INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Immigration into the United States peaked around the turn of the 20th century with 22 million European immigrants entering the country between 1880 and 1900. During this period, the number of foreign-born living in the United States doubled from almost 7 million to about 14 million.

Most of the immigrants were of working age, comprising a larger fraction of the labor force than that of the total population. The immigrants raised a second generation whose social, cultural, and economic characteristics were heavily influenced by their culturally diverse parents. In our study, we look at the assimilation of first and second generation immigrants by looking at their occupational characteristics and spatial location at two different time points - 1880 and 1900.

DATA AND METHODS

We use the IPUMS Linked Representative Samples of the United States, which consist of a 1800 complete count database linked to a one in one hundred national random sample of the population of 1900. Our study takes into account only the “primary” links and not the other household members who were linked separately.

Table 1 lists the immigrants/second generation immigrants and the control groups that we selected from the longitudinal sample for our study. Table 2 lists the occupational classification system. The occupational rank is assigned by the authors for statistical modeling.

RESULTS

We take difference of occupational ranking for the same person. We find no statistically significant difference (p=0.3904) between years 1880 and 1900. A statistically significant difference in occupational ranks (p=0.003) in Wilcoxon signed rank sum tests was observed for all the four cohorts in our study suggesting that all groups including the immigrants, their children, and the native-born moved up the occupational ladder.

Next we compare whether a larger number of immigrants and children of immigrants moved up the occupational ladder than the native-born, for immigrants versus the native-born (cohorts 1 and 2) and statistically significant difference (p=0.003) for children of immigrants versus children of the native-born (cohorts 3 and 4).

DISCUSSION

We conclude that immigrants have moved up the occupational ladder from blue to white collar jobs, but their advance is in no way significantly greater than that of the native-born. On the other hand, there are more children of immigrants who have ascended from blue to white collar jobs than their corresponding cohort, the children of the native-born.

MAPPING IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN

First generation immigrants working age white males

Children of first generation immigrants working age white males

SELECTED REFERENCES

