whether a male supervisor or a female supervisor would open the gate for her to reach the higher administrative levels of the government.

While some high-level women asserted that men usually provide better opportunities for their female subordinates, other women emphasized that women better understand the needs and concerns of female subordinates and consequently enhance their position. High-level women also were divided regarding whether the focus should be on equality or on the unique qualities that women bring to the workplace. Nevertheless, most high-level women believed in the advantages of the special qualifications that women have on their performance.

Another interesting experience that women described about working in the public sector in Kuwait is how they identify the responsibilities associated with their leading positions. High-level women asserted their perception of accountability in a typical way, concentrating on their official responsibilities as public managers. While high-level women did not directly refer to whom women see themselves as accountable, some indicators in the conversations and the whole context of the interviews, especially in terms of political responsibility, provide the answer to this question.

Some high-level women referred to their responsibilities as being the professional tasks of their jobs and some of them emphasized their connection to

the legislative branch. While women in the former group restricted themselves to professional duties, women in the second group referred to the legislative branch as well as their bureaucratic heads. It should be mentioned that the Kuwaiti constitution does not state any responsibility of public administrators to hold accountability to the parliament, based on the separation of powers. This means that high-level women who believe in being accountable to political leaders should find a way to justify their argument.

The third work experience that was mentioned by high-level women is the role of some social factors that encourage or discourage their performance and their ability to hold high positions in government. High-level women appreciated the support that family could provide to enhance their ability to reach a high position and to perform well. In fact, high-level women seriously emphasized the social challenges that are imposed on them by culture and traditions. Some conservative groups in Kuwait use misunderstood traditions to hinder the ability of women to hold high positions. One of the social barriers is the unequal role that women should play in family, which consumes their physical energy and intellectual ability.

Indeed, high-level women thought that overcoming the social challenges would be difficult without public support by the government, media, and civil society organizations. While there is some support from government, women-oriented organizations do not have coordinated efforts, as indicated elsewhere in the themes, to support the demands of women in the public sector. Women's

organizations in Kuwait are not prepared to provide support for women in government in order to increase their numbers in high positions.

4.4.2 Women and Change

The second main issue that should be presented as a response to the research sub-questions is the perceptions of women about changes in their work due to the franchise. The response to this issue is seen through the perceptions of women regarding the occurrence of change and the factors that could help to facilitate this change in order to support more women reaching leading positions in public administration. The factors that should be taken into consideration in this regard are competency, communication, knowledge, and leadership skills.

First of all, women who hold high positions in the government of Kuwait asserted that there has been a positive change in their political role in society. The high-level women also agreed that there has been no change in routine procedures due to the franchise. Kuwaiti high-level women also agreed on, at least the possibility of having a connection between women's political rights and their conditions in government, especially in terms of holding high positions. The increasing political power of women in Kuwait is assumed to improve their conditions in the public sector, including better opportunities to hold high positions. More specifically, most high-level women were supportive of the argument that there has been an actual positive change that has happened in

their work relationships as leaders in government due to gains in the political rights of women.

The change in women's work experiences could be described more as aesthetic rather than tangible steps to push more women to reach high positions. High-level women have witnessed the influence of gaining political rights on their relationships with other leaders in the Kuwaiti government. High-level women asserted that the political rights have offered them a better capability to articulate their opinions in the official meetings with other state leaders. The political rights also have opened the gate for women to have better interactions and communications with other leaders. In addition, the political rights have facilitated better opportunities for women to express their concerns and problems to the top-level administration. The political rights have helped women gain confidence in their abilities, personalities, and performance to reach high positions. These experiences illustrate the kinds of change that was not possible without the new image that was given to women in the government by gaining their political rights.

However, because there has been a considerable change in work relations without a considerable increase in the actual number of women who hold high positions in government, it is assumed that there are other factors that should be taken into consideration to facilitate the change. In other words, this change needs some factors to help in facilitating its progress to push more women towards leading positions in the public administration in Kuwait. The first one of these factors is the role of competency in public administration. High-level women affirmed that competency must be the main principle that women believe

in and work for. Competency should be the major criterion that rules the process of selecting an individual to hold a high position or evaluating the performance of individuals in leading positions. High-level women emphasized that if the criterion of competency is effectively applied in the selection process of leading positions, more women will hold high positions due to the fairness in promotions.

Another factor that would enhance the opportunities of Kuwaiti women to hold high positions in the government is the role of effective communications in their work. High-level women should not only depend on formal channels of authority to communicate with others but must strengthen their informal communications abilities. Kuwaiti high-level women should deal with their external communications in a very careful manner in order to avoid any negative effect that it may impose on them. In fact, even though some high-level women stressed the negative side of external communication, the lack of this kind of communication will have a worse effect on their effort to reach high positions. The communications that the external channels provide for high-level women in Kuwait would help them to lobby public support for their demands. They should wisely employ all their communication capabilities to provoke the bureaucracy in Kuwait towards demolishing its glass ceiling.

In addition, the third factor that should be observed in order to increase the number of women in leading positions in Kuwait is the role of leadership skills. High-level women asserted the critical role that their leadership abilities played in allowing them to hold their high positions. Women should use every means to improve and to apply their leadership abilities in order to have a

distinguished performance. Women should know that their personalities are a main key in distinguishing them among their colleagues and in justifying their qualifications to hold high positions. Female role models should be found and highlighted in order to represent an effective example for other women to follow. Kuwaiti high-level women asserted the significant of collaboration that should be applied within the society in order to coordinate women's efforts to reach equal opportunities to hold high positions. Collaboration also should be considered by women within the public sector in order to demonstrate their effective style of management. Putting the emphasis on the leadership capabilities of women would provide a strong support for the efforts to help more women to hold high positions in the Kuwaiti government.

4.4.3 Men and Change

The third main issue that should be presented as a response to the research sub-questions is the perceptions of men in comparable administrative positions about the change in their work experience with women as a consequence of women's political rights. High-level men clearly supported the argument that a positive change has occurred in the conditions of women in the public sector. High-level men asserted that the political rights have strengthened the position of women in the public sector to demand better opportunities to reach the higher administrative levels. However, high-level men did not mention

any detail about the kind of change that has occurred to women in the public sector.

4.5 Research Findings

Based on all the responses to the research sub-questions, this study is able at this stage to address the findings of this research. The response to the main question of this research regarding the changes that women in high administrative positions perceive in their experiences as high level administrators since gaining their political rights has become clear. The connection between the political rights of women and their condition in government is established based on the experiences of women and men in high administrative positions in the Kuwaiti government. This study finds agreement among the participants that the political rights of women have a positive influence on the conditions of women in the public sector. Whether or not high-level women have personally experienced any positive change in their work due to gaining their political rights, they affirm the occurrence of this positive change. The positive influence of political rights on women in government is emphasized especially in terms of encouraging more women to hold leading positions.

While the political rights of women are the main factor that facilitates the change in public administration in order to push more women towards leading positions, this study finds other main factors that need to be considered by women in order to enhance their numbers at high levels of government. By

listening to the women's experiences, these other factors are competency, communication, knowledge, and leadership. These factors help this study to reach its ultimate goal, which is an assessment of what women's experiences suggest regarding how to increase their access to high positions in public administration. Based on the interpretation of these working experiences, these factors assist in constructing the recommendations of this study. An emphasis is put on the role of these factors when the recommendations are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This study contributes to the field of public administration by examining the connection between the political rights of women and their condition in public administration, especially in regards to opportunities for them to attain high positions. Based on the rich working experiences of high-level women in government, this study also presents many interesting perspectives regarding the basics of women's status, about which little was known. Although the government of Kuwait is used as a case study for this research, these findings can provide a foundation for further research in other countries, especially developing nations. In fact, this study could provide a foundation for further research even in developed countries because the experiences of women in the public sector around the world seem to share many commonalities. Besides the

main themes of this study, the essences that were reached through the work experiences of high-level women could help in providing a better understanding of different issues that are discussed in public management, public policy, and public administration.

This chapter concludes the entire dissertation by briefly representing the purpose, assumptions, arguments, interpretation, and findings of this study. After presenting a summary of this research, some recommendations are given to assist women in enhancing their status in government. Some suggestions for further research are also included in order to provide new horizons for discussion about the topic of this study.

5.2 Summary

Although women in Kuwait have similar access to the various professions of the public sector as men, their ability to hold high positions is limited. It is believed in Kuwait that a major origin of this problem was the lack of women's political rights to vote and to run for office. In 2005, a legislative draft that gave women their political rights passed in the parliament, and an additional few women subsequently attained high positions in the government. However, it is still unknown whether or not the slight increase in the number of high-level women was caused because of the political rights that women have gained since 2005, which this study has attempted to address.

The purpose of this study is to explore whether the franchise has changed women's work experiences in public administration, especially women who hold high positions. This dissertation is based on the presumption that the work experiences of women in high positions could reveal not only the occurrence of any change in their conditions but could also provide suggestions about how to improve the opportunities for more women to enter high levels of administration in government. It should be made clear that since little is known about Kuwaiti women in public administration, the experiences of women who work for the public sector, especially those in high positions, are critical to understanding any relationship between women's political rights and their access to high positions in government. Given that this study seeks an in-depth understanding of the experiences of women in the public sector, phenomenology is the best suited research approach because it focuses on providing a rich understanding of the deep meaning of a phenomenon based on a description of lived human experience.

Matching the purpose of this study with this method of research is effectively met through generating the main themes that represent the essence of women's experiences. Through the interpretation of the experiences of high-level women in government, this study finds that there is a perceived connection among the women between their political rights and their condition in the top administrative levels of government. Women have started to experience a positive influence in their work since the franchise due to the new political power that they have gained. This study finds that this positive influence is reflected on

high-level women through better representation in official meetings, more interactions with state leaders, an increasing ability to express concerns to top levels, and enhancing their self confidence to lead. These positive aspects of change may help women who already hold high positions perform more effectively and at the same time can encourage more women from the mid-level administration to seek higher positions. These aspects of change provide better opportunities for women that prepare their ways to join the leading positions in government through: showing their distinguished performance, being known to the state leaders, expressing any barriers about gender, having a strong self-motivation.

However, this positive change needs to be supported by additional factors to facilitate the enhancement of women's numbers in high-level positions. Based on some of the interpreted themes of this study, high-level women present key elements that should be taken into consideration in this context. Some of the key elements are the significant role that should be played by competency, communication, knowledge, and leadership. These key elements are based on the rich work experiences that these high-level women have shared. A practical means of using these key elements is discussed through the recommendations in the following section.

5.3 Recommendations

Before starting to present the main recommendations of this study in regard to the enhancement of women's access to high positions, it should be mentioned that these recommendations are created based on two main sources. First of all, few of these recommendations were directly mentioned by some of the high-level women and, to some extent, men who participated in this study. Second, most of the recommendations were generated based on the researcher's interpretation of the main themes, the entire context of the interviews, and some of the interesting points that were individually addressed during some interviews.

Based on these sources, this study recognizes sixteen recommendations that may help to increase the number of women in the top positions of the Kuwaiti government if they are taken into consideration. These recommendations are categorized within three main groups that are related to the suggestions for the individual performance of women, for public administration, and for women-oriented non-governmental organizations in Kuwaiti society.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Women in Mid-Level Administration

1- Women should use every opportunity to gain the technical knowledge that will provide them with the required qualifications to hold leading positions in government. This effort should include selecting the appropriate specialization in

their educational attainment to fit the technical needs of their career. This effort also should include an active effort for continuing professional education while in office. Women should also work to maintain their general knowledge, especially about topics related to their positions and tasks.

2- Women should consider improving their leadership skills in order to advance their performance. Not only women will benefit from every opportunity, but they also should strive to create new opportunities to receive leadership skills training during service. Women should be self-motivated to continue learning how to enhance their leadership capabilities.

3- Women should consider employing every means to improve their informal networks of external communication. Women should make every effort to establish as many connections as possible with top officials, politicians, legislators, social leaders, media, et cetera in order to assure the widest possible public support and the least possible resistance to their effort of reaching high positions in government.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Public Administration

1- The government should be encouraged to re-identify the role of competency in the processes of selecting individuals for high positions and the evaluation of the individuals who hold these positions. Competent performance should be the main

criterion taken into consideration when dealing with leading positions. Neutral independent committees that include a balanced distribution of women and men should be established, especially to manage the process of selecting among the nominees to leading positions.

2- The government should be encouraged to facilitate more opportunities for mid-level woman administrators to have more interactions with leaders at the top levels of administration through official meetings, conferences, social events, et cetera. These opportunities would support the practical experience of women, would allow them to call attention to their performance, would provide them the chance to express their concerns, and would give them better representation.

3- The government should be encouraged to offer more opportunities for women to participate in professional courses, workshops, and conferences to help them to improve their technical knowledge and practical experience. Women should have the same opportunities as their male counterparts to receive training during service in order to enhance their capacity building.

4- The government should be encouraged to impose term limits for leading positions. The same persons should not hold leading positions for long periods. This course of action would allow more mid-level public managers, including women, to reach leading positions in government, which are currently dominated by men.

5- The government should be encouraged to allow longer duration of terms for women in public service, especially for those who may be promoted to leading positions. The government should make an investment in the women who have the necessary expertise due to their long experience in office. The current retirement policies in the Public Service Commission should be reviewed to encourage women in upper-level management to stay in service.

6- The government should be encouraged to initiate legislations or to develop existing legislations that provide protection to women against discrimination in the public sector. Specifically, the government should prepare new legislation that protects the rights of woman in the work environment against any gender biases, harassment, and other professional issues. This legislation should consider all the informal rules and procedures that keep the glass ceiling intact. The government should establish an independent public agency to evaluate the status of women in the public sector. This agency would provide assistance to policy makers, high-level women, and women's organizations in order to reduce the effect of gender discrimination in government.

7- The government should be encouraged to initiate legislation or to develop existing legislation to consider the special social needs of women due to their responsibility within the family. The government should observe all the social barriers that are imposed on women due to the traditions of society and work to

deal with them. All the available means should be used to make it possible for women to handle effectively both familial and professional responsibilities at the same time.

8- The government should be encouraged to make all the necessary adjustments to the bureaucratic structures, rules, and procedures in order to have more flexibility towards leading women. This flexibility should facilitate women's creativity by allowing them more options to apply their distinguished styles of management in the public sector.

9- The government should be encouraged to incorporate issues regarding the role of woman in society into the curriculums of schools and universities. The social and cultural barriers that are imposed on women should be removed by reestablishing the local mentality of new generations about how to think of women as equal citizens.

5.3.3. Recommendations for Women in Society

1- Women's non-governmental organizations should emphasize the role of collaboration to promote more women to high positions in the government. They should coordinate their political, social, and cultural efforts through teamwork in order to accomplish a common mission of enhancing the number of women in the top levels of public administration. Non-governmental organizations should

offer women assistance through conferences and workshops that concentrate on improving the capabilities of women in leadership, communication, technical knowledge, and so forth. The partnership among the non-governmental organizations would also improve their lobbying abilities towards policy-makers with the intention of reaching their objectives.

2- Women's non-governmental organizations should look for distinguished upper management women in the government who have high competent performance. These women should be highlighted as role models to inspire other women who wish to hold high positions.

3- Women's non-governmental organizations should establish research centers to support the decision making of women who hold high positions in government. These centers should focus on producing research to assist women in high-level positions make decisions. These centers also should provide needed information and databases that the high-level women cannot access due to the lack of their communications.

4- Women's non-governmental organizations should launch an extensive media campaign to increase public awareness regarding the important role of woman in parallel with the role of men in public administration. They should employ the media to facilitate the change that happened due to granting of political rights in order to emphasize the ability of women to hold high positions in government.

5.4 Further Research

There are many different issues that could be discussed in any further research regarding the conditions of women in the Kuwaiti public administration because this topic has not been widely researched in Kuwait. Based on the findings of this study, some of the most important directions for further research in regard to the connection between women's political rights and the conditions of women in high-level administration could be:

- 1- What are the perceptions of other Kuwaiti women in mid-level administration or lower about changes in their work experiences due to the political rights?
- 2- Is there any role for high-level women in public administration in supporting the efforts of Kuwaiti women to have representatives in the parliament?
- 3- How can high-level women in public administration use their technical knowledge and practical experience to assist women-oriented non-governmental organizations in collaborating their efforts?
- 4- Do women in the other countries of the gulf region, which share many commonalities with Kuwait, have the same work experiences due to gaining some of their political rights?
- 5- What kind of findings could be discovered in comparing the experiences of upper management women in Kuwait and upper management women in

the United States in terms of the common barriers that they encounter in their professions?

These are only few suggestions that could be used for further research.

These suggestions will present a great contribution to the field by offering a better understanding to the conditions of women in public administration. Applying the recommendations of this study also opens the gate for other directions of further research. Interestingly, these policy recommendations are based on the practical views of high-level women in government, which increases the significance of focusing on their influence in further studies.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. ENGLISH CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

Dear Participant,

There is little known about the condition of Kuwaiti women in government, especially in the administrative levels. Traditionally, women in Kuwait were excluded from the formulation of public policy by not allowing them the right to vote and to be candidates for the parliament. By mid 2005, the Kuwaiti women received their political rights that allowed them to vote and to run for office. This study explores the experience of women in top positions both before and since the franchise. The main themes of this research will be created through the experiences that the participants provide. It is my hope that the participants will contribute to a better understanding of the condition of women in public administration in the course of interview through expressing their experiences. From previous experience, it is estimated that the interview takes between 60 to 90 minutes. A digital recorder will be used during this interview to ensure the accuracy of the collected data. The electronic copy will be saved on a password-protected file and will be kept for three years with the chair of this dissertation.

The information that will be generated from the interview will be used in my dissertation. Risks associated with this study should be no more than what the participants may encounter in their daily living. Your responses to the questions during the interview will be confidential and complete privacy will be guaranteed. Your name will not appear anywhere on the interview's transcripts or the final product of this dissertation. The participation in the study is voluntary and the right to withdraw is maintained for all the participants at any time. There is not a reward for participating in this interview or consequence for not participating. You have the right not to respond to any question if you do not feel comfortable with or do not want to answer. No specific ministry will be named or connected to a specific theme or individual in this study.

For further information about this study you can contact Dr. Camilla Stivers at 001 (216) 687-3536 or by e-mail at camilla@urban.csuohio.edu. If you have any questions or comments that you need to add later, please feel free to contact me at 742-0852 or 001 (440) 887-0824. You can also send me an e-mail at h.alsarraf@csuohio.edu. Please understand that if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at 001 (216) 687-3630 or by e-mail at irb@csuohio.edu. After signing two copies of this letter, please keep one copy for your records and return the other one. Thank you so much for your cooperation and support.

Sincerely,

Hani A. Alsarraf, Ph.D. Candidate
Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University
Ohio, The United States of America

I have read and understood this consent form and I agree to participate in this study.

Signature: -----

Name: -----

Date: -----

APPENDIX B. ARABIC CONSENT FORM

نموذج موافقة

عزيزي المشارك:

هناك القليل من المعلومات المتوفرة حول ظروف عمل المرأة في الجهاز الحكومي وبشكل خاص في المستويات الادارية العليا ، تقليدياً فقد تم استبعاد المرأة من المشاركة بعملية صنع السياسة العامة من خلال عدم السماح لها بحق التصويت والترشح لمجلس الامة ، ولكن مع منتصف عام 2005 حصلت المرأة الكويتية على حقوقها السياسية التي أهلتها للتصويت والترشح وشغل المناصب العامة ، هذه الدراسة تتحرى تجارب وخبرات النساء اللاتي يشغلن مناصب عليا بالجهاز الحكومي منذ الحصول وكذلك ما قبل الحصول على الحقوق السياسية ، الفكرة الاساسية لهذه الدراسة سوف تبتنى من خلال نتاج الخبرات التي سوف يطرحها المشاركون ، أمل بأن المشاركين بهذه الدراسة سيساهمون بتقديم فهم أفضل لظروف المرأة بالادارة العامة من خلال المقابلة الشخصية وذلك لطرح خبراتهم وتجاربهم حول الموضوع ، من خلال الخبرة السابقة يقدر أن تستغرق هذه المقابلة ما بين 60 الى 90 دقيقة ، سوف يتم استخدام مسجل صوتي الكتروني خلال المقابلة لضمان دقة تسجيل الاجابات ، سوف يتم حفظ النسخة الالكترونية من هذا التسجيل على ملف محمي لمدة ثلاث سنوات لدى الدكتور المشرف على هذا البحث .

المعلومات الناتجة من هذه المقابلة سوف تستخدم في أطروحتي لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه في الادارة العامة ، ليس هناك مخاطر مرتبطة بالمشاركة في هذه الدراسة بما يزيد عما يمكن أن يواجهه المشارك بهذه الدراسة في حياته الاعتيادية ، اجاباتكم على الاسئلة التي سيتم طرحها خلال المقابلة ستكون سرية وخصوصيتكم الكاملة ستكون مضمونه ، أسماؤكم سوف لن تظهر في أي مكان على السجل الكتابي للمقابلة أو في سياق البحث النهائي ، المشاركة بهذه الدراسة تطوعية والحق بالانسحاب من المقابلة مصان لجميع المشاركين في أي وقت ، ليس هناك فائدة شخصية للمشاركة بهذه الدراسة أو أي نتائج سلبية لعدم المشاركة ، لديكم الحق بعدم الاجابة على أي سؤال في حالة عدم شعوركم بالارتياح تجاه السؤال أو فقط لعدم الرغبة بالاجابة ، لن يتم الاشارة الى اسم أي وزارة بشكل محدد أو ربطها بأي من المشاركين أو الافكار الواردة بهذه الدراسة.

لأي معلومات اضافية حول هذه الدراسة يمكنكم الاتصال على الدكتورة كاميلا ستايفرز المشرفة على البحث على هاتف 0012166873536 أو عن طريق البريد الالكتروني camilla@urban.csuohio.edu ، واذا كان لديكم أي استفسار أو تعليق لإضافته لاحقاً فبإمكانكم الاتصال على الباحث على رقم النقال 7420852 أو 0014408870824 كما ويمكنكم مراسلتي عن طريق البريد الالكتروني h.alsarraf@csuohio.edu ، أرجو التأكد من أنه وفي حالة وجود أي سؤال حول حقوقكم كمشاركين بهذه الدراسة يمكنكم الاتصال على هيئة التنقيح المؤسسي بجامعة كليفلاند الحكومية على الرقم 0012166873630 أو عن طريق البريد الالكتروني irb@csuohio.edu ، بعد التوقيع على نسختين من هذا النموذج يرجى منكم الاحتفاظ بنسخة لسجلاتكم واعادة النسخة الاخرى ، شكراً جزيلاً لدعمكم وتعاونكم.

الباحث

هاني عبدالله الصراف – مرشح لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه
كلية ليفين للشئون المدنية – جامعة كليفلاند الحكومية
اوهايو – الولايات المتحدة الامريكية

لقد قمت بقراءة وفهم نموذج الموافقة هذا وأوافق على المشاركة بهذه الدراسة.

التوقيع:-----

الاسم:-----

التاريخ:-----

APPENDIX C. AN INTERVIEW'S TRANSCRIPT

Interviewee #1

- Can you describe the kind of work that you do? Can you tell me a story from your experience that illustrates the work that you do?

Any governmental position increases the responsibility of the leader towards the obligations to the state, work, decision making, and towards the self. Woman, in particular, is very careful to do her work diligently... [amazed] and accurately... and at the same time she is very interested to fulfill her social responsibility towards her family. [regretful] Lights always are focused on the person who holds a leadership position; the fact which increases the difficulty of avoiding mistakes or ignoring them... I think that a leadership position faces an increasing responsibility where communications, meetings, and supervision of big bureaus are intensified. This responsibility obliges the leader to depend in large part of personnel who can assist in providing information, making decisions, and fulfilling various tasks. In fact, my hierarchical promotions in the same sector and the tasks that I was doing in my administrative work prompted me to learn and gain detailed knowledge about the business of the ministry: its organizational structures, the specialization of each internal sector, job descriptions, evaluation of individual and organizational performance, simplification of work procedures... in addition to the knowledge of the government major programs, and the cabinet's five-year term plan [ended with big smile].

- What is the best experience that you have ever had in your work and what is the worst one?

There are two ways for managers to receive a promotion for higher or leadership positions. One way is when a manager presents himself as a hard worker and receive the promotion for his effort... and the other way is when a manager is given the promotion as a means to encourage him towards harder work. I was assigned this position according to the first way. One of the major factors that helped me to fulfill the tasks of my work is my passion and love for my job [emphasis]. In fact, my bosses were convinced by my effort that is reflected on the elevation of the work. My desire of learning from the others... even if they are in lower positions... all of this motivated me to do any tasks benefiting from my energy and professional experience. I was even going to my bosses and initially ask them if there is anything that I can do... in addition, self-respect by being committed to timely work, commitment to my appointments, and my enthusiasm to get promoted... also, the encouragement of surrounding people are major factors that helped in doing my work effectively... it is very important to find support by the people who are surrounding you in the work environment and who appreciate the importance of the work that you do... I think that anyone who holds a leading position must have a self-motivation based on the belonging and love to our country... love of work... love of people. Actually, there are some ambitions that I have not achieved so far which in turn encourage me to continue working diligently... another thing that helped me is my

commitment to the needs of the women in this ministry. Women working in the ministry are hesitant to present their problems, especially to men bosses [emphasis]. They might need help in delivering information about their professional problems to their supervisors. Some problems might not be reported to their male colleagues. There is a sincere need to identify professional problems faced by female employees in the ministry... and such problems are welcomed to be discussed with an open heart. The professional challenges cannot sometimes be identified without exercising the work itself. The position of the leader might open new horizons in the front of her, but what is important is what comes after the position. The position of any leader requires personal competency... Before getting this position, there were some whispers about the person who would take the position. There was a kind of fear of appointing a woman as assistant deputy minister... there were some doubts about the potential of women and their competencies. Even after being appointed, there were some people who were not satisfied by appointing a woman in this position. The reason for that was either because they were willing to get this position or because they continued not to trust the potential of woman to occupy leading positions. There is a need that each one has to forget that I am woman, as work is the most important issue in this regard. I am a leader, and leadership is not correlated with the gender. I might be able to make a decision that men might be hesitant to make. When a woman holds a leadership position, everyone should forget that she is a women [great emphasis]... she becomes a leader.... I am a leader [louder voice]... Leadership is all about thinking and decision making

regardless of the gender of the position holder.... I might have the courage to make some hard decisions that my men counterparts might hesitate to make... women add some of the female qualities that are not possessed by men. Women have some visions that are different from men.... Being a woman was an advantage in my effectiveness on the job. I think that there are some roles that can be done better by women than by men. In the field of human resource management... especially in the recruitment process... the favoritism was minimized in the recruitments because of the difficulty faced by men in contacting me as a woman in order to put pressure on my decisions... I do not attend or have *Diwaniya* to meet men. However, I think that not each woman is able to give and to be effective in any task that she is assigned for. Sometimes, the local traditions, customs, and social obligations that might hinder a women's ability to reach higher positions. However, since I accepted to hold this position, I have to ignore these concerns and pass the barriers... and focus on my job... and work to fulfill my work honestly and faithfully... with love to the others. There are some entities in the government that help women in succeeding in their jobs while others try to undermine the role of women. The essential fact is the competency and the capacity of the leader; whether this leader is a man or a woman.

Have you noticed any changes in your work after the franchise? Can you describe them?

I think that most women who nominated themselves for the previous election were those women who held senior positions in the government. Recently, woman issues become a very important subject and a popular matter (not private) in the state. Women were given a lot of incentives to enter the field of work and compete for senior and leading positions... more women were assigned leadership positions recently. Regarding the nature of my work in the ministry... I do not think that there are changes after women got their political rights because ministerial work has stable bureaucratic procedures. Well, when I was assigned this position, many female employees in this ministry welcomed my coming because they thought that I would be the best one to represent them. Regarding my work experience... I think that men's support and assistance to 'the female Assistant Deputy' [emphasis with smile] began to increase. There is a growing mutual respect between ministers/deputy ministers and female assistant deputies. I feel that that there is an increase in respect and support. Therefore, the change occurred in the relationships among people rather than in the nature of work. During the formal meetings, for example, there is a growing interest in women's opinion and demands.

When you think back, are there any lessons you have learned in your work that suggest ways of opening top positions to more women?

There are many lessons that can enrich women's chances of getting senior positions including the importance of gaining scientific knowledge, networking and strong communications, self-development, active professional performance, love for work... love for our country, identifying the goals, mental organization, facilitating procedures... you should show your diligence to your supervisors... and before anything is the competence, which is the core base for all these lessons.

If you could change anything about your situation in public administration, what would you want to change?

First of all, anyone who holds a leadership position has to create a competent cadre regardless of the hindrances of gender. There should be a focus on those who have distinguished qualifications. There must be certain qualifications and standardizations that must be met by these selected employees. If we take being female as our only consideration, men will be exposed to injustice. There will be a mess as men will be biased towards men in promotion and recruitment and women will be biased towards women. I will support promotions only for women who deserve such promotion, not just because they are women. If there were more qualified male employee.... he would be given priority for such a promotion.

I encourage women to be promoted but only if they have the potential. The women, who do not have the potential and qualifications, should be rehabilitated continuously [emphasis]. For example, there were female employees whose appraisal performances were weak... I tried to transfer them to other works and changed the nature of their work. I focused on each problem that they thought it caused them the suffering... and their weak points. By offering them kindness and support... modifying their negative behavior and through a motivation process I was able to change these women to be more productive and competent. One way, for example, that I used was to reward these women and let them know that I am not satisfied with their ineffective performance... I pushed them to change their negative behavior... I wish if I can bring all those women who have a weak performance to investigate the actual reasons of their failure to perform competently... we should work to change the surrounding circumstances to know who would success and who would fail.[stopped for few seconds] Why women did not support the female nominees in the previous elections? Did the female nominees revise the reasons behind their failure in the elections to benefit from their experiences and allow the other women to benefit from their effort? Did those who received fewer votes asked the other women who received more votes about the reasons for this? Women have to learn from successful female experiences... they have to find models even in the private sector. Women are not given the opportunity to join the high administrative levels... are they giving women training courses on leadership? Women are given some training courses but these courses practically do not reflect their actual needs... Women are not

educated and trained about how to deal with other leaders in the government.... those who can provide valuable information about leadership experiences. I was pushed by my seniors to attend the higher meetings of the state leaders... to gain the practical leadership experience and knowledge. I was able to form public relations network. Courses and workshops are important means but they must be accompanied by practical experience. We have to be partners in work and development [emphasis]. [made a shift] Women's condition and performance in the political sphere should be improved. Women had a short experience with the election because it was the first time for them... therefore they have to revise their own programs and agendas... Women were not active in the media... they were divided... even the women's organizations were not united and they did not have a common linkage to organize and orient their work and activities as a team. [back to the main issue] We should figure out a way to find those women who deserve a leadership position... we have to maintain stable criteria and anyone who finds herself to have the potential can nominate to the position. We have to know the number of women working in the ministry and who have the desire and the ability to occupy senior positions. I assume that any woman who apply and have the potential can be called a leader. There is a need for adopting a strategy of training and rehabilitation through courses and workshops to improve the condition of women in the government. Women might not be able to function well in a specific field of work but the training and rehabilitation process can help us to know exactly where their capacities and skills can be invested in. There is a need to make a continuous filtration in human resource

management... and especially in the process of employment... so that we can identify the capacities and the qualification of the person and know her desire to fill a particular position successfully. There are certain positions that fit for women only and vice versa. I should also mention that the identification of person's potential and abilities are essential. Sometimes, the work performance might be influenced by the gap among the working women and this might be attributed to unorganized work load and wrong job descriptions in the work environment. Any woman has to get rid of the negative characteristics and she has to love her work.

Can you think of an example that illustrates how women would be able to improve their positions in public administration?

The government has to have a role in encouraging women. The state's current mechanism to implement [policies to support women]... is ambiguous. Women have to be supported by the media... Women should be given the opportunity to enter the field of work and politics freely. Without achieving such circumstances, women will struggle. Women should be encouraged to fill senior and leading positions, but what is going on is that women are discouraged by many entities. Personal and gender issues should not judge the public interest... I did not think in nominating myself. However, in the work environment, I make sometimes very tough decisions based on respect. This cannot happen in our political life. Women still need assistance from society, but what we see is that

some entities fight back against women's motivation and their efforts to be leaders. There are some women who might give up their rights to reach a higher position because of the negative propaganda that they might face. There is a need for reinforcing the orientation process about women's rights in the society.