Occupational Mobility among Legal Immigrants to the United States

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Abstract

       This paper uses the New Immigrant Survey Pilot data to compare the skill level of an immigrants' last home country job with that of his or her first U.S job since legalization. I find that slightly more than half (52%) of legal immigrants experience occupational downgrading with their first job in the United States and that the correlates vary by sending region. Immigrants' class of admission, English ability, and location of education are strongly related to downgrading. Overall, immigrants who legalize through employment-based categories are less likely to experience downward mobility. For most immigrants, English ability is associated with positive mobility outcomes. For immigrants from Asia, Europe, Australia, and Canada, education acquired abroad is associated with a decrease in the probability of downgrading. Results suggest that education acquired in Latin America and the Caribbean is poorly valued in the U.S. labor market and that formal education is more important than English ability for Asian immigrants. Upgrading is positively associated with the probability of pursuing formal education for immigrants from regions other than Asia and downgrading is loosely associated with an increased probability of enrolling in English classes.

INTRODUCTION

Few people would be surprised to hear that legal immigrants who come to the U.S. often have qualifications and experience that suit them for jobs well beyond what they end up doing once they are here. An 1997 article in the Washington Post told the stories of a Vietnamese former literature teacher who worked in a perfume factory, a Kurdish former publisher who worked at McDonald's, and a Jamaican high school teacher with 25 years of experience who sorted mail (Constable 1997). Although some legal immigrants may know ahead of time that their transition into the U.S. labor market will likely not be seamless and may require a substantial step down in the employment ladder, many come anyway. It may be that the blue-collar work they find in the U.S. offers them a path to a better life than the white-collar job they left behind. They may also see their sacrifice as one step towards a better life for their children.

Occupation influences a wide range of outcomes from health to welfare, yet we know little about why immigrants often end up in occupations for which they are overqualified. Understanding occupational downgrading is important for several reasons.[1] First, it is likely that success in the labor market is correlated with other outcomes of interest, such as remittance behavior, dependence on public assistance, and the probability of sponsorship. If occupational downgrading is associated with negative outcomes, it is important to understand its determinants. Second, there is empirical interest in knowing whether the trends and stereotypes of economic success generated by patterns of immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century will hold for those admitted at the end of the twentieth century (Massey 1995). Third, a high prevalence of occupational downgrading suggests an inefficient allocation of skills in the U.S. If a significant number of immigrants with college degrees are working in menial jobs, this may

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[1] Occupational downgrading in this paper refers to the situation where an immigrant's U.S. occupation is of a lower rank than his or her last occupation abroad. The rankings reflect the average education of individuals holding those positions. See Appendix A for details.

constitute a waste of human resources that could be put to better, more productive use. For instance, if the only obstacle to a more efficient application of an individual's skills is knowledge of English, this is important information for policy makers to have. In this paper, I use empirical evidence to address the question of how well the human capital an immigrant acquires in his or her home country converts to skills valued in the U.S. labor market. I further consider whether this initial experience has a subsequent association with the pursuit of additional schooling or English classes in the first year.

Researchers' theories differ in their arguments over which factors motivate migration and they vary in their positions about the level at which the decision to migrate is made (i.e., household versus individual). Further, they have debated whether the move is driven by market failures or is part of a lifetime wage maximization strategy (Massey and Denton 1993). All proposed theories assume that individuals who migrate and enter the labor force will attempt to obtain the best job, whether measured as ranking or wages, they can. Regardless of the individual's initial motivations, one hopes that occupational downgrading is a cost that turns out to be short term.

Prior research has shown that immigrants to the United States have lower earnings than natives with comparable education levels (see Chiswick 1978 for seminal work), suggesting that immigrants' skills and experience are undervalued. However, much of this research has been limited by the available data. The most commonly used sources for these analyses have been data from the decennial census of the United States or data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). Problems with the use of census data for the study of immigration are well known, including the absence of information on legal status and no reliable way to discern year of arrival (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1987; Redstone and Massey 2003). Although INS

data eliminate variation with respect to legal status, they do not include information on years of education or earnings. Further, census and INS data are cross-sectional and neither include information on the individual's occupation before coming to the U.S. Without being able to take into account the individual's prior occupation, it is difficult to know whether low skill occupations are observed because legal immigrants are negatively selected with respect to job skills or whether the observed lack of initial success in the U.S. labor market is due to occupational downgrading (see Borjas 1987 for a discussion of the selectivity of U.S. immigrants).

I am able to overcome many above these data limitations with the use of the New Immigrant Survey Pilot (NISP) data, whose survey includes a question regarding the individual's last occupation abroad. The NISP data allow for a ranking of the occupational categories by average education level. The rank of the occupation an individual held abroad, determined by the average education of individuals in each occupation category, can then be compared with that of his or her first post-legalization occupation in the U.S. Based on this comparison, fifty-two percent of legal immigrants experience occupational downgrading with their first job in the U.S. Findings suggest there is little variation in prevalence of downgrading by region, yet its determinants and characteristics are distinct.[2] Prior U.S. experience, measured in years or number of prior trips, is associated with an increase in the ranking attained by immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean and by those from Europe, Australia, and Canada. Becoming a permanent resident through an employment-based preference category is associated with a dramatic reduction in the probability of downgrading relative to other class of admission

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[2] The sending regions used in this analysis are [1] Latin America and the Caribbean, [2] Europe, Australia, and Canada, and [3] Asia. Although these categorizations smooth over substantial heterogeneity, they are meaningful for showing broad trends. Sample size limitations prohibit a more nuanced breakdown. For simplicity, I will sometimes refer to the Europe, Australia, and Canada group as 'the European group'.

categories for all regions. Although upgrading is not as common, I also consider its determinants. Approximately 19-27% of immigrants, depending on the region of origin, have this fortunate outcome. Generally, the determinants of upgrading are not the mirror image of downgrading as there are fewer significant covariates and, when significant, the magnitude is often smaller.

Looking across regions, I find variation in the effects of English ability and years of education acquired abroad on mobility. Having the ability to speak English is negatively correlated with the probability of downward mobility for immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean and for those from Europe, Australia, and Canada. Years of education acquired abroad contribute significantly to positive labor market outcomes for immigrants from Asia, Europe, Australia, and Canada. This suggests that education from Latin America and the Caribbean is of low value in the U.S. labor market and that formal education is more important than English ability for Asian immigrants.

Apparent in this analysis is that the determinants and characteristics of those who downgrade are not consistent across regions. The underlying characteristics of those who downgrade also differ by region. As shown in Table 1, there is little variation in prevalence such that 54% of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean downgrade compared with 54% of immigrants from Europe, Australia, and Canada and 50% from Asia. However, these figures mask substantial heterogeneity. Those from Latin America and the Caribbean who downgrade do so from lower ranked positions on average than those from Europe, Australia, and Canada. Immigrants from Europe, Australia, and Canada who downgrade start higher and fall further on average than those from other regions. Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean are

unable to attain the same ranking in the U.S. even though the jobs they left behind are, on average, at lower levels of the distribution.

<div align="center">TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE</div>

In what follows, I will discuss related work and its limitations, describe the data and methodology used in the analysis, present a discussion of results, and conclude.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF THEORIES AND RESULTS ON OCCUPATIONAL DOWNGRADING

Chiswick's work comparing immigrants' earnings to natives' earnings constitutes the seminal work in the study of immigrants' labor market outcomes (1977; 1978). Using census data, he finds that immigrants' earnings are lower for the first fifteen years after migration, at which point there is a crossover and they earn more than natives (1978). Chiswick's results have subsequently been criticized as it is impossible to discern whether his findings using cross-sectional data reflect an actual wage increase for immigrants due to increased time in the U.S. and the acquisition of U.S.-specific human capital or whether this conclusion is spurious and the results are driven by a trend of progressively lower quality of entering immigrants (Borjas 1985, 1994).

In an analysis using Israeli census data, Friedberg looks at earnings and shows that an immigrant's education is valued differently in the Israeli labor market depending on where it was acquired. She also shows that education acquired in Israel increases the returns to that acquired abroad (Friedberg 2000). Jasso and Rosenzweig (1995) compare outcomes for marital immigrants and employment-based immigrants at the time of permanent residency and at naturalization and find that, although employment-based immigrants have greater labor market success in the short term, less than half of them who began in executive or managerial positions

were still in positions of that level at the time of naturalization (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1995).[3]

These studies have contributed to the understanding of occupational downgrading, but have been limited by the cross-sectional, and therefore multiple cohort, nature of the data or the fact that necessary information has not been available. These deficiencies have not allowed for a clear identification of what are likely to be significant contributing factors to labor market outcomes, such as legal status or years of education. Relying on cross-sectional data will lead to biased estimates if cohorts are changing over time. If, as suggested by Borjas (1985), immigrant cohort quality has declined over time, the age-earnings-U.S. duration profiles resulting from an analysis of cross-sectional data will not accurately reflect immigrants' experience. In addition, an inability to distinguish between legal and illegal status forces coefficients to be equal for populations that face dramatically different labor markets. Legal immigrants are free to seek employment in the open market while illegal immigrants are largely restricted to employment in the informal sector.

In this analysis, I am not bound by the same data limitations as prior studies and am able to move beyond a consideration of whether immigrants are better or worse off than natives; I am able to consider whether they are better or worse off than they were in their home country. Further, two of the obstacles listed above are avoided in the NISP through its sampling frame. The NISP data avoid the problem of changes in cohorts over time by sampling from one cohort

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[3] The majority of U.S. admissions are determined on the basis of two factors and they fall into two broad "class of admission" categories. There are immigrants who offer unique skills that are desired and in demand in the U.S. labor market. These are referred to as employment-based immigrants, or as being in an employment-based preference category. Second, there are family-based preference immigrants who reach permanent residency through shared kinship with a U.S. citizen. Outside of these two categories, there are refugees and diversity visas. The diversity lottery provides 55,000 visas per year and is open to qualified applicants from eligible countries. The names of eligible countries are produced annually and, in order to qualify, applicants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent or they must have two years of recent work experience in an occupation that requires at least two years of training or experience to perform (see http://www.bcis.gov/grahpics/howdoi/divlott.htm for more information).

of immigrants and the data avoid combining immigrants of varying legal statuses as the sampling frame includes only those who are legal.

The survey includes retrospective information providing each individual's last occupation abroad, detailed information on class of admission, a reliable measure of prior U.S. experience, and the ability to identify where the individual's education was obtained. This information along with data on other relevant demographic characteristics allows me to assess the extent to which prior occupation in the country of origin and other human capital variables influence the type of occupation attained in the U.S. and how these factors vary by sending region. I am also able to consider whether the major determinants of occupational mobility differ depending on the level at which one starts, or whether the same characteristics that move someone from a high position to an even higher position serve the same function when starting at a lower level.[4] Lastly, I consider the relationship between mobility and the probability of enrolling in school or English classes within the first year of legalization.

HYPOTHESES

The probability of experiencing a drop in occupational ranking after moving to the U.S. may depend on factors such as where the individual comes from and what brought him or her to the U.S. Individuals from countries that are more economically, culturally, or linguistically similar to the U.S. most likely have an easier time making the transition. In an open labor market, the type of job one can secure is largely determined by education and experience, or human capital. The returns to human capital are likely to vary by whether the inputs were obtained in the U.S. or abroad, the former considered more desirable. It is also possible that U.S.

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[4] While the term occupational mobility is often used in sociology to refer to trends involving occupational prestige and social standing, I use the term downward (or upward) mobility interchangeably with occupational downgrading (upgrading), strictly referring to a change in job ranking.

education has an indirect effect on labor market outcomes by increasing the return to human capital acquired abroad (Friedberg 2000).

Additional potential influences might include previous U.S. experience or an individual's household structure. Prior experience may be associated with an increased probability of downgrading if this past is associated with a poor skill set, or an increased probability of upgrading if the individual acquired valuable labor market experience or migration-specific knowledge during that time. One might also imagine that initial migration status may factor into future labor market outcomes. Having previously been in the U.S. illegally may be associated with poor outcomes later on if this signifies that an individual has low skills.[5] Having minors in the household might be associated with an increase in the probability of downgrading if it means that the adult is less able to be selective in employment and must settle for an immediate, but possibly lower ranked, job.

The data include the immigrant's reported state of residence, so I am able to test whether individuals from certain countries or sending regions do better or worse living in states where the percentage of their compatriots is known to be high. For instance, do immigrants from Mexico who live in Arizona, Texas, or California fare better, in terms of occupational mobility, than those living in other states? The data do not permit linkage of individuals' addresses with census tract data or have information on the race or ethnicity of the individual's employer. For this reason, I am unable to test for the effects of an enclave environment or ethnic networks on occupational mobility.

Additionally, immigrants admitted as refugees and those admitted through an employer's sponsorship will not likely experience the same outcomes (Chiswick 1978). One might expect

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[5] Empirically, I measure this as the variable labeled 'at least one prior trip without a visa'. An individual is assigned a 1 if he or she [1] had been in the U.S. at any point without a visa, [2] if he or she had ever overstayed a visa, or [3] if he or she had ever been apprehended by the INS.

that employment-based immigrants would have greater labor market success due to higher skills and the higher likelihood that they have a job prior to legalization. Empirically, I distinguish between employment-based immigrants, refugees, diversity immigrants, immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, and family preference category immigrants. There are two reasons why I distinguished between 'family preference' and 'immediate relative of a U.S. citizen'. Immediate relatives of a U.S. citizen are a subset of the family-based preference category, although the categories are mutually exclusive in this analysis. Firs, the two categories combined make 50% of the sample and the combination likely glosses over substantial heterogeneity within the group. The subset is defined to include spouses, parents, and unmarried children, under the age of 21, of U.S. citizens, where the sponsoring U.S. citizen must be at least 21 years of age. These are also the only family-based preference categories not subject to worldwide limitation (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1990).   Second, it may be the case that immigrants more closely linked to a U.S. citizen have an easier time in their transition to the U.S. labor market due to access to information leading to better institutional knowledge of their surroundings or networks with greater social capital. The refugee dummy variable captures a heterogeneous group of people with diverse labor market outcomes that largely depend on their country of origin (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Sample size limitations do not allow me to differentiate between subgroups of refugees, for example between Eastern European and South Asian refugees.

With respect to the association between mobility and the probability of pursuing additional education or English classes, I expect to find that those who have a first job in the U.S. of lower ranking than their last job abroad would have a higher probability of enrollment. This would suggest an effort to overcome the initial disruption of downgrading.

DATA AND METHODS

The data used in this analysis come from the New Immigrant Survey Pilot study (NISP), a unique study of legal immigrants to the U.S. It is a longitudinal survey beginning at the time of legalization. The sampling frame is U.S. immigrants who were legalized in July and August of 1996. It is representative of the 1996 cohort of legal U.S. immigrants and is based on probability samples of administrative records of the INS (see Jasso et al. 2000 for a full discussion).[6] Children and adults were sampled, although the analysis here is restricted to the adult files.[7]

The pilot study included four waves of data collection: a baseline survey, three-month, six-month, and twelve-month follow-ups. Completion rates for those contacted for the baseline survey and who were subsequently chosen for the follow-up surveys were 92% at the six-month follow-up and 95% at the twelve-month (Jasso et al. 2000). It has been shown in other work that those individuals interviewed do not differ demographically or by country of origin distribution from those not interviewed (Jasso et al. 2000). The three-month follow-up was primarily designed to determine the feasibility of successfully finding those surveyed and an attempt was made to contact only half the sample. For this reason, the following analyses are restricted to data drawn from the baseline, six month, and twelve month surveys.

Predicting Occupational Mobility

The surveys gathered data on demographic characteristics, each respondent's migration history, prior visas, household structure in the U.S., public and private transfers, and employment. In the baseline survey, respondents were asked about their most recent occupation

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[6] Further information about the dataset is available from the project website at http://www.pop.upenn.edu/nis/about.htm.

[7] Of the adults, employment-based immigrants were oversampled with a 3.5:1 ratio. Immigrants in this category had a sampling probability of 0.047201, compared to 0.013486 for other visa categories (Jasso et al. 2000). All descriptive statistics and tabulations shown here are adjusted using sampling weights.

prior to coming to the U.S. In each survey, they were also asked to provide information about their current employment. It follows that an individual could have a maximum of four occupations recorded: his or her last occupation abroad, that at the time of the baseline, six-month, and twelve-month surveys.

When self-reported occupation was unavailable (i.e., if the person reported that he or she was working and did not provide an occupation), responses were taken from the INS supplemental files where applicable. To use information from both sources, the survey responses were aggregated into the twenty-five INS occupation categories representing people in the labor force. Ranking the occupation categories was necessary to make a comparison. Each INS occupation category (e.g., service occupations) has an educational distribution abroad and in the U.S. I took the average education of all people in service occupations abroad and the average education of all people in service occupations in the U.S. and then averaged the two averages. The twenty-five occupation categories are ranked based on this system (see details in Appendix A). I have repeated this ranking exercise using the average education for the categories abroad and in the U.S. separately, in addition to permutations using average income. The results shown here were robust to the ranking system used. I present those using the education-based ranking because this most accurately reflects the idea of human capital transfer under analysis in this paper.[8]

To consider mobility, I estimate multinomial logit models of the form:

$$\log\left(\frac{\pi_{ij}}{\pi_{iJ}}\right) = \alpha_j + \beta_{1j} Rank\_AB_i + \beta_{2j} Class\_Ad_i + \beta_{3j} Ed\_US_i + \beta_{4j} Ed\_AB_i + \beta_{5j} X_i$$

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[8] While there exist indices for categorizing occupations (Ganzeboom & Treiman's Standard International Occupational Scale (Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996) and Ganzeboom's International Socio-Economic Index of Occupational Status (Ganzeboom, De Graaf and Treiman 1992), these are less strictly about job skill level attainment and more related to social standing and prestige. This analysis differs in that I do not attempt to make a normative statement about the social status associated with one occupation versus another. Future work will incorporate the use of the Treiman prestige score.

where *j* can be either upgrading or downgrading and *J* is the reference category where no change

in ranking has occurred, α_j is the constant for category *j*, *Rank_AB* is the rank of individual *i*'s

last job abroad, *Class_Ad* is a set of dummy variables capturing whether individual *i* was

admitted through an employment-based category (reference category), as an immediate relative

of U.S. citizen, through a family preference category, as a refugee, or with a diversity visa.

Ed_US measures individual *i*'s education in the U.S., *Ed_AB* measures individual *i*'s education

in the home country, and *X* is a vector of demographic and other characteristics.

Pursuit of Further Education

      For this section of the analysis, I use binary logit models to predict enrollment in formal

schooling or English classes in the first year after legalization.   The logit model estimated is:

$$P(immig\_enrolled_i = 1) = \frac{\exp(X_i\beta)}{1 + \exp(X_i\beta)}$$

where *P(immig_enrolled$_i$)* is the probability that individual *i* enrolls in school or the probability

that individual *i* enrolls in English classes, and X_i is a vector of demographic and human capital

variables for individual *i*, including a variable measuring individual *i*'s mobility with respect to

his or her first U.S. job, earnings at the first U.S. job, and the rank of last job abroad.

      At the six month and the twelve month follow-up surveys, each individual was asked if

he or she had enrolled in any formal schooling since the last interview and if he or she had taken

any English classes since the last interview. The question regarding formal schooling specifies

that the person exclude any vocational training. The variable considering occupational mobility

is measured as follows: -1 if the individual drops in rankings more than 1 level, 0 if the change is

between -1 and 1, and 1 if the individual upgrades more than one level. I include this

abbreviated measure of mobility, rather than a direct measure that ranges from -24 to 24 (rank

abroad-rank in U.S.) in an attempt to isolate the effect of mobility from a level effect of occupational rank.

RESULTS

In the following section, I begin in Table 2 with descriptive statistics of the variables used in the analysis. Tables 3a-3d show, for the pooled sample and by region, the conditional probabilities of being in the same, higher, or lower ranking quartile than the one the respondent was in abroad. In Table 4, I present three ordinary least squares (OLS) models, one for each sending region, where the rank of U.S. occupation is a function of the rank of occupation abroad and a series of human capital characteristics. An OLS regression model is used in Table 4 as it allows for greater ease of interpretation than ordered logit.[9]

Table 5 presents three multinomial logit models where the outcome is either upward mobility, downward mobility, or no change in occupational ranking (the reference category). Table 6 takes the final model from Table 5 and applies it to the three regions separately and Table 7 presents multinomial logit models of upward or downward mobility by occupational rank abroad aggregated into quartiles to determine whether contributing covariates are sensitive to the level at which the individual starts. The multinomial model in Tables 5 through 7 is used because this specification allows the variables to have separate effects on each outcome. Coefficients are estimated for each outcome category minus one, the reference category.

Tables 8 and 9 show, by region and for the pooled sample, binary logit models predicting enrollment in formal schooling and English classes within the first year after legalization. All multinomial and binary logit results are presented as marginal effects, estimated as $\frac{\partial P(x)}{\partial x_i}$. The

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[9] The results using the ordered logit model do not differ from those obtained using OLS.

result of this partial derivative is a change in the probability of the outcome for an incremental change in the explanatory variable x_i, evaluated at the mean. For dummy variables, the marginal effect is calculated for a discrete change from 0 to 1.

Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for variables used in the analysis. The first three columns present figures for Latin America and the Caribbean; Europe, Australia, and Canada; and Asia. There were too few cases from Africa to consider it as a separate region, but African immigrants are included in the total shown in column four. On average, legal immigrants in the mid 1990s who were in the labor force had beyond a high school education (13 years) and were slightly dominated by men (52%). There is substantial variation by sending region with respect to educational background, with total education for those from Latin America and the Caribbean averaging less than twelve years and averaging approximately fifteen years for those from Europe, Australia, and Canada. Immigrants legalized in 1996 had acquired, on average, approximately six months of education in the United States.

TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean are more likely to have obtained a green card through a family member's sponsorship and to have a child living in the U.S. The average immigrant from Europe, Australia, and Canada has some college education, speaks English well, and has been to the U.S. almost three times acquiring approximately three years of experience before legalization. The average Asian immigrant legalized in the mid 1990s has some college education and has made between one and two trips amassing less than two years of U.S. experience, the fewest of three sending regions. Notably, the average immigrant from the European group makes more trips yet has fewer years of experience in the U.S. on average than the Latin American and Caribbean immigrant. Latin American and Caribbean immigrants have

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the highest percentages reporting enrollment in English classes (26%), where immigrants from Europe, Australia, and Canada dominate those pursuing additional formal schooling with 20% reporting enrollment. These figures suggest substantial variation in the characteristics of immigrants from each sending region.

Tables 3a-3d present cross-tabulations of the quartile of an individual's occupational ranking abroad with the quartile he or she attains in the U.S. The twenty-five occupation categories are aggregated into quartiles based on the ranked distribution of respondents' last occupation abroad. Table 3a shows the comparison for the pooled sample. For ease of reference, I refer to positions in the lowest quartile as having 'low skills', the second quartile as 'some skills required', the third quartile as 'training required', and the top quartile as 'professional positions'. In the top left cell of Table 3a, there are 103 people who were in the lowest quartile occupations abroad who were also in the lowest quartile in the U.S. Fifty-six percent of those who were in the lowest quartile occupations abroad remained in the same quartile in the U.S. and forty percent of those in the lowest quartile in the U.S. were also in the lowest quartile abroad. Those on the diagonal stayed within their quartile; those above the diagonal upgraded and those below the diagonal downgraded.

<center>TABLES 3a-3d ABOUT HERE</center>

Although cell counts are small, a comparison of tabulations broken down by region reveals distinct variation in the percentages of people who hold upper quartile jobs abroad and are able to attain comparable positions in the U.S. Table 3b shows that only 20% of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean who held 'professional positions' abroad are able to attain the same level with their first post-legalization job compared to 34% from Europe, Australia, and Canada (Table 3c) and 34% from Asia (Table 3d). The comparison is even more dramatic when

considering the percentages of individuals who held jobs in the 3rd quartile ("training required").

Twenty percent of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean are able to hold that level

compared to 48% of immigrants from the European group and 41% from Asia.

These trends are graphically displayed in Figure 1. The vertical line at zero represents

those who retain the same ranking in the U.S. as they had abroad. Occupational changes

associated with an increase in ranking are to the right of the vertical line and those with a

decrease are to the left. As shown in the graph, there is more variability and frequency with

downward changes. The majority of downward mobility occurs between zero and -12. In this

range, immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean dominate in frequency. Those who

experienced a drop in skill ranking greater than twelve are few (8%).

<div align="center">FIGURE ONE ABOUT HERE</div>

In Table 4, I estimate OLS regressions where the occupational ranking of U.S. job is a

function of occupational ranking abroad and a series of human capital characteristics.

Coefficients can be interpreted as the resulting change in U.S. job ranking for a one unit increase

in the explanatory variable. For each region, I first present a model with education broken down

by where it was obtained. I then include an interaction between the education abroad and

education in the U.S. to allow for the possibility that education in the U.S. increases the value of

that acquired abroad. For each region, the ranking of the individual's job abroad has a strong

association with the ranking of the occupation he or she attains in the U.S. In order to take a step

toward being able to imply a causal relationship between rank abroad and rank in the U.S., I have

also estimated a two stage least squares model for the Latin American and Caribbean region

model found in Table 4 (results not shown). I use the variation in years of education abroad as

an instrument to estimate the impact of one's rank abroad on that in the U.S. I argue that years

of education abroad satisfies the exclusion restriction from the second stage equation as many

U.S. employers place little emphasis on education from many Latin American and Caribbean

countries. With this specification, the coefficient for rank of last job abroad remains significant

with a magnitude similar to that shown in Table 4. While this does not eliminate the endogeneity

of rank abroad and rank in the U.S. for the other regions, it presents a strong argument for an

independent effect of rank abroad on rank in the U.S.[10]

Variation across regions is apparent in the variables for age, gender, and prior U.S.

experience.[11] In the model for the European group and in the model for Asia, there is evidence

of nonlinear effects of age. However, the former relationship is concave reaching a maximum at

age 35, and the latter is convex, reaching a minimum at age 36. It appears that U.S. employers

consider age a proxy for experience with European, Australian, and Canadian immigrants with

increasing returns to age early on, yet see it as a hindrance for Asian workers, with decreasing

returns at younger ages. Understanding the age profile of labor market outcomes is important

because age is thought to be a proxy for experience. Consideration of these variables can help

ascertain the veracity of that assumption with respect to immigrants.

TABLE FOUR ABOUT HERE

It is notable that, for all models, education has a significant and positive association with

obtaining a higher ranked job in the U.S. The magnitude for immigrants from Europe, Canada,

and Australia is more than triple that for immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean.

That the coefficient for either of the education variables is significant may be surprising as one

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[10] The results are the same for Asia and the European group, suggesting a causal relationship between rank abroad and rank in the U.S., although the argument that years of education abroad is plausibly excluded from the second stage equation is less strong for these groups, particularly the latter.

[11] A comparison of the log likelihoods for a model run with regional dummies and covariates and one with the regional dummies completely interacted with all of the covariates indicates that the regional models statistically differ from one another at the 1% level.

might expect that the effects of education would be captured in the measurement of occupational ranking abroad. This would suggest a coefficient indistinguishable from zero, if education were perfectly matched to occupation in the country of origin. However, if one accepts that many immigrants move to places where employment opportunities are better, a possible explanation for this independent effect is simply that the jobs some individuals held abroad do not reflect their education level. This may be due to the structure of the labor market in the sending country and that it may be underdeveloped in certain industries such that jobs for people with a postsecondary (or secondary) education are few.

Notably, it is for immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean and, to a slightly lesser extent, from Asia whose education in the source country is least valued. The interaction terms indicate that education in the U.S. increases the value of that acquired abroad for immigrants from these regions. For an immigrant from Latin America with six months of U.S. education, the interaction raises the returns to an additional year of source country education to 0.182 from 0.118 (0.118+(0.5*0.127)). For an identical immigrant from Asia, this interaction raises the return to source country education to 0.411 from 0.343 (0.343+(0.5*0.136)). These represent increases of 35% and 17% respectively.

Additional regional variation comes from the variables related to an individual's migration history. For immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, I find a significant negative association with prior U.S. experience. Holding constant the number of trips, years of prior experience might be suggestive of an illegal stay if illegal stays are longer than those that are legal, resulting in the negative coefficient. However, the number of prior trips is positively correlated with ranking for the European group. It may be that having a higher number of trips for this group is jointly associated with business-related travel and higher skilled jobs.

Table 5 presents three multinomial logit models estimating occupational mobility. The first is a baseline model with education and demographic covariates. The second model includes education disaggregated into that obtained in the U.S. and that obtained in the individual's home country, household characteristics, and the individual's migration history. The third model includes dummy variables for class of admission and tests for state level residence effects. For each model, the first column presents results measuring upward mobility in occupation, the second column presents downward mobility, and no change in occupational ranking is the reference category. A comparison of log likelihoods shows that decomposing education into that acquired in the U.S. and that acquired abroad and adding household and migration history characteristics leads to a significant improvement in fit from the first model (p=0.07). A similar comparison between the second and third models shows that adding controls for class of admission further improves the fit of the model (p=0.00).

TABLE FIVE ABOUT HERE

The ranking of the individual's occupation abroad has a consistent and strong association with the probability of experiencing occupational downgrading or upgrading in the U.S. labor market. The lower the level at which one starts, the more room there is to rise, and the higher one starts, the more room to fall. This can partly be considered a result of the floor and ceiling effects inherent in the comparison, but it is also a indicator of the overall tendencies for movement in those directions. Results for the first two models show that age has a convex relationship with downward mobility, reaching a minimum at an average of age 38. This is not surprising as the outcome is one associated with decreased success in the labor market. The ability to speak English well is consistently and strongly associated with a decreased probability

of downward change. However, the marginal effect of English ability declines from 29.3% to 20.1% (column 2b and column 3b) when controls for class of admission are added.

Results from columns 2a and 2b indicate differential marginal effects of education obtained in the U.S. and that obtained in the country of origin. An additional year of education in the U.S. is associated with an increase in the probability of upward mobility of 3.8%, where an additional year of education in the individual's home country has a comparative association of 1.9%, a difference that is statistically significant from zero (p=0.05). The respective associations with downward mobility are a decrease in the probability by 5.7% for each year of U.S. education and 2.5% for education abroad. This difference is also significant at the 10% level (p=0.07). This supports the hypothesis that education in the U.S. is more highly rewarded than that from the source country.[12]

I expect that having children under sixteen in the household, who can not yet legally work, may affect the type of job one is willing to settle for and make the need for immediate employment more dramatic, thereby increasing the probability of downgrading (Cobb-Clark and Kossoudji 2000). However, no significant association is found. As mentioned earlier, prior illegal experience may suggest something about the individual's labor market history and be associated with an increased probability of downgrading if this past is associated with a poor skill set, or an increased probability of upgrading if they acquired valuable labor market experience or migration-specific knowledge during that time. It may be that the two opposing propensities lead to a marginal effect that can not be distinguished from zero.

I expect that having obtained more education or training prior to securing a first job after legalization would be associated with a lower probability of downgrading. It is surprising to see

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[12] I do not include the interaction of the two education variables in these models as the interpretation with an outcome representing change is not as intuitive as an outcome of levels.

that this has no significant association with mobility in either direction, although we saw in Table 2 that it is somewhat of a rare event (~5%).

In the third model, I include controls for class of admission (provided by the INS supplemental file) because certain visa categories are thought to be correlated with different outcomes in the U.S. labor market. The reference category consists of those who reached permanent residency through an employment-based preference category. Since it is generally thought that employment-based immigrants have the highest probability of labor market success, it is important to consider how other groups fare relative to them. I find strong evidence supporting the trend of employment-based migrants as having a distinct advantage, as all other categories have higher probabilities of downgrading.

There are two possibilities for the insignificant effects of the regional and state interactions (i.e., from Asia*living in California and from Mexico*living in California, Arizona, or Texas). First, the sample sizes looking at individuals for whom both the origin and state variables are true are small and do not provide a lot of power or variation. Second, it is possible that an association might not be observed even with a larger sample size if it is the case that choice of destination is largely network-driven. This would result if, for example, the Mexican immigrant who moves to Montana does so because he has a contact there that can help him secure employment.

All three models include region dummies interacted with the rank of last job abroad, although, in the interests of space, the coefficients are not shown. Of the interactions between regions and rank abroad, a consistently significant interaction between Latin America and rank abroad, suggests considering the regions separately. This follows in Table 6.

Table 6 takes the full model from columns 3a and 3b in Table 5 and applies it to the three regions separately: (1) Latin America and the Caribbean (2) Europe, Australia, and Canada, and (3) Asia. The occupational ranking of the individual's last job abroad continues to be strongly associated with mobility. However, there is variation in the magnitude of marginal effects for this variable by region. Specifically, the marginal effect on the probability of downward mobility for immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean is 10% where it is 5% for immigrants from Europe, Australia, and Canada. It may be that the downgrading experienced by immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean is more tied to the individual's starting level than that experienced by European, Australian, and Canadian immigrants.

TABLE SIX ABOUT HERE

Across the three regions, variables for having children in the household or receiving a relative's assistance with employment are not significantly associated with either mobility outcome. The ability to speak English well is associated with a 30% and 23% lower probability of downward mobility for immigrants from Latin America and from the European group respectively. However, it is not significantly associated with either outcome for Asian immigrants. It may be that the effects of non-English education are more important for this group than English ability.

The returns to education show an interesting pattern. For immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, U.S. education is associated with positive occupational outcomes, yet education abroad shows no relationship. For the European group, an additional year of education abroad is associated with a 3% increase in the probability of upgrading and U.S. education has no significant association. For Asian immigrants, U.S. education is important for upgrading, where each additional year is associated with an increase in this probability of 6%. For the same

group, education acquired abroad is associated with a decreased probability of downgrading (5%). It is worth noting that, although the difference is not consistently significant, the models for Latin America and the Caribbean and for Asia reveal larger marginal effects for U.S. education than for education acquired abroad. This suggests confirmation that U.S. education is more highly valued in the U.S. labor market for immigrants from certain regions.

Again, there is no evidence of a significant association between being of Mexican origin and living in the west. There is a significant association between living in the west and an increased probability (20%) of upward mobility. Further inspection shows that 75% of Mexican immigrants live in Arizona, Texas, or California. There is no notable difference in the probability of downgrading between those living in the three western states and those living in the rest of the U.S. Among non-Mexican origin immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, those who live in the west are slightly younger (30 versus 35 years old) and have twice as much U.S. education (1.2 compared to 0.6 years). This suggests possible differential selection for non-Mexican immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean who opt to live in the west. It is possible that the 16% of non-Mexican immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean who choose to live in those states have strong network connections there influencing their choice of destination. However, this possibility stands only as speculation as I am not able to measure social networks.

Finally, the variables for class of admission show that, overall, employment-based immigrants have lower probabilities of downgrading and higher probabilities of upgrading than to the other class of admission categories.

Table 7 considers whether the determinants of mobility depend on the level at which the person started. The twenty-five rankings are divided into quartiles based on their distribution

abroad (the same quartiles used in Tables 3a-3d, described in Appendix A). This asks whether the factors that determine upward movement from a 'low skills' position are the same as those influencing a move upwards from a 'training required' position. The comparison to be made is between columns 1a, 1b, and 1c for upward transitions and 2a, 2b, and 2c for downward transitions. Modeling each outcome separately as ordinary least squares allowed for Chow tests to determine whether the equations predicting upward and downward changes are the same. Results suggest that there is no significant difference between the determinants of moving upward from the first two tiers, but a comparison of each with the third shows that determinants of moving upward from a third level ('training required') position are distinct. Factors influencing movement downward from a second or third tier job are also distinct from each other.

TABLE SEVEN ABOUT HERE

Much of the variation between determinants may be driven by variation in magnitude rather than qualitative differences. For instance, the ability to speak English well consistently deters downgrading as do years of education abroad, although the marginal effect ranges from 23% to 52%. Additional education overall is associated with upgrading from all but the lowest quartile and it appears that, for professional positions, education in the U.S. will increase the probability (by 6% for each year) of maintaining that level. Regardless of the level at which the person starts, English ability and education (particularly if acquired in the U.S.) will improve immigrants' chances for success in the U.S. labor market.

Given the importance of English ability and U.S. education, Tables 8 and 9 present results of logit models predicting enrollment in further formal schooling and English classes. Results are inconclusive. Table 8 shows a positive association between upgrading and the

probability of enrolling in formal education classes for all models except that for Asia. It may be that those who experience occupational upgrading are unique in characteristics that are unobserved and are correlated with the probability of enrolling in further schooling. Or it may be that those enrolling in school are in the fortunate position of having their classes paid for by their employer. The earnings variable is negatively correlated with the probability of enrolling in school and being able to speak English and having already had some U.S. education are associated with an increase in the probability of enrollment.

TABLE EIGHT ABOUT HERE

Table 9 shows the results for a binary logit model predicting enrollment in English classes within the first year after legalization. Here the sign on the mobility variable is in the expected direction for immigrants from Europe, Australia, and Canada, where experiencing downgrading increases the probability of enrollment, yet it is only for this group that the marginal effect is significantly different from zero. Women are more likely than men to enroll in English classes and age is associated with an increased probability of enrollment up until age 45.[13] It may be that if we observed these individuals for more than one year, we would see a stronger association between mobility and enrollment in school or English classes.

TABLE NINE ABOUT HERE

CONCLUSION

This analysis has used the New Immigrant Survey Pilot data to consider the occupational mobility of newly legalized immigrants to the U.S. and their subsequent enrollment in school or

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[13] I also estimated the model predicting enrollment in English classes restricting it to those who reported not speaking English well at the baseline survey. The reduction in sample sizes, which start out small, results in a dramatic loss of power. I found, in the pooled sample, that the effects for age, sex, the interaction between female and having young children, and earnings at first U.S. job that were similar to those found in the pooled model in Table 9.

English classes. I began with a consideration of the factors associated with the ranking of occupation attained in the U.S. broken down by region of origin. English ability and education significantly contribute to the ranking of U.S. occupation, and education acquired in the U.S. has a greater impact for Asian, Latin American, and Caribbean immigrants. Acquiring U.S. education for immigrants from the regions just mentioned increases the returns to their source country education. Determinants of occupational mobility associated with the first U.S. job, or how well an individual retains the same ranked occupation he or she had abroad, differ by region. Education acquired abroad is beneficial for those coming from Europe, Australia, and Canada or from Asia, yet not for immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean. Education is a stronger determinant of success in the labor market than English ability for Asian immigrants. I find that class of admission, particularly employment-based preference categories, English ability, and years of education all matter for occupational attainment in the U.S., yet vary in their impact across groups.

A consideration of correlates broken down by the rank of occupation abroad showed that the majority of differences in determinants of mobility by starting level are due to variation in the magnitude of effects, and not in their substantive associations. For instance, the ability to speak English well consistently decreases the probability of downgrading, yet the magnitude of the effect varies considerably by where in the ranking distribution one starts. It is likely that there is systematic variation with respect to the resources (social, human, and financial capital) available to immigrants from different regions. Research that seeks to understand the labor market faced by U.S. immigrants should allow for variation by region of origin and should account for the fact that immigrants with different skill sets have unique experiences in their transitions to the U.S. Finally, I find a positive association between upgrading and the probability of school enrollment

and a negative, but often not significant, relationship between upgrading and the probability of enrollment in English classes.

Prior studies of immigrants' outcomes in the U.S. have been limited by available data. Limitations include the fact that decennial census data do not distinguish between illegal and legal immigrants and that INS data do not provide information on years of education or earnings. I have been able to move beyond these restrictions to compare the ranking of the occupation an individual held abroad with that held as a first post-legalization job in the U.S. This analysis suggests that newly legalized immigrants to the U.S. in 1996 were largely unable to convert their prior experience and skills into comparable jobs in the U.S. With 52% of the population experiencing a downward change, the transition is clearly not smooth. There remains a lack of clear understanding as to how these initial entries into the U.S. labor market play out in the long run. For instance, is it that the 52% take an initial step down for their first job but then make up the difference? If so, one might ask how long the recovery takes and how it varies by region of origin. Further, it is essential to understand which factors contribute to subsequent upgrading. Several of these questions currently lack appropriate data for empirical testing but this will soon change as the full NIS survey data become available.

Immigration policy in the U.S. has not reached consensus as to whether its goal is to benefit immigrants or natives. However, minimizing occupational downgrading can benefit both. Immigrants benefit because they are able to attain better jobs and apply their, in some cases considerable, prior experience and training. The U.S. native population stands to benefit for two reasons. First, if downgrading is correlated with adverse outcomes later on, particularly those that use public funds, its prevention is desirable. Second, an efficient allocation of skills leads to a more efficient labor market.

Figure 1. Density Estimate of Mobility by Region
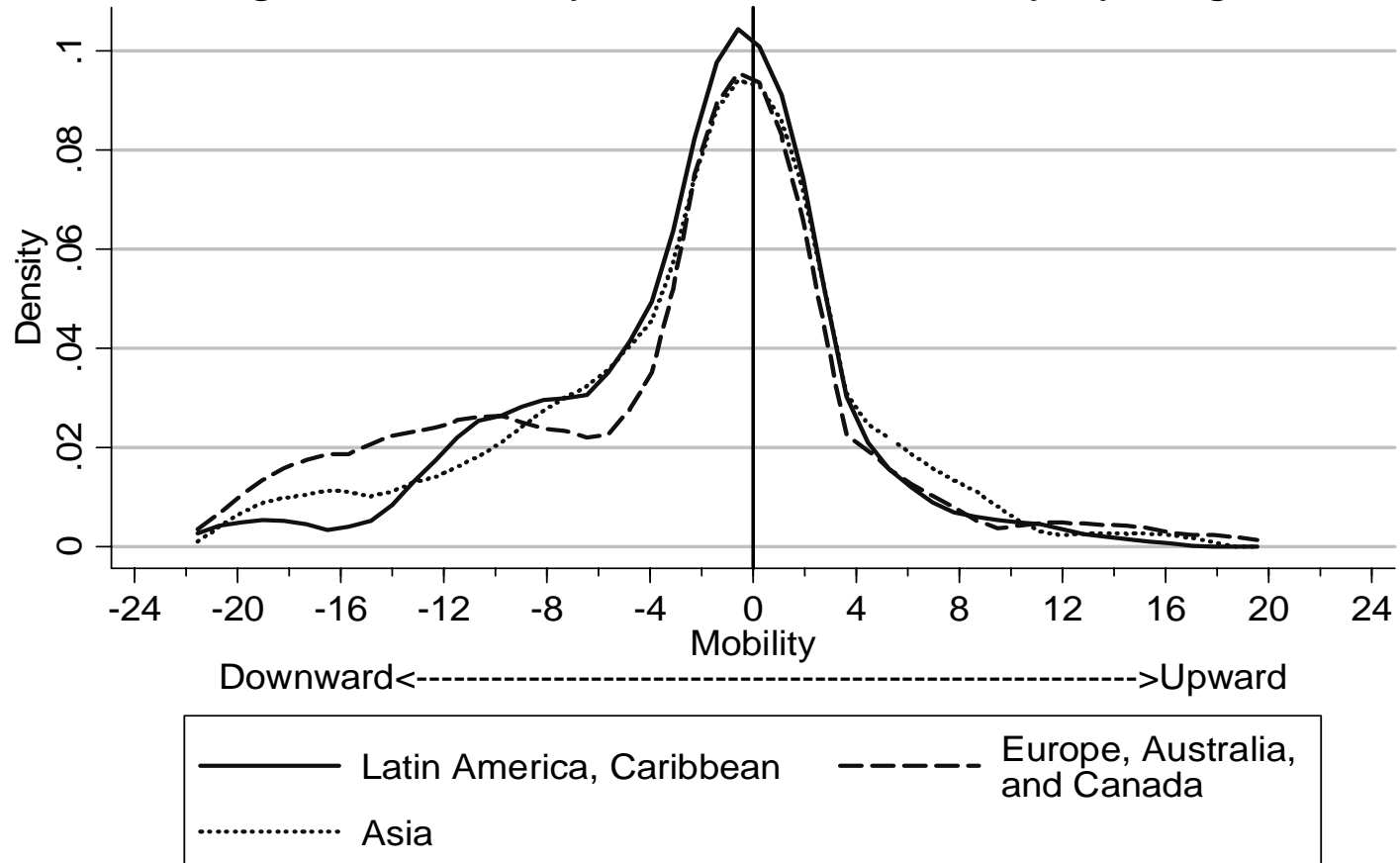
Table 1. Summary characteristics.

	Latin America & Caribbean			Europe, Australia, and Canada			Asia		
	Down	Up	No change	Down	Up	No change	Down	Up	No change
Proportion with mobility	0.539 (0.034)	0.237 (0.029)	0.225 (0.028)	0.538 (0.042)	0.193 (0.034)	0.270 (0.035)	0.502 (0.037)	0.265 (0.033)	0.233 (0.030)
Average rank of occupation abroad	10.52 (0.558)	4.06 (0.371)	6.33 (0.619)	14.22 (0.818)	6.290 (0.770)	11.53 (1.030)	12.45 (0.682)	5.67 (0.608)	10.08 (0.890)
Average drop/increase in ranking	-6.07 (0.453)	3.59 (0.448)	—	-8.34 (0.718)	5.46 (0.902)	—	-6.89 (0.557)	4.32 (0.520)	—
N	116	57	56	79	35	71	104	61	63

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 2. Means and Standard errors of variables associated with U.S. occupational mobility.

	Latin America, Caribbean	Europe, Australia, Canada	Asia	Total
Demographics				
Male	55.47	42.98	49.61	51.56
	(0.034)	(0.430)	(0.496)	(0.021)
Age	32.47	35.15	33.88	33.49
	(0.748)	(0.873)	(0.793)	(0.451)
Has Any Kids Living in the U.S. (yes, no)	0.142	0.091	0.054	0.097
	(0.024)	(0.025)	(0.017)	(0.013)
Education & English				
Years of Education	11.29	15.17	13.77	13.07
	(0.307)	(0.278)	(0.300)	(0.183)
Years of U.S. Education	0.497	0.709	0.512	0.533
	(0.092)	(0.192)	(0.081)	(0.063)
Years of Education Abroad	10.80	14.47	13.26	12.55
	(0.300)	(0.312)	(0.273)	(0.179)
Education or Training Before First Job Post-Legalization	0.060	0.045	0.071	0.059
	(0.016)	(0.018)	(0.020)	(0.010)
Speaks English Well/Very Well at Baseline	0.377	0.493	0.361	0.416
	(0.033)	(0.042)	(0.035)	(0.021)
Migration History				
Number of U.S. trips	2.12	2.79	1.67	2.08
	(0.203)	(0.332)	(0.167)	(0.123)
Years of Prior U.S. Experience	4.74	2.98	1.71	3.15
	(0.451)	(0.292)	(0.184)	(0.209)
At Least One Prior Trip Without a Visa	0.469	0.130	0.056	0.240
	(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.017)	(0.018)
Household				
Has Kids in Household Under Sixteen	0.581	0.390	0.473	0.496
	(0.034)	(0.041)	(0.037)	(0.021)
Class of admission				
Employment-based category	0.047	0.243	0.160	0.132
	(0.008)	(0.027)	(0.018)	(0.009)
Immediate Relative of U.S. Citizen	0.537	0.330	0.276	0.386
	(0.034)	(0.042)	(0.034)	(0.021)
Refugee	0.034	0.183	0.172	0.114
	(0.013)	(0.035)	(0.029)	(0.014)
Family Preference	0.352	0.139	0.319	0.280
	(0.033)	(0.032)	(0.036)	(0.020)
Diversity/Other	0.029	0.104	0.073	0.088
	(0.012)	(0.028)	(0.020)	(0.013)

Table 2 (continued). Means and Standard errors of variables associated with U.S. occupational mobility

	Latin America, Caribbean	Europe, Australia, Canada	Asia	Total
Employment				
Had Help From Relative with Employment	0.304	0.167	0.300	0.264
	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.036)	(0.020)
Average Job Skill Ranking Abroad (1-25, lowest to highest)	8.05	11.97	10.10	9.74
	(0.395)	(0.605)	(0.485)	(0.277)
Average Job Skill Ranking in U.S. (1-25, lowest to highest)	5.63	8.54	7.79	7.07
	(0.279)	(0.472)	(0.382)	(0.206)
Further Education or English in First Year				
Percent Pursuing Formal Schooling	0.113	0.196	0.173	0.159
	(0.023)	(0.036)	(0.029)	(0.016)
Percent Enrolling in English Classes	0.263	0.178	0.221	0.218
	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.032)	(0.018)
Skill level abroad (column %s, lowest—> highest skill)				
Low (or no) Skilled Position (1st quartile)	33.1	17.8	24.0	26.7
Some skills or experience required (2nd quartile)	33.6	24.8	30.3	29.6
Training required (3rd quartile)	21.8	24.8	23.4	23.3
Professional Position (4th quartile)	11.4	32.5	22.3	20.3
Skill level in first U.S. job (column %s, lowest—>highest skill)				
Low (or no) Skilled Position (1st quartile)	46.7	29.7	29.7	37.4
Some skills or experience required (2nd quartile)	33.9	34.2	38.7	36.7
Training required (3rd quartile)	12.8	22.1	21.7	17.7
Professional Position (4th quartile)	3.6	14.0	9.8	8.2
N	229	185	228	679

Note: Quartiles are assigned by aggregating the twenty-five occupation categories into quartiles based on the ranked distribution of respondents' last occupation abroad. Columns do not sum to total because African origin immigrants are included in the total and they are not counted in an individual column due to limited frequency. Summary statistics are weighted.

Table 3a. Skill Level of First U.S. Job (Lowest (1) to Highest (4))

Skill Level Abroad	Skill Level of First U.S. Job				
	1st Quartile: Low Skills	2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	3rd Quartile: Training Required	4th: Professional Position	Total
1st Quartile: Low Skills (N)	103	69	11	0	183
(row %)	56.24	37.73	5.82	0.21	100.00
(column %)	40.07	27.69	8.85	0.68	26.82
2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	85	82	29	5	201
	42.21	40.79	14.45	2.55	100.00
	33.11	32.95	24.17	9.22	29.52
3rd Quartile: Training Required	44	52	54	9	159
	27.74	32.74	33.69	5.83	100.00
	17.26	20.98	44.71	16.72	23.42
4th Quartile: Professional Position	24	46	27	41	138
	17.77	33.20	19.42	29.61	100.00
	9.56	18.38	22.27	73.38	20.24
Total	256	249	120	56	681
	37.64	36.55	17.65	8.17	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

To facilitate the tabulations in Tables 3a-3d, I aggregate the twenty-five occupation categories into quartiles based on the ranking distribution of respondents' last occupation abroad.

Table 3b. Skill Level of First U.S. Job (Lowest (1) to Highest (4)), Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean

Skill Level Abroad	Skill Level of First U.S. Job				
	1st Quartile: Low Skills	2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	3rd Quartile: Training Required	4th: Professional Position	Total
1st Quartile: Low Skills (N)	50	23	2	1	76
(row %)	65.68	30.95	2.95	0.42	100.00
(column %)	43.82	30.25	7.65	3.85	33.15
2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	35	33	9	0	77
	45.02	42.95	12.03	0.00	100.00
	30.48	42.59	31.69	0.00	33.64
3rd Quartile: Training Required	21	16	10	3	50
	42.31	32.05	19.87	5.77	100.00
	18.54	20.58	33.88	34.62	21.77
4th Quartile: Professional Position	8	5	8	5	26
	31.10	19.51	29.88	19.51	100.00
	7.16	6.58	26.78	61.54	11.44
Total	114	78	29	8	229
	49.69	33.91	12.77	3.63	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3c. Skill Level of First U.S. Job (Lowest (1) to Highest (4)), Immigrants from Europe, Australia, and Canada

	Skill Level of First U.S. Job				
Skill Level Abroad	1st Quartile: Low Skills	2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	3rd Quartile: Training Required	4th: Professional Position	Total
1st Quartile: Low Skills (N)	20	11	2	0	33
(row %)	60.84	34.27	4.90	0.00	100.00
(column %)	36.40	17.82	3.93	0.00	17.76
2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	18	16	10	2	46
	39.50	34.00	22.00	4.50	100.00
	33.05	24.73	24.72	7.96	24.84
3rd Quartile: Training Required	9	11	22	3	46
	19.50	25.00	48.00	7.50	100.00
	16.32	18.18	53.93	13.27	24.84
4th Quartile: Professional Position	8	25	7	20	60
	12.98	41.22	11.83	33.97	100.00
	14.23	39.27	17.42	78.76	32.55
Total	55	63	41	26	185
	29.69	34.16	22.11	14.04	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 3d. Skill Level of First U.S. Job (Lowest (1) to Highest (4)), Immigrants from Asia

	Skill Level of First U.S. Job				
Skill Level Abroad	1st Quartile: Low Skills	2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	3rd Quartile: Training Required	4th: Professional Position	Total
1st Quartile: Low Skills (N)	23	26	6	0	55
(row %)	41.61	48.18	10.22	0.00	100.00
(column %)	33.63	29.86	11.29	0.00	24.01
2nd Quartile: Some Skills Required	27	28	10	3	69
	39.60	41.04	14.74	4.62	100.00
	40.41	32.13	20.56	14.29	30.32
3rd Quartile: Training Required	9	21	22	2	53
	16.48	38.95	41.20	3.37	100.00
	12.98	23.53	44.35	8.04	23.40
4th Quartile: Professional Position	9	13	12	17	51
	17.32	25.20	23.23	34.25	100.00
	12.98	14.48	23.79	77.68	22.26
Total	68	88	50	22	228
	29.71	38.74	21.74	9.82	100.00
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 4. OLS predicting job skill attained in U.S.

Dependent variable: Occupational Ranking in First U.S. Job, 1-25 (lowest-highest)	Latin America & the Caribbean	With Interaction	Europe, Australia, & Canada	With Interaction	Asia	With Interaction	Pooled Sample	With Interaction
Employment								
Ranking of Occupation Abroad	0.239***	0.213***	0.245***	0.248***	0.279***	0.280***	0.272***	0.270***
	(0.050)	(0.049)	(0.064)	(0.065)	(0.057)	(0.056)	(0.033)	(0.033)
Demographics								
Male	0.792	0.725	0.260	0.312	-0.240	-0.354	0.270	0.238
	(0.541)	(0.527)	(0.778)	(0.790)	(0.623)	(0.622)	(0.378)	(0.373)
Age	0.094	0.043	0.759***	0.757***	-0.358*	-0.348*	0.176	0.154
	(0.127)	(0.125)	(0.266)	(0.267)	(0.212)	(0.210)	(0.108)	(0.107)
Age Squared	-0.001	-0.000	-0.011***	-0.011***	0.005*	0.005	-0.002	-0.002
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education and English Ability								
Years of Education Abroad	0.176**	0.118*	0.749***	0.733***	0.417***	0.343***	0.399***	0.342***
	(0.070)	(0.070)	(0.145)	(0.150)	(0.112)	(0.118)	(0.056)	(0.057)
Years of U.S. Education	0.852***	-0.385	0.479**	0.379	0.933***	-1.268	0.615***	-0.115
	(0.204)	(0.411)	(0.226)	(0.327)	(0.257)	(1.135)	(0.122)	(0.221)
Yrs of Education Abroad*Yrs of U.S. Education		0.127***		0.013		0.136**		0.069***
		(0.037)		(0.030)		(0.068)		(0.017)
Speaks English Well/Very Well, Baseline	2.062***	2.209***	2.464***	2.415***	1.741**	1.832**	2.420***	2.366***
	(0.594)	(0.580)	(0.876)	(0.886)	(0.711)	(0.708)	(0.416)	(0.411)
Education or Training in U.S. Prior to First Job	0.232	0.290	1.866	1.900	0.772	0.687	0.644	0.745
	(1.170)	(1.140)	(1.886)	(1.892)	(1.330)	(1.321)	(0.839)	(0.829)
Migration History								
Prior U.S. Experience (years)	-0.082*	-0.072	0.158*	0.152*	0.174	0.217	0.018	0.006
	(0.045)	(0.044)	(0.088)	(0.090)	(0.142)	(0.143)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Number of Trips to the U.S.	0.256***	0.156	0.090*	0.090*	0.091	0.160	0.131***	0.128***
	(0.093)	(0.095)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.159)	(0.161)	(0.041)	(0.040)
Constant	-1.877	0.115	-19.752***	-19.510***	4.536	5.397	-5.127***	-3.919**
	(2.445)	(2.451)	(4.825)	(4.871)	(3.719)	(3.718)	(1.975)	(1.976)
Observations	212	212	177	177	218	218	607	607
Adjusted R2	0.437	0.466	0.452	0.450	0.473	0.481	0.462	0.475

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 5. Multinomial logit predicting occupational mobility.

Dependent Variable: 1=Upgrading, 2=Downgrading, 0=No change in Occupational Ranking Between Job Abroad and U.S. job (0 is the reference category)	Baseline model		Dividing education locations		Full model	
	(1a-Upward)	(1b-Downward)	(2a-Upward)	(2b-Downward)	(3a-Upward)	(3b-Downward)
Employment						
Rank of Occupation Abroad	-0.033***	0.039***	-0.034***	0.039***	-0.037***	0.050***
	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.007)	(0.006)	(0.008)
Demographics						
Male	-0.014	-0.069	-0.022	-0.049	-0.044	0.018
	(0.030)	(0.050)	(0.030)	(0.052)	(0.031)	(0.056)
Age	-0.007	-0.041**	-0.008	-0.035**	-0.012	-0.018
	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.009)	(0.017)	(0.009)	(0.018)
Age Squared	0.000	0.001**	0.000	0.000**	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education and English Ability						
Speaks English Well/Very Well, baseline	0.072**	-0.326***	0.059*	-0.293***	0.040	-0.201***
	(0.033)	(0.056)	(0.034)	(0.059)	(0.036)	(0.064)
Years of Education	0.022***	-0.033***				
	(0.005)	(0.008)				
Years of U.S. Education			0.038***	-0.057***	0.041***	-0.061***
			(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.011)	(0.019)
Years of Education Abroad			0.019***	-0.025***	0.016***	-0.020**
			(0.005)	(0.009)	(0.005)	(0.009)
Education or Training in the U.S. Prior to First Job			0.038	-0.096	0.040	-0.097
			(0.061)	(0.107)	(0.064)	(0.114)
Migration History						
At Least One Prior Trip Without a Visa			-0.009	0.078	-0.007	0.046
			(0.043)	(0.080)	(0.044)	(0.084)
Years of U.S. Experience			0.004	-0.011*	0.002	-0.003
			(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)	(0.007)
Number of trips to the US (incl. current)			0.008*	-0.021**	0.006	-0.016
			(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.004)	(0.010)
Help from Relative						
Help from Relative Getting Job			-0.006	0.089	0.000	0.063
			(0.037)	(0.068)	(0.039)	(0.073)
Household Structure						
Has Any Kids in Household under 16			0.012	-0.032	0.015	-0.029
			(0.030)	(0.053)	(0.031)	(0.057)

Class of Admission						
Family Preference					-0.157***	0.427***
					(0.051)	(0.096)
Immediate Relative of U.S. Citizen					-0.156***	0.426***
					(0.048)	(0.086)
Refugee					-0.204***	0.622***
					(0.068)	(0.120)
Diversity/Other					-0.023	0.600***
					(0.075)	(0.168)
U.S. Location						
Living in CA, TX, or AZ					0.030	0.032
					(0.050)	(0.086)
From Asia, Living in California					-0.090	0.184
					(0.071)	(0.130)
From Mexico, Living in CA, TX, or AZ					-0.126	0.170
					(0.086)	(0.145)
Constant	-0.005	1.078***	0.053	0.902***	0.319*	-0.031
	(0.172)	(0.315)	(0.177)	(0.328)	(0.192)	(0.369)
Observations	571	571	571	571	571	571
Pseudo R2	0.1931		0.2115		0.2632	
Log Likelihood	-491.81		-480.58		-449.05	
Degrees of Freedom	24		38		52	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. Reference categories: for outcome—no change in skill category, for regions—Europe, Australia, and Canada.

Table 6. Multinomial logit predicting occupational mobility, by region

Dependent Variable: 1=Upgrading, 2=Downgrading, 0=No change in Occupational Ranking Between Job Abroad and U.S. job (0 is the reference category)	Latin America, Caribbean		Europe, Australia, Canada		Asia	
	Upward	Downward	Upward	Downward	Upward	Downward
Employment						
Ranking of Occupation Abroad	-0.058***	0.097***	-0.030***	0.047***	-0.045***	0.062***
	(0.012)	(0.018)	(0.009)	(0.012)	(0.008)	(0.012)
Demographics						
Male	-0.020	0.025	-0.101*	0.039	0.018	-0.074
	(0.059)	(0.138)	(0.060)	(0.111)	(0.068)	(0.093)
Age	-0.009	-0.042	0.022	-0.108**	-0.022	0.055
	(0.014)	(0.033)	(0.019)	(0.045)	(0.022)	(0.034)
Age Squared	0.000	0.001	-0.000	0.001**	0.000	-0.001
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education and English Ability						
Speaks English Well/Very Well, baseline	0.042	-0.294**	0.136*	-0.229*	0.006	-0.050
	(0.062)	(0.140)	(0.081)	(0.132)	(0.078)	(0.107)
Years of U.S. Education	0.082**	-0.243***	0.004	-0.010	0.059**	-0.066*
	(0.035)	(0.074)	(0.021)	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.039)
Years of Education Abroad	0.004	-0.002	0.029**	-0.009	0.019	-0.051***
	(0.007)	(0.017)	(0.013)	(0.024)	(0.014)	(0.019)
Education or Training Prior to First U.S. Job	0.016	-0.018	0.140	0.068	0.078	-0.239
	(0.101)	(0.219)	(0.120)	(0.228)	(0.137)	(0.201)
Migration History						
Prior U.S. Experience (years)	-0.006	0.004	0.005	-0.004	0.009	-0.018
	(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.004)	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.024)
Number of Trips to the U.S. (incl. current)	0.005	-0.006	0.008	-0.049*	0.004	-0.003
	(0.008)	(0.017)	(0.006)	(0.028)	(0.017)	(0.024)
At Least One Prior Trip Without a Visa	-0.049	0.052	0.016	-0.037	-0.032	-0.193
	(0.063)	(0.134)	(0.067)	(0.194)	(0.184)	(0.296)
Household Structure						
Any Kids under 16 in Household?	0.059	-0.195	-0.059	0.009	0.009	0.025
	(0.057)	(0.131)	(0.055)	(0.114)	(0.069)	(0.093)
Help from Relative						
Help from Relative Getting Job	0.069	-0.022	-0.054	0.016	-0.036	0.040
	(0.065)	(0.149)	(0.117)	(0.190)	(0.084)	(0.119)

Class of Admission						
Immediate Relative of U.S. Citizen	-0.215**	0.455**	-0.024	0.621***	-0.143	0.253*
	(0.095)	(0.214)	(0.072)	(0.172)	(0.103)	(0.142)
Family Preference Category	-0.223**	0.316	0.144	0.548**	-0.209**	0.537***
	(0.107)	(0.238)	(0.116)	(0.240)	(0.106)	(0.153)
Refugee			-0.035	0.451**	-0.270**	0.640***
			(0.103)	(0.205)	(0.125)	(0.176)
Diversity/Other			0.194	0.590**		
			(0.134)	(0.288)		
U.S. Location						
From Mexico	-0.075	0.176				
	(0.116)	(0.218)				
Living in CA, TX, or AZ	0.203**	-0.235				
	(0.096)	(0.213)				
From Mexico*Living in CA, TX, or AZ	-0.202	0.348				
	(0.157)	(0.330)				
Constant	0.568*	-0.055	-0.684*	1.413*	0.598	-1.009*
	(0.315)	(0.688)	(0.399)	(0.854)	(0.410)	(0.611)
Observations	168	168	162	162	193	193
Pseudo R2	0.3570		0.3789		0.2065	
Log Likelihood	-115.68		-105.51		-164.40	
Degrees of Freedom	36		34		32	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. The categories for refugee and diversity/other are not in the Latin American and Caribbean model due to quasi-complete separation on those variables. The absence of the diversity/other category for Asian immigrants is for the same reason. The reference category for Class of Admission is employment-based preference immigrants.

Table 7. Multinomial predicting occupational mobility by skill level

Dependent Variable: 1=Upgrading, 2=Downgrading, 0=No Change in Occupational Ranking Between Job Abroad and U.S. Job (0 is reference category)	Level 1	Level 2		Level 3		Level 4
	1a-Upward	1b-Upward	2a-Downward	1c-Upward	2b-Downward	2c-Downward
Demographics						
Male	-0.178*	-0.089*	0.058	0.007	-0.051	-0.101
	(0.097)	(0.054)	(0.083)	(0.029)	(0.099)	(0.089)
Age	-0.027	-0.018	0.030	-0.010	0.012	-0.068*
	(0.025)	(0.014)	(0.023)	(0.011)	(0.037)	(0.040)
Age Squared	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.001*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education & English Ability						
Speaks English Well/Very Well, baseline	0.113	0.090	-0.326***	0.039	-0.518***	-0.230**
	(0.107)	(0.056)	(0.102)	(0.035)	(0.109)	(0.094)
Years of U.S. Education	0.079	0.007	-0.005	0.015	-0.011	-0.060***
	(0.050)	(0.022)	(0.053)	(0.009)	(0.039)	(0.023)
Years of Education Abroad	0.012	0.043***	-0.046***	0.013**	-0.064***	-0.047***
	(0.013)	(0.009)	(0.013)	(0.005)	(0.021)	(0.015)
Household Structure						
Any Kids under 16 in Household?	0.131	-0.099*	0.074	-0.005	-0.006	0.017
	(0.098)	(0.054)	(0.091)	(0.032)	(0.103)	(0.093)
Migration History						
Prior U.S. Experience (years)	-0.017	-0.010	-0.001	0.005*	0.002	-0.002
	(0.011)	(0.008)	(0.011)	(0.003)	(0.013)	(0.012)
Number of U.S. Trips (incl. current)	0.045	0.020*	0.003	0.001	-0.022*	-0.035
	(0.075)	(0.011)	(0.022)	(0.002)	(0.012)	(0.022)
Constant	0.267	-0.309	0.005	-0.148	1.107*	2.454***
	(0.463)	(0.240)	(0.407)	(0.205)	(0.653)	(0.744)
Observations	138	170	170	164	164	170
Pseudo R2	0.0758	0.2121		0.2510		0.2259
Log Likelihood	-87.93	-142.45		-109.45		-89.90
Degrees of Freedom	9	18		18		9

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%. To facilitate this analysis, I aggregate the twenty-five occupation categories into quartiles based on the ranking distribution of respondents' last occupation abroad. The quartiles are the same as those used in the cross tabulations in Tables 3a-3d.

Table 8. Logit Predicting Formal Schooling

Dependent Variable: 1 if enrolled during the first year in formal school; 0 otherwise	(1) Latin America & the Caribbean	(2) Europe, Australia, & Canada	(3) Asia	(4) Pooled Sample
Employment and Earnings				
Mobility Variable for Down, No change, and Up (-1, 0, 1)	0.050*	0.098**	0.031	0.063***
	(0.028)	(0.050)	(0.032)	(0.020)
Ranking (1-25) of Job Abroad	0.003	0.003	0.005	0.004
	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.002)
Log of Earnings at 1st U.S. Job	-0.054*	-0.114**	-0.019	-0.046***
	(0.031)	(0.047)	(0.020)	(0.015)
Education and English Ability				
Years of Education Abroad	-0.003	0.006	-0.001	0.001
	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.004)
Years of U.S. Education	0.006	0.026**	0.019	0.020***
	(0.011)	(0.013)	(0.016)	(0.007)
Speaks English Well/Very Well, baseline	0.091**	0.094	0.034	0.067**
	(0.037)	(0.065)	(0.046)	(0.027)
Demographics				
Respondent's Age	-0.011	-0.011	-0.037**	-0.019**
	(0.011)	(0.023)	(0.019)	(0.010)
Age Squared	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Female (1 if yes)	0.008	0.010	-0.016	0.015
	(0.038)	(0.058)	(0.042)	(0.027)
Household Structure				
Any Kids in Household Under 6 (baseline)?	-0.076	0.062	-0.028	-0.042
	(0.050)	(0.092)	(0.078)	(0.041)
Female*Any Kids in Household Under 6?	0.027		0.063	-0.035
	(0.070)		(0.103)	(0.059)
Migration History				
Years of U.S. Experience	-0.002	-0.012	0.001	-0.006
	(0.005)	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.004)
Constant	0.630**	1.132**	0.770**	0.660***
	(0.311)	(0.517)	(0.335)	(0.189)
Observations	167	140	195	545
Pseudo R2	0.258	0.292	0.221	0.217

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 9. Logit Predicting English Training

Dependent Variable: 1 if enrolled in English classes during the first year; 0 otherwise	(1) Latin America & the Caribbean	(2) Europe, Australia, & Canada	(3) Asia	(4) Pooled Sample
Employment and Earnings				
Mobility Variable for Down, No change, and Up (-1, 0, 1)	0.001	-0.039*	0.014	-0.024
	(0.055)	(0.023)	(0.030)	(0.021)
Ranking (1-25) of Job Abroad	-0.005	-0.004	-0.001	-0.005*
	(0.007)	(0.002)	(0.004)	(0.003)
Log of Earnings at 1st U.S. Job	-0.139*	-0.023	-0.034	-0.045**
	(0.076)	(0.016)	(0.024)	(0.018)
Education and English Ability				
Years of Education Abroad	0.017**	0.005	-0.008	0.002
	(0.008)	(0.004)	(0.007)	(0.004)
Years of U.S. Education	-0.009	0.007	-0.004	0.007
	(0.033)	(0.006)	(0.026)	(0.009)
Speaks English Well/Very Well, baseline	-0.259***	-0.076*	-0.141***	-0.194***
	(0.075)	(0.039)	(0.053)	(0.031)
Demographics				
Respondent's Age	-0.020	-0.006	0.003	-0.016**
	(0.016)	(0.007)	(0.012)	(0.007)
Age Squared	0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000*
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Female (1 if yes)	0.153*	0.048	0.008	0.076**
	(0.082)	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.030)
Household Structure				
Any Kids in Household Under 6 (baseline)?	0.134	0.073	-0.142	0.038
	(0.082)	(0.052)	(0.101)	(0.040)
Female*Any Kids in Household Under 6?	-0.087		-0.059	-0.112*
	(0.129)		(0.159)	(0.062)
Migration History				
Years of U.S. Experience	-0.003	-0.007	-0.012	-0.004
	(0.006)	(0.005)	(0.011)	(0.004)
Constant	1.409*	0.243	0.369	0.642***
	(0.730)	(0.170)	(0.265)	(0.192)
Observations	183	144	200	572
Pseudo R2	0.189	0.404	0.212	0.191

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Appendix A

INS Occupation category	Ranking	Quartile, based on distribution abroad (used in Tables 3a-3d and Table 7)
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations	1	1
Health diagnosing occupations	2	1
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	3	1
Precision production, craft, and repair occupations	4	1
Service occupations	5	2
Teachers, except postsecondary	6	2
Health assessment and treating occupations	7	2
Sales occupations	8	2
Social, recreation, and religious workers	9	2
Registered nurses	10	3
Administrative support occupations, including clerical	11	3
Mathematical and computer scientists	12	3
Technologists and technicians, except health	13	3
Executive, administrative, and managerial	14	3
Writers, artists, entertainers, and athletes	15	4
Librarians, archivists, and curators	16	4
Engineers, surveyors, and mapping scientists	17	4
Health technologists and technicians	18	4
Architects	19	4
Counselors, educational and vocational	20	4
Lawyers and judges	21	4
Physicians	22	4
Teachers, postsecondary	23	4
Social scientists and urban planners	24	4
Natural scientists	25	4

When an individual's occupation is provided in the NISP survey data, it is aggregated into one of the above twenty-five labor force occupations. These INS classifications are derived from the Census occupation codes (used in 1980 and 1990). When occupation was not reported in the NISP data yet the individual reported that he or she was currently working, the INS provided occupation was used instead. For employment based principals –a principal is defined by the INS as the "alien who applies for immigrant status and from whom another alien may derive lawful status under immigration law or regulations (usually spouses and minor unmarried children)"— and immigrants obtaining permanent residency through adjusted status (rather than as new arrivals), INS occupation is assumed to represent that in the U.S. For new arrivals, the INS occupation is assumed to refer to the last occupation abroad.

Appendix A, Ranking Methodology

1	2→	3→	((Column A+ Column B)/2)	←4	←5	6
Occupation abroad	Years of Education	(A) Average Education	**Used for Ranking**	(B) Average Education	Years of Education	Occupation in U.S.
Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations	♀~7 yrs ♂~12 yrs ♀~10 yrs ♂~6 yrs	8.75	**8.375**	8	♀~7 yrs ♂~10 yrs ♀~10 yrs ♂~5 yrs	Farming, forestry, and fishing occupations
Health diagnosing occupations	♀~8 yrs ♂~14 yrs ♀~11 yrs ♂~13 yrs	11.5	**11.5**	11.5	♀~9 yrs ♂~12 yrs ♀~12 yrs ♂~13 yrs	Health diagnosing occupations
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	♀~7 yrs ♂~11 yrs ♀~12 yrs ♂~6 yrs	9	**9.375**	9.75	♀~8 yrs ♂~12 yrs ♀~10 yrs ♂~9 yrs	Operators, fabricators, and laborers

The middle column in the diagram above shows examples of final figures used for ranking the occupation categories. Moving from column 2 to column 3 shows how the average within-occupation category education is estimated based on who reported having an occupation in that category abroad. Moving from column 5 to column 4 shows the same exercise for those who held occupations in that category in the U.S. The middle column is a simple average of columns 3 and 4. These are the figures used to rank the twenty five categories.

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