

how many third-hand bakers had savings accounts? And how many engineering laborers can be said to have chosen to "go under"?

Shergold's discovery of a two-tiered working class leads him to reject the idea of "embourgeoisement" as a statistical illusion based on a nonexistent "average" and to substitute for it an interpretation of American workers based on the "wide material and ethnic divisions that separated them" (p. 228). These divisions, Shergold argues, made it difficult for workers to understand their "common exploitation" (p. 229). What this means is that the working-class aristocracy, well-fed and enjoying real wages some fifty percent above the British standard, did not feel exploited — and that is little more than a re-statement of the idea of embourgeoisement. Though only labor's elite had apple pie, they had it à la mode.

Department of History
State University of New York
College at Fredonia

WILLIAM GRAEBNER

Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900-1960. By JOHN BODNAR, ROGER SIMON, and MICHAEL P. WEBER. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982. Pp. xiv, 286. Acknowledgments, introduction, maps, notes, appendixes, index. \$22.95.)

Lives of Their Own reflects the long-term research interests of three young but accomplished social historians who have individually honed their research skills in earlier studies of diverse urban places such as Warren, Pennsylvania, Steelton, Pennsylvania, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In this work the authors have collaborated to produce a comparative study of the racial and ethnic experiences of Polish, Italian, and black families who made their homes in twentieth-century Pittsburgh.

Bodnar, Simon, and Weber point out that most urban-based ethnic and racial studies have essentially posed mutually exclusive hypotheses: that is, the urban environment destroyed premigration culture, leaving the immigrant at the mercy of an acculturation process; or, and conversely, the migrants' racial and ethnic culture persisted in the urban environment and racial and ethnic families utilized their historic traditions as part of their strategy for survival. In what the authors call an "interactional framework," they attempt — and I believe succeed — to integrate the two perspectives. By viewing "over

time" the urban experience of Polish, Italian, and black families whose arrival in Pittsburgh coincided with the turn of the century, the authors observe the "interaction" of tradition ("premigration culture"), urban structure, industrial employment opportunity, and discrimination in determining the separate lives of black, Italian, and Polish working-class families. It is the authors' contention that by casting their study in an interactional mode, employing longitudinal analysis of census tract, city directory, and mortgage and deed data (which they supplement with a rich body of oral interview data), they have extrapolated and identified the particular strategies, work experiences, and organizational structures that characterized each group's adjustment to the Pittsburgh urban-industrial environment.

Several major points emerge from Bodnar's, Simon's, and Weber's interactional analysis of the lives of these Pittsburgh families. First, the authors seem to agree with Caroline Golab and Joseph Barton that the premigration culture of the immigrants shaped their orientation to the city and determined ethnic group adjustment strategy. For example, the authors assert that the Polish immigrants who settled on Polish Hill in 1900 emigrated from an impoverished and disrupted European agricultural society, arrived bearing some temporary experience as urban-industrial laborers, but harbored weak expectations for economic success. Therefore, Poles settled for stable, albeit low-paying jobs in metal manufacturing. On the other hand, the immigrants from southern Italy who, according to the authors, represented a less oppressed and more enterprising and skilled segment of the Italian peasant class, were more adventurous. Once in Pittsburgh they started small proprietorships, or looked for skilled work in the building trades. The sizable cohort of East Liberty Italians employed in the damp, poorly lit sand filters of the Aspinwall waterworks plant, however, must have found work in America pure drudgery.

Unquestionably, as the authors point out, blacks from Alabama, Virginia, and elsewhere in the South arrived with the highest expectations. They believed fervently in educating their children, encouraged individualism in their offspring, and were intolerant of what they perceived as "dead-end" jobs.

The authors especially underline the significance of kinship systems in easing the adjustment to urban industrialism. They argue, though, that while all three groups used kinship networks to secure jobs and housing, the system functioned less effectively for blacks. For example, Poles had an operational link to jobs in Pittsburgh's

steel mills; blacks, on the other hand, were systematically excluded from most metal producing industries.

The authors neither ignore the work-residence nexus in determining patterns of settlement, nor do they overlook the immigrants' interest in homeownership. In fact, there is an entire chapter devoted to the subject of housing. While the chapter contains an excellent demographic analysis of the Polish, Italian, and black homeowner, it does not follow the path blazed by Simon in his study of *Housing and Services in New Milwaukee Neighborhoods, 1880-1910* (1978). That is, there appears to be a paucity of information about how ethnic groups and blacks "used" or failed to use their housing to gain a foothold in Pittsburgh society.

Clearly, homeownership constituted one of the major building blocks which immigrants used to fashion a stable community. The authors underline "community" as a key to ethnic adjustment. The institutions and networks comprising the community afforded groups leverage in urban society. Over time Polish and Italian families, according to the authors, established "functional" communities such as Bloomfield, Polish Hill, the South Side, and Lawrenceville, which were replete with elaborate friendship and institutional support systems. For this reason these places survived as viable communities as late as 1960. Meanwhile, in contrast, black communities such as the Hill District, plagued by discrimination and low rates of homeownership, failed as viable communities.

As I believe the authors intended, this use of historical data to identify nuances in the fabric of the ethnic and racial experience in Pittsburgh stands as the signal contribution of the book. The similarities they discover in the black and white adaptation patterns are often as striking and illuminating as the differences. Blacks, like white immigrants, brought with them to Pittsburgh some familiarity with urban life and usually some experience with nonagricultural labor. Both groups used kinship networks to help adjust to city life. Although blacks had greater expectations, and were individualistic rather than collectively-oriented, the greatest difference underscored by the authors seemed to be black Pittsburgh's inability to create functional communities. In explanation, Bodnar, Simon, and Weber point to discrimination and poor job opportunities (especially the difficulty faced by black women in securing work), but they do not adequately explain why between 1900 and 1930 black Pittsburgh never erected the kind of institutional base that Allan Spear found in Chicago, Kenneth Kusmer uncovered in Cleveland, Nelson discovered in Philadelphia, or James Borchert espied developing in the alleys of Washington,

D.C. While the authors frequently and wisely punctuate their book with allusions to comparable data from other cities, they are mute on this point.

Finally, unlike other studies of the ethnic and racial experience in urban America (Borchert excluded), Bodnar, Simon, and Weber venture into the uncharted territory of the post-1930s. Using an array of census and city directory data they trace the ethnic and racial experience of families in seven Pittsburgh neighborhoods. Interestingly, they find what Erickson and Yancey found in Philadelphia. White neighborhoods located in proximity to viable industry (that is, Bloomfield, the South Side, Lawrenceville) remained remarkably stable in the 1930-1960 era; working-class neighborhoods with weak industrial bases such as the Hill District floundered till eviscerated by urban renewal in the 1950s.

While the authors provide a richly detailed background for their discussion of the immigrant arrival into Pittsburgh, the historical texture for their data-laden discussion of the post-1930s is less substantial. Absent is that urban structural context which the authors emphasized as part of their study model. Certainly the economic pummeling of the Great Depression had a profound impact on the adjustment experiences of Poles, Italians, and blacks. For all groups the federal government now became a vital factor, often interposing itself where family, church, and beneficial society once had sole dominion. Likewise, for blacks, Poles, and Italians World War II, followed by a rapidly postindustrializing society (symbolized by Renaissance I) wrought significant changes in Pittsburgh, modulating conditions critical to an understanding of the lives discussed in their extensive tables. That Bloomfield (minus the bridge) preserved its ethnic ambience can be attributed to the mix of tradition, life course decisions, job opportunities, and community support systems discussed by Bodnar, Simon, and Weber. Without a fuller discussion of the changing political relationships, technological determinants, and shifting regional economic forces, however, the whole tapestry of the post-1930 era is incomplete. These lacunae aside, *Lives of Their Own* is an important and well-written book, which for the first time systematically views the black experience side by side with the white ethnic experience against a panorama of the changing urban environment. It is a rich and significant addition to the literature of both ethnic and urban history.

Department of History and Urban Affairs
California State College
California, Pennsylvania

JOHN F. BAUMAN