Immigrants' U.S. Labor Market Adjustment: Disaggregating the Occupational Transitions

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Abstract

Using data from the New Immigrant Survey 2003 cohort, changes in occupational prestige between the last job abroad and the first U.S. job and from the first U.S. job to the current U.S. job are examined. Incorporating the first job in the U.S. overcomes an important limitation faced by many previous studies, which were generally restricted to a comparison of the last job abroad and the U.S. job as measured at the time of the survey. Distinctions are made between class of admission groups as the trajectories toward labor market success vary systematically along this dimension. Consistent with a model of immigrant occupational assimilation, all class of admission groups show a U-shaped adjustment pattern with, on average, initial downgrading followed by subsequent ascension. However, although all groups exhibit a similar pattern, the trough of the U is deepest for refugees, who also experience the steepest subsequent upward climb.

The recent media attention paid to immigration confirms that policy makers and the public have a keen interest in how immigrants are faring in the U.S. There is concern over their quality, whether they are assimilating, and whether they will become a public charge. Understanding immigrants' labor market assimilation is crucial for gauging their prospects for broader economic success and the occupational transitions they experience are integral to this process.

Researchers have shown that, across various geographical contexts, human capital and labor market experience acquired abroad are valued less than that gained domestically (Akresh 2006; Friedberg 2000). With this in mind, scholars have been interested in measuring the initial occupational 'costs' of migrating and whether subsequent upward mobility is observed. Although previous researchers have examined occupational shifts for newcomers, most have faced two important limitations. First, many have not been able to consider the immigrant's first job in the host country, looking instead at the current job, and second, they have not been able to consider multiple occupational changes. In the current work, data from the New Immigrant Survey are used, in the first study we are aware of, to deal directly with both issues.

Occupation influences a wide range of outcomes from health to welfare, yet we know little about why immigrants often end up, at least initially, in those for which they are overqualified. Less still is known about their subsequent prospects to ascend the occupational ladder. Expanding our understanding of these transitions is essential as success in the labor market may be correlated with other outcomes of interest, such as the probability of sponsorship or naturalization, or later probabilities of self- or enclave-employment. Further, examining variation by visa entrant status (family preference, employment preference, refugee, or diversity

lottery) is crucial both as an empirical step and to inform policy about which groups face the greatest obstacles.[1]

The most common conceptual framework applied to the process of labor market adjustment is the immigrant assimilation model. This framework suggests that immigrants will experience some degree of occupational downgrading upon arrival and, after some time in the U.S., they will acquire the U.S. specific labor market experience and/or additional human capital necessary for subsequent ascension.[2] These two factors suggest a U-shaped trajectory of occupational adjustment. As the work of Chiswick and co-authors and of Duleep and Regets has shown, the depth of the U's trough will depend on the degree of transferability of the individual's skills, education, and experience acquired prior to migration (Chiswick et al. 2003;

[1] 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, divided into two groups for the purposes of this paper, 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).

[2] One of the clearest descriptions of this framework is in the work of Chiswick et al (2002).

Duleep and Regets 1996, 1999). Individuals from countries more similar linguistically and economically to the host country will likely experience less occupational downgrading than those from more distinct origins (Chiswick et al. 2002).

An important factor to consider in the discussion of immigrant occupational downgrading is the type of occupation the individual held abroad (Chiswick et al. 2002). Although it is clear that one of the dominant causes of occupational downgrading is the U.S. labor market's lower valuation of skills acquired abroad, it is also true that certain occupations present logistical barriers that are absent in others.[3] This can be largely attributed to two factors. First, select occupations require U.S. certification and, second, some occupations are associated with more 'specific' than 'general' capital; the distinction suggests that the former will be more immediately valued in the U.S. than will the latter. General human capital is defined as that which may be valued by any employer, while specific is thought to be valued by one employer only (Becker 1975). Examples of occupations requiring certification include doctors, nurses, and school teachers. Examples of jobs with substantial employer-specific capital include government employees and bureaucrats.

Keeping in mind the factors mentioned above, an important question from a policy perspective is how patterns of occupational attainment vary across class of admission groups. Previous work has shown that class of admission remains a significant correlate of immigrant occupational attainment even after controlling for observable human capital characteristics and region of origin (Akresh 2006). Possible explanations for this are that the individual's class of

[3] The work of Duleep and Regets in which they develop their Immigrant Human Capital Investment model is highly informative in thinking about the transfer of human capital (Duleep and Regets 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1999).

admission [1] provides information about unobservable characteristics, such as the circumstances under which the individual migrated and [2] may, particularly in the case of economic migrants, be directly tied to the type of job they obtain in the U.S.[4]

The U-shaped pattern of labor market assimilation is expected to vary across these subgroups. Economic immigrants may be more likely to experience a lateral transition than are family immigrants or refugees. They tend to have higher levels of education, better English ability, and often have a job prior to moving. Family migrants frequently have lower levels of education and their labor market skills may be less portable. Further, as others have noted, the migration decision of family migrants is not solely the result of an evaluation of their own earning potential, but is heavily influenced by the previous departure of another person (Chiswick et al. 2002). For these reasons, one might also expect the latter group to have a deeper trough with respect to occupational mobility.

Refugees face unique circumstances as they are perhaps the least prepared to leave their home countries. They are forced to leave because of persecution or a well-founded fear of

[4] Because the immigration system is, to a certain degree, open to manipulation, coming through an employment based preference category does not preclude occupational downgrading. In other words, employment-preference category immigrants are not necessarily making a lateral occupational move. Highly qualified individuals, such as those eligible for EB-2 or EB-3 visas, may be willing to accept a degree of downward mobility in exchange for the opportunity to work and live in the U.S. Anecdotal evidence supports the idea that some individuals deem this a tradeoff worth making.

persecution.[5] The skills sets of refugees range from individuals who held positions of responsibility (often the earlier wave of arrivals), often in law or government, to farmers (often a later wave of arrivals). Although members of this group are expected to fare worse initially in the labor market, it is also thought that they will experience the steepest subsequent climb. Because they have a greater degree of certainty than members of other groups that they will not return to their home country, they are more likely to pursue additional human capital investment (Cortes 2004).

The fourth subgroup considered are diversity immigrants. This group consists of individuals admitted through the diversity lottery. In order to be eligible for the lottery, one must be native of a country that is eligible to participate, defined as countries with low rates of immigration to the U.S. Further, the applicant must have a high school diploma (or the equivalent) or have two years of work experience within the last five years in an occupation that requires at least two years of training or experience to perform.[6] Because of the minimum skill requirement to determine eligibility, the a priori expectation is that members of this group will fare more similarly to economic immigrants than to family immigrants or refugees.

These hypotheses yield important testable implications. First, refugees and family migrants in particular, will experience greater initial downward mobility than economic immigrants. Second, refugees are expected to experience upward mobility with greater alacrity

[5] As defined by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the maltreatment must be due to the individual's race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

[6] Definitions of refugee and diversity immigrant are taken from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services glossary (http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/glossary.htm).

than other groups. This analysis tests these hypotheses and improves on previous work by directly addressing two previously mentioned constraints: the inability to measure the first U.S. job and the opportunity to study only one transition.[7]

PREVIOUS WORK

Chiswick's analyses comparing immigrants' earnings to those of comparable natives' constitute the seminal work in the study of immigrants' labor market outcomes (1977a; 1977b; 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 (Chiswick 1978). Subsequent researchers have shown that earnings at time of entry and growth are inversely related, further supporting the idea of convergence (Duleep and Regets 1997b). Chiswick's results have been criticized as it is impossible to discern whether his findings using pooled cross-sectional data reflect an actual earnings 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 among entering immigrants (Borjas 1985, 1994). An alternative argument to recent immigrants being lower skilled is that their skills have become less transferable to the U.S. labor market. Duleep and Regets have tested these two competing hypotheses and found evidence supporting the latter (1997a). There has also been speculation over the differential selectivity of emigration. If only the 'successful' immigrants remain in the U.S., those present over time to be counted in the census will look even 'better' when compared to the recent arrivals for whom the unsuccessful

[7] An exception is a study by Chiswick, Lee, and Miller using data from Australia (2002). In that study, they are able to make minimal assumptions and identify the respondent's first job in Australia.

ones have not yet filtered themselves out (Jasso and Rosenzweig 1982; Lindstrom and Massey 1994).

The available studies of occupational transitions have found substantial occupational downgrading. In one study using the New Immigrant Survey-Pilot data, 50 percent of legal immigrants to the U.S. experience downward occupational mobility (Akresh 2006). Another study uses data from Israel to measure the occupational cost of migration, calculated as the decline in the level of occupational prestige, and finds that the where the individual comes from and the kind of job they held prior to moving to Israel are significantly linked to the occupational cost (Raijman and Semyonov 1995). The U-shaped theoretical model developed by Chiswick et al., described earlier, has received support in the authors' empirical analysis of Australian data (2002). Additionally, using the 1989 Legalized Population Survey, Powers and co-authors have shown that men and women are able to improve their occupational status and earnings between their first job in the U.S. and their job at the time they applied for legalization (Powers and Seltzer 1998; Powers et al. 1998).

Several characteristics contribute to the observed occupational attainment of immigrants. Education is one of the most important determinants of labor market success, although clearly, where it is obtained matters (Akresh 2006; Friedberg 2000). Moreover, not only is education acquired in the host country more highly valued than that acquired in the home country but the acquisition of the former can increase the returns to the latter (Akresh 2006; Friedberg 2000). In addition, the ability to speak the dominant language of the host country has been shown to be unequivocally important in the labor market success of newcomers (Dustmann and van Soest 2002; Kossoudji 1988; McManus et al. 1983; Tainer 1988). Besides its hypothesized direct effect on labor market success, some researchers also conceptualize host country language

proficiency as an indicator of skill transferability (Chiswick et al. 1997; Chiswick et al. 2003; Chiswick and Miller 1995). Prior research has also shown that occupational mobility is moderated by demographic characteristics, including sex (Powers and Seltzer 1998). Finally, as basic human capital theory indicates that age is linked to the accrual of labor market experience, this factor is essential in the study of occupational outcomes (Mincer 1974; Murphy and Welch 1990). The current study examines variation in the trajectories by class of admission after controlling for these factors, thus expanding our understanding of differences along this important dimension.

DATA AND METHODS

New Immigrant Survey

The data used for this analysis come from the first round of the New Immigrant Survey 2003 cohort, the only wave currently available. The sampling frame was all immigrants who were granted permanent residency status between May and November of 2003. Probability sampling techniques were used, meaning that the majority of countries in the world are represented in the data. Further, individuals who were new arrivals to the U.S. as well as those who had adjusted their status while already in the U.S. were included in the sample (Jasso et al. *forthcoming*). Interviews were carried out as soon as possible after legalization in the language of the respondent's choice.

One of the ways the survey instrument is unique is that it asks respondents about their occupations at multiple points in time. First, individuals were asked about their most recent job abroad prior to coming to the U.S. to live. They were then asked to describe their first occupation after coming to the U.S. to live and then to describe their current occupation. These three data points enable the study of two important transitions for immigrants, from their last job

abroad to their first job in the U.S. and from their first U.S. job to their current U.S. job. The current study pools together men and women as this has the advantage of yielding a larger sample size. Several researchers have shown that the differences between men and women, with regards to the process of occupational status attainment, are minimal (Featherman and Hauser 1976; McLendon 1976; Treiman and Terrell 1975). Further, this analysis only includes individuals who reported an occupation prior to coming to the U.S., a restriction that minimizes many of the biases resulting from women's selection into the labor force.

Of the 8,573 completed interviews, 3,464 are available for the analysis. The substantial loss of sample size is due to the stringent data requirements necessitating that the respondent have reported a last job abroad and is currently in the U.S. labor force. For individuals who responded that they are in the labor force at the time of the survey, yet did not report an occupation, multiple imputation was used to estimate their current occupational prestige score (affecting 737 observations).[8] The analytical approach is to specify ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions predicting the level of occupational prestige attained and multinomial logistic regressions predicting occupational upgrading and downgrading, relative to no change in prestige. Upgrading is defined as the immigrant having a higher prestige score in the more recent position than in the previous and downgrading is defined as having a lower prestige score in the current position than in the previous. The first specification compares the last job abroad (*t1*) with the first job in the U.S. (*t2*) and the second compares the first job in the U.S. (*t2*) with the current job in the U.S. (*t3*).

[8] Imputation of occupational prestige for the last job abroad is precluded by several reasons, one of which is the inability to identify who was in the labor force (and therefore eligible for imputation) prior to their arrival in the U.S.

Variable Definitions

Occupational prestige is measured using the International Socio-Economic Index, an internationally standardized measure of occupational prestige (Ganzeboom et al. 1992; Ganzeboom and Treiman 1996). It is a continuous measure ranging from 16 (e.g., domestic helpers) to 90 (e.g., judges).[9]

It is important, particularly when predicting the first U.S. job, to be cognizant of the timing of the covariates, several of which are only measured at *t3*, the time of the survey. Fortunately, in several cases, it was possible to construct measures for *t2*, the time of the first U.S. trip, which are used to predict the first U.S. job. Specifically, age and marital status are determined using information on marital history, current age, and the year of first trip. In the absence of a more detailed educational history, years of education abroad are assumed to be the individual's education level at the time of the first trip, with years of education in the U.S. accumulated after that point. English ability at the time of arrival is determined using a series of algorithms. If the individual does not speak English well at the time of the interview, it is assumed that he did not speak it well upon arrival. Of those who report English proficiency at the time of the interview, if they have [a] taken any English classes in the last 12 months or [b] report having no classes in English prior to coming to the U.S., they are classified as low English proficiency upon arrival. If, of the same group who reports English proficiency at the time of survey, they report [a] having regularly read an English language periodical prior to coming to the U.S., [b] they never spoke a language other than English, [c] they spoke English with their parents at home at age 10, or [d] had courses taught in English in their home country, they are classified as English proficient upon arrival. Although they are not the focus of the analysis,

[9] Occupational prestige scores were assigned following the work of Nakao and Treas (1994).

region of origin fixed effects are included in all specifications so as not to conflate the importance of class of admission status.[10]

Even though class of admission is revealed at *t3*, including these indicators in the prediction of mobility between *t1* and *t2* informs our understanding of the selection process. A key contribution of the current analysis is the inclusion, in the second specification predicting occupational mobility between *t2* and *t3*, of an interaction between class of admission and whether the individual experienced occupational downgrading between *t1* and *t2*. This approach provides a direct empirical test of whether, for instance, refugees are more likely to experience upward mobility once in the U.S.[11]

The covariates for the specification predicting current U.S. job need little additional explanation. All are measured at the time of the survey and are generally restricted to those that could also be reliably estimated in the prediction of the first U.S. job. While this may limit the inclusion of certain variables in the determination of current U.S. job, it has the desirable result of making the specifications as comparable as possible.

RESULTS

[10] The regions are South/Central America and the Caribbean, Mexico, Western Europe/Australia/Canada/New Zealand, Eastern Europe/Former USSR, Asia, India/Nepal/Pakistan/Bangladesh/Middle East, and Africa.

[11] Although future work with subsequent survey rounds may want to consider the occupational trajectory in a prospective manner from the granting of legal permanent resident status forward, a retrospective analysis remains highly informative in establishing patterns and is consistent with previous work (Akresh 2006).

Figure 1 shows the average occupational trajectories by subgroup. The faint dotted lines represent the single transition from the last job abroad to the current U.S. job, measured by previous studies, while the bolder lines indicate the dual transitions considered in the current analysis. Several characteristics are apparent from the Figure. First, all groups exhibit a U-shaped pattern. Specifically, although employment preference category immigrants have the shallowest U-shape, there remains a dip in their pattern. Second, refugees appear to have the deepest trough and the steepest upward slope. Finally, a simple comparison with the fainter dotted lines, suggests that a substantial portion of the trajectory is overlooked when studies are limited in that manner.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of the pooled sample and by class of admission. Approximately half the sample is made up of family preference category immigrants (49 percent), while diversity immigrants make up another 30 percent. The remaining 20 percent consists of employment preference category individuals and refugees. The percentages for each group who adjusted their status to legal permanent residency, as opposed to new arrivals, range from a low of 34 percent with the diversity/other category to a high of 99 percent of refugees, with an average of 58 percent overall. Not surprisingly, given that inclusion in the sample requires having reported a last job prior to coming to the U.S., women make up less than half the sample (43 percent).

From Table 1, it is clear that class of admission is not a geographically random selection of individuals. For instance, 44 percent of family preference immigrants are from South & Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico while 70 percent of employment preference immigrants are from the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and Asia. Human capital characteristics also vary systematically such that the employment preference category has the

highest percentage of English proficient individuals (83 percent) and the highest level of education (approximately 16 years). Diversity immigrants have the lowest frequency of English proficiency (41 percent), although the categories of family preference and refugee are not far off with 51 and 49 percent respectively. Contrary to initial speculation, along the dimensions of education and English proficiency, diversity immigrants resemble family preference individuals and refugees more closely than they do employment-based immigrants. Noteworthy is the disparity between the proportion married at arrival and at the time of the survey. While the figures for refugees are almost identical, there are dramatic differences for the three other groups, particularly family preference category individuals, where many marry after coming to the U.S.

In the interest of brevity, when presenting the multivariate results for Tables 2 and 3, only coefficients for human capital characteristics and class of admission categories are displayed.[12] The first column in Table 2 presents results from an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression predicting the prestige level attained with the first job in the U.S. Consistent with expectations, human capital characteristics are positively associated with the prestige level attained. The coefficient on the variable indicating the prestige of the last job abroad is worthy of note. A perfect transfer of skill and experience across occupations would suggest a coefficient of one on this variable. In other words, the value of 0.235 indicates that an average of only approximately one quarter of the prestige level transfers to the U.S. context. Finally, we see evidence that, after controlling for human capital characteristics, all three groups fare worse than employment preference migrants.

The second specification in Table 2 is a multinomial logistic regression predicting upward or downward mobility, relative to no change in occupational prestige. Many of the

[12] Full tables are available upon request.

strongest correlates predicting the level of occupational prestige in the OLS specification continue to be strongly tied to the mobility outcomes. After controlling for background characteristics, the three class of admission groups have higher likelihoods of downgrading than employment preference individuals. The magnitude of the coefficient for the refugee indicator suggests that, relative to employment based immigrants, they experience approximately eight times (8x) the odds ($e^{2.063}$) of downward mobility with their first job in the U.S., followed by diversity lottery winners (7x), and then by family preference immigrants (6x). Notable is that all three class of admission categories also exhibit higher likelihoods of upgrading than the employment group. However, the point estimates on the class of admission indicators when predicting upgrading are substantially smaller in magnitude than for the equation predicting downgrading and may be an artifact of the flatter overall trajectory for employment preference individuals, the reference group.

Table 3 displays results from an analysis similar to Table 2, yet in this case the OLS is predicting the occupational prestige of the current U.S. job and the multinomial logistic regression is predicting the result of the transition from the first to the current U.S. job. In these specifications, interactions between class of admission and an indicator of initial downgrading are included to determine mobility patterns once in the U.S. In particular, we are interested in knowing, of those who downgrade with their first U.S. job, which group is most likely to upgrade. The results indicate that English ability and years of education continue to be important correlates of labor market success. Consistent with previous work, the magnitude of the coefficient on years of U.S. education is greater than that on years of education abroad, confirming the higher valuation of education aquired in the U.S. The fact that time in the U.S. has a similar, downward parabolic relationship with downward and upward mobility, relative to

no change, is unexpected. The positive relationship on years in the U.S. for the two mobility outcomes peaks at 33 and 36 years respectively, points at and beyond which there are few observations. One explanation for this pattern is that additional time in the U.S. can represent either the acquisition of knowledge about the U.S. labor market or specific skills that enable the individual to move up the occupational ladder or, during this additional time, the individual reveals to an employer previously unobserved characteristics that result in his or her demotion. The interaction terms between initial downgrading and class of admission are statistically significant, except for refugees, indicating that initial downgrading has a lingering negative relationship with the current level of occupational prestige. The interaction terms are more informative in the subsequent multinomial logit, which considers the relative, rather than absolute, attainment and there they provide a test for whether the group with the deepest trough experiences the steepest climb.

The coefficient on the main effect of occupational downgrading with the first U.S. job indicates that employment preference immigrants who experience this have four times the odds ($e^{1.363}$) of upgrading with their current job, relative to employment preference individuals who did not downgrade. Conditional on having experienced downward mobility, members of all other class of admission groups are less likely to experience subsequent upgrading than are employment preference immigrants, with the least likely being the diversity category. However, relative to employment preference individuals who stayed the same or improved their occupational prestige with their first U.S. job, the odds of upgrading (for those who downgraded initially) are higher for the all other groups.[13] The different interpretations mentioned here

[13] Calculated by adding the coefficients on the interaction terms and the main effect of the indicator of downward mobility.

indicate the importance of the reference group. To better disentangle this issue, the final multinomial logit specification in Table 3 is restricted to individuals who downgraded in their first U.S. job. In that regression, refugees in particular are shown to have odds of subsequent upgrading comparable to employment preference migrants.

Table 4 shows predicted probabilities of mobility for each class of admission. Column 1(a) displays further evidence that individuals in the employment preference category have the lowest probability of downgrading with their first U.S. job (0.30). The remaining three groups experience predicted probabilities ranging from 0.68 to 0.75, differences that, when compared to employment preference immigrants, are not substantively large. Also of interest is that there is substantially less variation across the groups in the probability of upgrading. The highest probability of upgrading is for employment preference immigrants (0.18), but the lowest is only about 0.06 lower for diversity immigrants (0.12). Column two displays parallel probabilities for the transition from first U.S. job to current U.S. job. For this second transition, all groups experience a probability of downgrading that is substantially lower than for the previous. Further, the probability of upgrading in the second transition is higher than for the first for refugees and for diversity immigrants (these are also the two groups with the highest probabilities of downgrading with their first U.S. job). The most substantial gain between the two transitions with respect to the probability of upgrading is for refugees, for whom this figure changes from 0.13 to 0.34, suggesting that refugees experience the steepest upward climb once in the U.S.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the task has been to disaggregate the occupational transitions made by immigrants to the U.S. In much of the previous work in the U.S. and other contexts, if the

individual's last occupation abroad was available, the only comparison to be made was with the job at the time of the survey. However, as indicated in Figure 1, the inability to consider the first job in the host country results in a substantial loss of information and underestimation of downgrading. The current work is the first to attempt to disentangle the process by disaggregating the transition into two separate shifts, from the last job abroad to the first U.S. job and from the first U.S. job to the current U.S. job.

Several important findings emerge from this analysis concerning the occupational trajectories of the various class of admission groups.

[1] The U-shaped pattern suggesting downgrading with the first U.S. job and a subsequent climb up the occupational ladder is observed for all class of admission groups.

[2] For the majority of those who experience downgrading, it happens with the first, rather than a subsequent, U.S. job.

[3] After the initial U.S. job, other class of admission groups who initially downgraded are more likely than employment preference individuals who experienced an initial lateral (or upward) move to experience occupational upgrading. This is not found to be the case when compared to employment preference immigrants who downgraded.

[4] After controlling for other characteristics, the trough of the U-shaped pattern is deepest for refugees, followed by diversity immigrants, family preference, and employment preference groups.

[5] The predicted probability of upgrading once in the U.S. for refugees is the highest of the class of admission groups. Of those who downgrade, the predicted probability of subsequent upgrading for refugees is comparable to that for employment preference immigrants and is

substantially higher than for family preference or for diversity immigrants. This suggests that refugees experience the most rapid climb back up the occupational ladder.

By disaggregating the occupational transitions of immigrants into the last job abroad to the first U.S. job and the first to the current U.S. job, the current study has illuminated the process of labor market adjustment. Initial occupational downgrading is experienced across class of admission groups and subsequent upgrading, while it does occur, is not a given. Future work should continue to examine the process of occupational assimilation for these groups as much of the long term process of occupational adjustment for immigrants remains to be examined. Fortunately, the longitudinal nature of the New Immigrant Survey will make this possible when the second wave of NIS-2003 is available. The second round of data should also address one of the limitations present in the current work, namely the absence of a follow-up period that is consistent across individuals.

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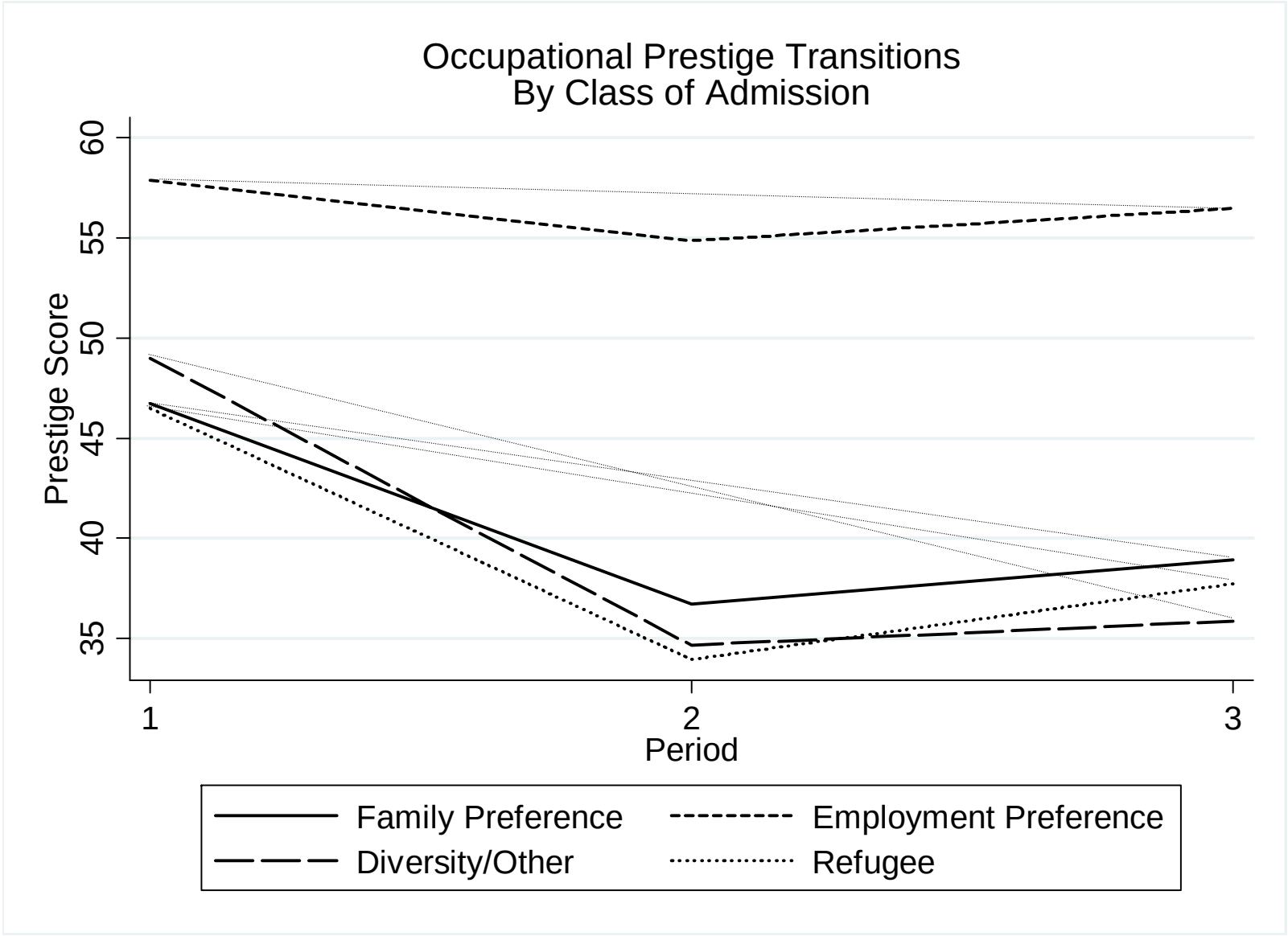
Figure 1.



Note: Period 1 refers to the last job abroad, period 2 to the first U.S. job, period 3 to the current U.S. job.

Table 1. Selected Descriptive Characteristics

	Family Preference (n=986)	Employment Preference (n=907)	Diversity/ Other (n=1330)	Refugee (n=241)	Total (n=3464)
Demographics					
Female	0.49	0.39	0.37	0.35	0.43
Age	38.60	37.48	37.53	40.55	38.25
Age (at arrival)	0.42	31.07	32.10	34.60	32.78
Married (at arrival)	0.39	0.51	0.49	0.69	0.46
Married	0.91	0.81	0.60	0.70	0.79
Migration History					
Years of U.S. Experience	3.95	5.49	4.38	5.40	4.40
Previous Trip without a Visa	0.19	0.06	0.28	0.18	0.20
Adjusted Status	0.62	0.71	0.34	0.99	0.58
Region of Origin					
Western Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand	0.07	0.09	0.01	0.03	0.05
South & Central America, Caribbean	0.22	0.08	0.32	0.20	0.23
Mexico	0.22	0.05	0.09	0.00	0.14
Eastern Europe, Former USSR	0.06	0.06	0.21	0.43	0.13
Asia	0.01	0.37	0.13	0.07	0.22
India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Middle East	0.11	0.33	0.08	0.13	0.13
Africa	0.06	0.03	0.16	0.14	0.09
Human Capital Characteristics					
Speaks English Well/Very Well (at arrival)	0.29	0.56	0.24	0.23	0.30
Speaks English Well/Very Well	0.51	0.83	0.41	0.49	0.52
Occupational Prestige of Current U.S. Job	39.10	56.12	34.81	37.64	39.80
Occupational Prestige of First U.S. Job	37.35	54.65	33.12	34.26	38.08
Occupational Prestige of Last Job Abroad	47.42	57.89	47.08	46.82	48.54
Years of U.S. Education	0.47	0.86	0.31	0.46	0.47
Years of Education Abroad	12.33	15.38	12.36	12.75	12.75
Occupational Mobility with First U.S. Job					
Down	0.64	0.34	0.68	0.68	0.61

Same	0.14	0.44	0.13	0.11	0.17
Up	0.22	0.22	0.19	0.22	0.22
Occupational Mobility with Current U.S. Job					
Down	0.17	0.14	0.15	0.25	0.16
Same	0.59	0.66	0.62	0.41	0.56
Up	0.24	0.20	0.23	0.35	0.24
Occupational Mobility with Current U.S. Job among those who Downgraded with First U.S. Job					
Down	0.13	0.08	0.12	0.21	0.12
Same	0.58	0.52	0.65	0.37	0.58
Up	0.30	0.41	0.24	0.41	0.30

Source: New Immigrant Survey 2003. All descriptive statistics weighted with sampling weights.

Table 2. OLS Predicting Prestige of First U.S. Job, Multinomial Logit Predicting Mobility between Last Job abroad and First U.S. Job

	Prestige of First U.S. Job	Multinomial Logit Predicting Occupational Mobility between Last Job Abroad and First U.S. Job	
		Down	Up
Human Capital Characteristics			
Prestige of Last Job Abroad	0.235***	0.037***	-0.065***
	[14.42]	[9.73]	[13.97]
Years of Education Abroad	0.745***	-0.054***	0.065***
	[9.94]	[3.37]	[3.45]
Speaks English Well/Very Well at Arrival	4.058***	-0.381***	0.291**
	[7.15]	[3.32]	[2.13]
Class of Admission			
Family Preference	-8.716***	1.858***	0.826***
	[12.15]	[12.85]	[4.99]
Refugee	-11.259***	2.063***	0.707**
	[10.40]	[8.51]	[2.49]
Diversity/Other	-11.467***	1.921***	0.694***
	[16.24]	[13.70]	[4.16]
Constant	42.882***	-3.049***	2.362***
	[16.32]	[5.45]	[3.82]
Observations	3464	3464	3464
Adjusted/Pseudo R-squared	0.450	0.208	

Absolute value of t statistics in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Note: Results are coefficients. Includes region of origin effects, indicator for married, an indicator for having had a previous trip without a visa, age, age squared, and an indicator for sex.

Table 3. OLS Predicting Prestige of Current U.S. Job, Multinomial Logit Predicting Mobility between First and Current U.S. Job

	Prestige of Current U.S. Job	Occupational Mobility between First U.S. Job and Current U.S. Job		Occupational Mobility between First U.S. Job and Current U.S. Job (only those who initially downgraded)	
		Down	Up	Down	Up
Human Capital Characteristics					
Prestige of First U.S. Job	0.716***	0.035***	-0.050***	0.052***	-0.051***
	[53.25]	[7.85]	[10.57]	[7.36]	[7.99]
Years of U.S. Education	0.720***	-0.014	0.173***	-0.214**	0.174***
	[6.12]	[0.38]	[4.88]	[2.21]	[3.36]
Years of Education Abroad	0.384***	-0.020	0.064***	0.013	0.083***
	[7.62]	[1.16]	[4.07]	[0.53]	[4.35]
Speaks English Well/Very Well	2.066***	0.110	0.537***	0.089	0.556***
	[5.16]	[0.79]	[4.37]	[0.45]	[3.85]
U.S. Experience					
Years of U.S. Experience	0.334***	0.127***	0.188***	0.142***	0.210***
	[3.70]	[4.45]	[7.12]	[3.40]	[6.21]
Years of U.S. Experience Squared	-0.007	-0.003*	-0.004***	-0.003	-0.005***
	[1.41]	[1.79]	[3.10]	[1.24]	[2.71]
Class of Admission					
Family Preference	-0.675	0.868***	0.318	0.885***	-0.344*
	[1.01]	[4.31]	[1.26]	[2.84]	[1.69]
Refugee	-2.146*	1.491***	0.757**	1.736***	0.132
	[1.86]	[4.64]	[2.09]	[4.66]	[0.50]
Diversity/Other	-0.448	0.560***	0.433*	0.763**	-0.830***
	[0.67]	[2.70]	[1.78]	[2.35]	[3.88]
Prior Mobility					
Downgraded with First U.S. Job	3.932***	0.127	1.363***	--	--
	[5.62]	[0.49]	[6.31]	--	--
Family Preference*Downgraded with First U.S. Job	-3.540***	-0.234	-0.810***	--	--
	[3.95]	[0.73]	[2.76]	--	--
Refugee*Downgraded with First U.S. Job	-1.505	-0.030	-0.729*	--	--

	[1.05]	[0.07]	[1.73]	--	--
Diversity/Other*Downgraded with First U.S. Job	-4.986***	-0.046	-1.349***	--	--
	[5.79]	[0.15]	[4.87]	--	--
Constant	4.691**	-5.017***	-2.295***	-6.537***	-1.439
	[1.98]	[6.04]	[2.81]	[4.87]	[1.44]
Observations	3464	3464	3464	1978	1978
Adjusted/Pseudo R-squared	0.749	0.175		0.191	

Absolute value of t statistics in brackets. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Note: Results are coefficients. Includes region of origin effects, indicator for married, an indicator for having had a previous trip without a visa, age, age squared, and an indicator for sex.

Table 4. Predicted Probabilities of Mobility Outcomes by Class of Admission (Omitted category is no change in occupational prestige)

	Last Job Abroad → First U.S. Job (1)		First U.S. Job → Current U.S. Job (2)		First U.S. Job → Current U.S. Job, if Down in Column 1 (3)	
	Down (a)	Up (b)	Down (a)	Up (b)	Down (a)	Up (b)
Employment Preference	0.30	0.18	0.14	0.14	0.07	0.43
Family Preference	0.68	0.17	0.14	0.16	0.11	0.23
Refugee	0.74	0.13	0.22	0.34	0.18	0.44
Diversity/Other	0.75	0.12	0.12	0.16	0.10	0.18
Total	0.63	0.16	0.14	0.16	0.11	0.25

Note: Probabilities result from regressions specified in Tables 2 and 3.