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# Occupational Mobility and Persistence Within Albuquerque Ethnic Groups, 1880-1910: A Statistical Analysis

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JUDITH L. DeMARK

Between 1880 and 1925, millions of foreign-born immigrants came to the United States. While the majority of these newcomers settled in the large urban centers of the East and Midwest, many thousands found homes in the growing communities of the American West. As historian Lawrence H. Larsen has noted in his study of the twenty-four largest western cities of 1880, "no community was under 12 percent immigrant."<sup>1</sup> It is therefore necessary to explore the experiences of those immigrants who settled in western urban areas in order to gain a more complete picture of the American immigrant experience.

One such western community that hosted several hundred foreign-born immigrants at the end of the nineteenth-century was Albuquerque, New Mexico.<sup>2</sup> This study looks at the economic and geographic mobility of the foreign-born of Albuquerque in comparison with other major racial-nativity groups.

Economic mobility is the best indicator of economic success in a community. Economic success is also directly related to the stability of the population. Don Harrison Doyle, in a study of Jacksonville, Illinois, found that "those with special skills were significantly more stable than those below them on the occupational ladder."<sup>3</sup> Stephan Thernstrom, in

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1. Lawrence H. Larsen, *The Urban West at the End of the Frontier* (Lawrence: The Regents Press of the University of Kansas, 1978), 25.

2. From 1880 until the 1950s there were two Albuquerques, "Old Town" and "New Albuquerque." This study examines the populations of both communities unless otherwise indicated.

3. Don Harrison Doyle, *The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-70* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 99.

his work on Newburyport, Massachusetts, stated that one reason for upward mobility in occupational levels in Newburyport was that those who did not advance did not remain in town. Thernstrom also found that foreign born did not improve their occupational status as often as did native-born whites.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, many historians have discovered a different pattern than the one Thernstrom suggested. In his pioneering study of Trempeleau County, Wisconsin, Merle Curti found that foreign and native born competed more equally on the frontier.<sup>5</sup> A study of mobility and occupational structure in nineteenth-century Denver concluded that "Denver offered immigrants considerable occupational opportunity."<sup>6</sup>

A comparison of the economic experiences of the foreign-born immigrants in Albuquerque, New Mexico, compared to those of other racial-nativity groups in the city will determine how Albuquerque fit into the foregoing patterns. How successful were Albuquerque's foreign born in terms of upward economic mobility? If they were upwardly mobile, how did their success compare to the occupational and economic mobility of other groups in Albuquerque and in other cities as well? In order to determine economic mobility, this study examined occupational ranking<sup>7</sup> and property holdings. Geographic mobility was also studied in order to further determine how the Albuquerque foreign born compared to other groups within the community. This study covered the years 1880 to 1910, the era following the building of the Santa Fe Railroad into Albuquerque through the last available manuscript census data.

Table 1 summarizes the occupational distribution of male heads of households in 1880 by five racial-nativity groups, including native-born Hispanic, native-born Anglo, foreign born, second generation (or those who had at least one parent born outside the United States), and Black. In 1880, native-born Hispanics comprised the largest group, 234 persons, or 60 percent of all employed male heads of households.<sup>8</sup> Over 80 percent of the Hispanics were employed as unskilled laborers. Conversely, more than 40 percent of the native-born whites held a skilled

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4. See Stephan Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress: Social Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

5. Merle Curti, *The Making of an American Community: a Case Study in a Frontier County* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959).

6. Robert M. Tank, "Mobility and Occupational Structure on the Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Frontier: The Case of Denver, Colorado," *Pacific Historical Review* 47 (May 1978): 189-216.

7. For purposes of this study, employed persons were grouped into seven major occupational categories. The categories were based on those used in Kenneth L. Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976). The unemployment rate in Albuquerque between 1880 and 1910 was quite low and thus a separate category was not set aside for this group.

8. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manuscript Census of the Territory of New Mexico, 1880* (Albuquerque: Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library) Microfilm Reel 1, Bernalillo County; hereafter referred to as *Census of 1880*.

Table 1. Occupational Distribution of Male Heads of Households in Albuquerque by Racial-Nativity Groups, 1880.\*

Occupational Category	Native-Born Anglos	Native-Born Hispanics	Foreign-Born Immigrants	Second Generation	Blacks
Professional	12	2	3	1	0
Proprietary/ Managerial	27	13	14	2	0
Clerical	6	2	5	1	0
Skilled	41	22	20	5	1
Semi-skilled	3	2	1	1	0
Unskilled	6	193	6	2	1
Domestic	0	0	0	0	0
Total Employed Male Heads of Households	95	234	49	12	2

\* Compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Manuscript Census of the Territory of New Mexico, 1880* (Albuquerque: Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library), Microfilm Reel 1, Bernalillo County, hereafter cited as *Census of 1880*.

job, and almost one-third were employed in the proprietary/managerial field. In the third-largest group, foreign born, most male heads of households (over 40 percent) held skilled jobs, while proprietors, managers, and professionals provided over 34 percent of immigrant male heads of households.

Table 2 shows the occupational distribution of all males in 1885 by racial-nativity groups. In all but the native-born Hispanic group, the majority of men were employed as skilled laborers. While the majority of immigrants were skilled laborers, the second-largest group was proprietary/managerial. All racial-nativity groups were represented in the field of merchandising to varying degrees. As the railroad expanded into the Southwest, eastern manufacturers found wider and more easily available markets for their products. Ronald L. F. Davis, in a study pertaining to western urbanization, stated that "cities of the American West were dumping grounds for eastern manufactured goods, as demonstrated by the relatively high proportion of the population employed in service industries."<sup>9</sup>

Many of the successful merchants were German-Jewish immigrants. The earliest Jewish merchants in Albuquerque had been sutlers, or outfitters, for the U.S. Army in the Territory of New Mexico between 1848 and 1870.<sup>10</sup> Oftentimes a successful merchant moved into warehousing or wholesaling. While there were several non-Jewish merchants, at least half of the most successful merchants in Albuquerque were Jews.<sup>11</sup>

9. Ronald L. F. Davis, "Western Urban Development: A Critical Analysis," *The American West: New Perspectives, New Dimensions*, ed. Jerome O. Steffen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1979), 191.

10. Marc Simmons, *Albuquerque, A Narrative History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 195, and Floyd S. Fierman, ed., "Reminiscences of Emanuel Rosenwald," *New Mexico Historical Review* 37 (April 1962): 110-31.

11. The most notable exception was Franz Huning; however, Jewish merchants in the dry goods field had an overwhelming monopoly.

Table 2. Occupational Distribution of Albuquerque Males by Racial-Nativity Groups, 1885.\*

Occupational Category	Native-Born Anglos	Native-Born Hispanic	Foreign-Born Immigrants	Second Generation	Blacks
Professional	42	8	22	2	1
Proprietary/Managerial	127	10	98	21	2
Clerical	127	9	53	29	0
Skilled	286	31	123	50	15
Semi-skilled	172	9	25	5	3
Unskilled	45	362	67	26	8
Domestic	16	7	34	1	14
Total Employed Males	815	436	422	134	43

\* Compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *New Mexico Territory Census of 1885* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, National Microfilm Publication, 1971), Microcopy 846, Roll 1, Bernalillo County, Precincts 12, 13, and 26, hereafter cited as *Special Census of 1885*.

Whether it was the railroad, merchandising, or other fields, the availability of work in Albuquerque brought ever-increasing numbers of laborers into the town. Significant differences occurred among racial-nativity groups by 1900. For example, while a disproportionate number of Hispanics were unskilled laborers in 1900, more of this group had moved into a skilled labor occupation between 1885 and 1900.<sup>12</sup> Table 3 contrasts the major job categories of the five racial-nativity groups and demonstrates that most Blacks held domestic or other unskilled positions and that over two-thirds of native-born Hispanics were unskilled laborers. While the percentage of foreign-born workers in proprietary/managerial and unskilled occupations remained similar to the percentages in 1885, there was a significant increase in the percentage of immigrants employed as skilled laborers. In 1885, a little over 29 percent of foreign-born workers held skilled jobs, whereas by 1900, over 42 percent of immigrants were skilled laborers.<sup>13</sup>

By the time of the census of 1910, Albuquerque had grown considerably. Almost 4,000 men were part of the work force, and over one-third of the employed males were skilled or semi-skilled workers.<sup>14</sup> Undoubtedly, native-born Anglos, foreign-born immigrants, and second-generation Americans in Albuquerque in 1910 were much more well-off economically than the other two groups.

12. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of Population, 1900* (Albuquerque: Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library), Microfilm Reel 1, Volume 1, Bernalillo County, Precincts 12, 13, and 26; hereafter referred to as *Census of 1900*.

13. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *New Mexico Territory Census of 1885* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, National Microfilm Publication, 1971), Microcopy 846, Roll 1, Bernalillo County, Precincts 12, 13, and 26; hereafter referred to as *Special Census of 1885*.

14. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910; Abstract of the Census with Supplement for New Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), Bernalillo County, Precincts 12, 13, and 26; hereafter referred to as *Census of 1910*.

Table 3. Occupational Distribution of Albuquerque Males by Racial-Nativity Groups, 1900.\*

Occupational Category	Native-Born Anglos	Native-Born Hispanic	Foreign-Born Immigrants	Second Generation	Blacks
Professional	78	5	25	10	0
Proprietary/Managerial	140	20	110	55	5
Clerical	144	19	50	71	1
Skilled	312	54	210	151	8
Semi-skilled	110	26	28	55	5
Unskilled	146	297	70	58	32
Domestic	15	11	18	3	25
Total Employed Males	945	432	511	348	56

\* Compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of Population, 1900* (Albuquerque: Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library), Microfilm Reel 1, Volume 1, Bernalillo County, Precincts 12, 13, and 26, hereafter cited as *Census of 1900*.

This trend continued into the 20th century. Table 4 contrasts the occupational distribution of the five racial-nativity groups in 1910 and shows that the immigrant, second-generation, and native-born groups still held the greatest percentage of upper-level occupations. Over 40 percent of each of these groups were part of the professional, proprietor, or clerical class as in 1910. The skilled occupational category was the largest single employment category for the native-born Anglos, foreign-born, and second-generation groups. Conversely, the largest occupational category for native-born Hispanics and Blacks was unskilled labor.<sup>15</sup>

Foreign-born immigrants were occupationally mobile throughout the study period. Table 5 traces the occupational distribution of employed immigrants from 1885 to 1910. In all census years, immigrants were clustered in either the skilled or proprietor categories with more than 20 to 40 percent holding some sort of proprietor or skilled occupation.<sup>16</sup>

Important differences occurred, however, within the immigrant community. According to census records of 1885, the proprietary/managerial and skilled occupations were the largest for the immigrants as a whole; however, the Irish and English had large percentages of unskilled laborers. More than one-third of the Italian immigrants held jobs in the professional category, most being Jesuit priests at San Felipi de Neri Church in Old Albuquerque. For Germans, Canadians, and Italians, the largest occupational category was either proprietor or skilled labor.<sup>17</sup>

15. *Census of 1910*.

16. *Special Census of 1885, Census of 1900, and Census of 1910*.

17. *Special Census of 1885*. It is not surprising that skilled and proprietary/managerial occupations were the most numerous for immigrants as a whole, since the coming of the railroad brought new workers to build its ever-increasing number of warehouses, shops, and homes and to serve as shopkeepers,

Table 4. Occupational Distribution of Albuquerque Males by Racial Nativity Groups, 1910.\*

Occupational Category	Native-Born Anglos	Native-Born Hispanic	Foreign-Born Immigrants	Second Generation	Blacks
Professional	126	13	30	33	3
Proprietary/ Managerial	174	101	184	108	8
Clerical	434	54	66	130	2
Skilled	488	130	208	208	10
Semi-skilled	127	45	44	53	7
Unskilled	191	610	112	61	32
Domestic	21	19	12	12	25
Total Employed Males	1561	972	656	605	67

\* Compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of Population, 1910; Abstract of the Census of 1910, with Supplement for New Mexico* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1913), Bernalillo County, Precincts 12, 13, and 26, hereafter cited as *Census of 1910*.

Table 5. Occupational Distribution of Foreign-Born Males in Albuquerque, 1885-1910.\*

Occupational Category	1885		1900		1910	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Professional	22	5.2	25	4.9	30	4.6
Proprietary/ Managerial	98	23.2	110	21.5	184	28.0
Clerical	53	12.6	50	9.8	66	10.1
Skilled	123	29.1	210	41.1	208	31.7
Semi-skilled	25	6.0	28	5.5	44	6.7
Unskilled	67	15.9	70	13.7	112	17.1
Domestic	34	8.0	18	3.5	12	1.8
Total Employed Foreign-Born Males	422		511		656	

\* Compiled from the *Special Census of 1885; Census of 1900; Census of 1910*.

It is not surprising that skilled and proprietary/managerial occupations were the most numerous for immigrants as a whole, since the coming of the railroad brought new workers to build its ever-increasing number of warehouses, shops, and homes and to serve as shopkeepers, hotel managers, and city officials. Apparently, these new immigrants to Albuquerque were part of the growth process.

Another method to determine the success, or lack of success, of a group is to evaluate the persistence of individuals from year to year and then to examine their ability to move up the occupational ladder. Groups that tended to have higher rates of out-migration were those who were not able to improve their job status.<sup>18</sup> Table 6 compares the persistence rates of male heads of households in three racial-nativity groups from

18. See, for example, Alice Kessler-Harris and Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "European Immigrant Groups," *Essays and Data on American Ethnic Groups*, ed. Thomas Sowell (Washington, D. C.: The Urban Institute, 1978): 107-37.

Table 6. Persistence Rates of Male Heads of Households in Albuquerque, 1885-1900.\*

Occupational Category	Native-Born Anglo			Native-Born Hispanic			Native-Born		
	in 1885-			in 1885-			in 1885-		
	1885	1900	%	1885	1900	%	1885	1900	%
Professional	34	6	18.0	6	5	83.0	6	0	0.0
Proprietary/ Managerial	93	14	15.0	86	17	20.0	9	3	33.3
Clerical	45	12	27.0	18	4	22.0	4	4	100.0
Skilled	126	24	19.0	57	27	49.0	22	7	32.0
Semi-skilled	40	4	10.0	15	2	13.0	9	0	0.0
Unskilled	46	4	9.0	21	3	14.0	283	30	11.0
Domestic	2	0	0.0	0	0	0.0	1	1	100.0
Persistence Rate	386	64	16.0	203	58	29.0	334	45	13.0

\* Compiled from the *Special Census of 1885; Census of 1900*.

1885 to 1900 by occupational categories. In this framework, the foreign born had less turnover than the other two groups. Sixteen percent of the native-born Anglo and 13 percent of native-born Hispanics were listed in both the census of 1885 and 1900. Approximately 29 percent of the foreign-born immigrants were in Albuquerque in both census years. For all three groups, type of occupation had some bearing on out-migration. For example, most of those who remained in town for the fifteen-year period held a professional, clerical, proprietor, or skilled job in 1885.<sup>19</sup>

To follow occupational mobility, change, or lack of change, must also be examined. As indicated in Table 7, the majority of the native-born Anglo and foreign-born immigrant groups in Albuquerque from 1900 to 1910 tended to keep the same job between 1900 and 1910. This is not surprising, since over 70 percent of native-born Anglos and immigrants held jobs as skilled laborers or higher by 1900. Moving to a better occupation is one gauge of economic success, and a large percentage of both these groups did move to a better job from 1900 to 1910. Forty-one percent of the immigrant male heads of households improved their occupational status from 1900 to 1910 and thus had a better rate of upward occupational mobility than did the native-born Anglos.<sup>20</sup>

Many of those who moved upward between 1900 and 1910 moved to a job within the same field in which they had worked in 1900. Table 8 lists the thirty-two male immigrant heads of households who had improved their job status between 1900 and 1910, by country of birth and occupation in 1900 and 1910. Twelve men, or 38 percent, moved up the economic ladder within the same type of business in which they had

19. *Special Census of 1885, and Census of 1900*.

20. See Kessler-Harris and Yans-McLaughlin, "European Immigrant Groups," 107-37.



Table 7. Occupational Mobility of Native-Born Anglo and Immigrant Male Heads of Households in Albuquerque, 1990-1910.\*

Type of Job Change	Native-Born Anglo		Foreign-Born Immigrants	
	No.	%	No.	%
Better Job	37	24.0	32	41.0
Different Job-Same Category	28	18.0	8	10.0
Less Prestigious	12	8.0	3	4.0
No Job Change	76	50.0	35	45.0
Total	153	100.0	78	100.0

\* Compiled from the *Census of 1900; Census of 1910; Albuquerque Business Directory of 1910/11* (Albuquerque: Worley's Printing Co., 1910).

Table 8. List of Immigrant Male Heads of Households in Albuquerque Who Improved Their Occupational Status, 1900-1910.\*

Name	Country of Birth	Occupation in 1900	Occupation in 1910
Balling, Sam	Germany	Baker	Bakery Owner
Both, Benjamin	Germany	Saloonkeeper	Liquor Merchant
Bryce, William	Scotland	Machinist	Foundry Manager
Bullard, Harry	England	Clerk	Office Manager
Burrus, George	France	Railroad Laborer	Bakery Owner
Chaplin, William	England	Shoemaker	Shoe Store Owner
Cordeman, Alfred	Belgium	Saloonkeeper	Liquor Merchant
Dieckman, Otto	Germany	Real Estate Agent	Brewery Co. President
Grande, Caesar	Italy	Day Laborer	Grocer
Hatch, Andrew	Ireland	Unemployed	Railroad Carpenter
Isherwood, E. T.	Scotland	Brass Molder	Traveling Salesman
Jenks, William	England	Mining Engineer	Copper Co. President
Johnson, Wm. J.	England	Assistant Cashier	Mine Broker
Keppeler, Charles	Germany	Saloonkeeper	Store Owner
Kraemer, August	Germany	Machinist	Clerk
Metz, Nicolas	Germany	Unemployed	Feed Co. Owner
Metzinger, Jos.	Germany	Baker	Bakery Owner
Morelli, August	Italy	Tailor	Hotel Owner
Motzenbacher, J.	Germany	Drayman	Saloon Owner
Napoleone, Nic.	Italy	Stonemason	Grocer
Passmore, Thomas	Canada	Carriage Painter	Carriage Co. Owner
Pratt, F. G.	England	Boilermaker	Grocery Owner
Schwartzman, J.	Germany	Butcher	Meat Market Owner
Serra, Clinton	Italy	Stonemason	Saloon Owner
Seth, Smith H.	Scotland	Clerk	Grain Co. Owner
Spitz, Edward	Austria	Bookkeeper	Wool Buyer
Sweeney, R. J.	Ireland	Carpenter	Store Owner
Thirion, John	France	Carriage Painter	Furniture Store Owner
Vann, Samuel	England	Jeweler	Mercantile Co. Owner
Werning, Andress	Germany	Salesman	Grocer
Wilkinson, James	England	Wool Scourer	Wool Mill President
With, Alex	Germany	Butcher	Meat Market Owner

\* Information obtained from the *Census of 1900; Census of 1910; Albuquerque Business Directory of 1910/11*.

worked in 1900. Most of these men worked as clerks or skilled laborers in 1900 and had become store owners or managers of the same type of business between 1900 and 1910. Considering that a majority of immigrants were employed in the retail industry, this is not surprising. Of those who were skilled laborers in 1900 and had become business owners by 1910, most were of German origin.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to occupational mobility, property ownership was another significant indicator of economic success. An assessment of the amount and value of real estate holdings of immigrants and other groups in 1900 demonstrated that the foreign-born immigrants of Albuquerque fared relatively well in comparison to other property owners and that second-generation Americans did even better. Table 9 examines the total value of real and improved property holdings of male heads of households in New Albuquerque in 1900. According to the tax rolls of 1900, second-generation Americans had the largest median value of real property per person, and foreign-born immigrants were third in terms of median value. These immigrants held a median amount of property per person that was much higher than native-born Hispanics or Blacks. Just as they were more successful as a group than Blacks and Hispanics in occupational mobility, so was the foreign-born immigrant group more well-off in terms of real property.<sup>22</sup>

As other studies have shown, great differences existed among the various nationalities, and this was true in Albuquerque as well. For example, of the six largest immigrant groups in 1900, English immigrants held a median value of \$1,000 per person, and the Italians held the lowest median value at \$400 per person. Italian male heads of households also had the lowest property value at \$692, whereas the average amount of real estate for German male heads of households was almost \$2,000.<sup>23</sup> The high average for German immigrants can be attributed to the wholesalers and retailers who owned high-value property in the center of town. German immigrants and other foreign born did, indeed, enjoy some measure of economic success in Albuquerque. Foreign-born male heads of households were able to obtain economic success both in terms of property holdings and upward occupational mobility.

The findings in this study demonstrate that Albuquerque immigrants fared better than immigrants in other occupational mobility studies. For example, Richard J. Hopkins, in a study of Atlanta, Georgia, found that between 1870 and 1880 21 percent of immigrants and 22 percent of native whites moved upward in their occupation.<sup>24</sup> According to a study

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21. *Census of 1900, and Census of 1910.*

22. *Bernalillo County Assessment, 1900* (Albuquerque: Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library), Microfilm Copy.

23. *Bernalillo County Assessment 1900.*

24. Richard J. Hopkins, "Occupational and Geographic Mobility in Atlanta, 1870-1896," *The Journal of Southern History* 34 (May 1968): 200-13.

Table 9. Total Value of Real Property Owned by Heads of Households in New Albuquerque in 1900.\*

Racial-Nativity Group	Total Property Owned by Group	No. Owning Property	Median Value by Person	Ave. by Person
Foreign Born	\$188,650	116	\$750	\$1,626.29
Native-Born Anglo	\$175,205	112	\$900	\$1,564.33
Second Generation	\$101,405	51	\$1,050	\$1,988.33
Native-Born Hispanic	\$68,164	22	\$320	\$3,098.36
Black	\$2,845	5	\$400	\$569.00
Total	\$536,269	316	\$870	\$1,697.05

\* Compiled from the *Census of 1910*, Albuquerque, Precincts 12 and 26; *Bernalillo County Assessment, 1900* (Albuquerque: Special Collections, University of New Mexico Library), Microfilm copy.

of occupational mobility in San Antonio, 19 percent of European immigrants who were manual laborers improved their job status between 1870 and 1900.<sup>25</sup>

This study has shown that whether single adults or heads of households, males among three racial-nativity groups in Albuquerque experienced economic success. Native-born Anglo, foreign-born immigrant, and second-generation American males held a large portion of the higher-paying jobs in Albuquerque between 1880-1910. These groups also enjoyed upward economic mobility.

For Albuquerque's foreign-born population, there was a remarkable degree of economic success, both in occupational mobility and geographic persistence. Not only did immigrants compare favorably to the native-born Anglo and second-generation groups, it would appear that Albuquerque's immigrants were better off economically than immigrants in many other communities in the United States in the years of heavy immigration from Europe. Although the number of studies are increasing, further treatment of foreign-born populations throughout the West will give historians a wider study base for comparison with immigrant histories in midwestern and eastern urban areas. And thus, American immigration history may well need to be redefined.

25. Alwyn Barr, "Occupational and Geographic Mobility in San Antonio, 1870-1900," *Social Science Quarterly* 51 (September 1970): 396-403.