Looking for Appalachians in Pittsburgh:
Seeking 'Deliverance' and Finding the 'Deer Hunter'

By Phillip J. Obermiller and Michael E. Maloney

APPALACHIA is an abiding symbol of rural white poverty in America. When the media needs a visual clip, a sound bite, or a few column inches on rural poverty, reporters and photojournalists are dispatched to Appalachia. When presidential contenders need a social issue, their campaign trails often include a stop at a small Appalachian town for a quick speech and few photos.

Apart from its symbolic function of

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invoking images of poverty, Appalachia remains fairly unknown to mainstream America. Millions of Appalachians, primarily from West Virginia and Appalachian regions of other central and southern states, have left the region and settled in metropolitan areas from Baltimore to Los Angeles in search of work and improved life chances for themselves and their families. These migrants receive even less recognition than their kinfolk back in the mountains. Urban Appalachians have been characterized aptly as the “invisible minority” — invisible because their culture is not recognized and minority because when it is recognized, it is not accepted by individuals and institutions in the urban mainstream.

Appalachian migrants to cities like Cincinnati have begun to organize, and they are imposing a severe strain on the assumptions, stereotypes, and biases of urban power brokers. Cincinnati’s urban Appalachians are teaching government social service departments, philanthropic organizations, social welfare agencies, school systems, and mainline religious groups that ethnicity is not restricted to people of foreign lands and cultures, that poverty is not confined to blacks and rural whites, and that assimilation into the urban milieu is not a foregone conclusion for many rural-to-urban migrants.

In Pittsburgh the picture is entirely different. The city, the county (Allegheny), and all of Western Pennsylvania lie within the Appalachian region as defined by the federal government, making the entire population of the Pittsburgh metropolitan area technically “Appalachian.” Yet there is no sign of an Appalachian cultural presence in Pittsburgh. The city’s history of immigration and its strong ethnic neighborhoods would lead most observers to believe that Appalachians are merely the most recent group of white ethnics to establish itself in the city. Yet Pittsburgh may be the only major metropolitan area in or near the Appalachian region without a significant population of migrants from other parts of Appalachia. This article explores the reasons for this anomaly.

The authors, one Appalachian, and the other of European ethnic stock, are familiar with the dynamics of Appalachian migration and ethnic neighborhood formation in Cincinnati and other midwestern cities. We traveled to Pittsburgh expecting to find hidden enclaves of “invisible” Appalachians. We visited several different neighborhoods in and
around Pittsburgh. We interviewed key informants across the city — preachers, social workers, educators, shopkeepers, university professors — and always asked where we might find a neighborhood populated by West Virginians or by “folks from the mountains.” We scanned scholarly documents and daily newspapers, looking for hints of an Appalachian presence in Pittsburgh. Using annual county-to-county migration data produced by the U.S. Census Bureau and Internal Revenue Service records, we studied migration flows out of Appalachia and into Allegheny County in selected years from 1955 to 1981.

The results of our studies are presented here in the form of a comparison between Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. Cincinnati represents the 30 major metropolitan areas in which Appalachians can be found as a legitimate, if invisible, ethnic group. Pittsburgh, surrounded by Pennsylvania’s Appalachian counties and readily accessible by Interstate 79 from West Virginia, stands alone; it represents the only known case in which Appalachian migration streams have almost entirely avoided a readily accessible industrial city.

The Appalachian region is composed of 397 counties, which lie across portions of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, New York, Virginia, Maryland, western Pennsylvania, and the entire state of West Virginia. Although Appalachians are generally perceived as rural people, about 75 percent of the region’s 1980 population lived in metropolitan or urban counties.1 Major urban areas in the Appalachian region include Birmingham, Charleston, Chattanooga, Huntsville, Knoxville, Nashville, Pittsburgh, and Tuscaloosa. Cities located in counties bordering on the region include Atlanta, Buffalo, Cincinnati, and Memphis. Extractive industries, specifically coal mining, traditionally have formed the region’s economic base; agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation, and textile manufacturing are also components of the regional economy.

There is significant cultural diversity within the Appalachian region. In eastern Ohio, for instance, there are areas with people of primarily Anglo-Saxon and Celtic heritage who have historic links to Kentucky and Virginia. Other sections of the region were settled by people from New England and are not a part of the “upland South” cultural region. The river towns north of Marietta, Ohio, are home to large numbers of people with central and southern European backgrounds. Similar diversity is found in Appalachian Pennsylvania. Washington County appears to be more strongly influenced by the culture of the British Isles than the steel towns along the Monongahela and Ohio rivers, where central European ethnicity is more prevalent.

What then is meant when we say that a person is “Appalachian” or when we use terms such as “an Appalachian neighborhood?” Because of the variety of connotations and denotations that the term “Appalachian” can have, we will describe some of the most common usages and indicate which one we are using at any given time. A politician might reasonably refer to all residents of the 397 counties in the region as Appalachian. This usage ignores the reality that many people living in the region may have moved there from other places, but because of the availability of data, many researchers employ this definition. Research on Appalachian migration generally considers a person who was born in the region or whose forebears were born in the region as Appalachian. “Southern Appalachian” refers to people living in West Virginia and the mountainous areas to the south, while “Northern Appalachian” refers to people living in the hills of southeastern Ohio and upland areas to the north.

Anthropologists studying value orientations go beyond these geographical and topographical distinctions and define as Appalachian anyone who is tied to the region by ancestry and who shares the subcultural values of that area. Further distinctions could be made between mountain subcultures — for example, between farmers and miners, rural folk and small town folk, or snake handlers and Primitive Baptists.

The most dramatic Appalachian migration to metropolitan centers began in the decade after World War II. Those who clustered in blue-collar ethnic neighborhoods and who experienced problems typical for most low-income migrants (underemployment, poverty, school failure, stereotyping, and discrimination) are primarily from the northern and southern Appalachian coalfields. As might be expected, this group is predominantly white, mostly Baptist or Pentecostal, and heavily blue collar. They are for the most part of Scots-Irish or Anglo-Saxon heritage, speak with a distinct accent, and especially enjoy country and western, bluegrass, and “old time” gospel music. When we went looking for Appalachians in Pittsburgh, these were the people we sought.
Based on these characteristics we expected to find Appalachian neighborhoods replete with "hill-billy" bars and restaurants, Pentecostal and Baptist churches, and people speaking with mountainer accents. Other typical lifestyle features of blue-collar Appalachian neighborhoods include pickup trucks with hunting rifles mounted inside the back window, camping vehicles, body shops, and shed-tree mechanics working on cars and trucks.

We acknowledge that there are other kinds of Appalachians in Pittsburgh — for example, professionals from West Virginia living in suburban communities, or blacks from eastern Kentucky living in integrated middle-class neighborhoods, or blue-collar Polish- and Italian-Americans from the mining counties of southwestern Pennsylvania living in central city neighborhoods. Our point is not to deny Appalachian heritage to any of these groups, but to recognize that they are quite likely highly assimilated into urban milieus shaped by the dominant social, economic, and cultural forces on each group.

The motive for Appalachian migration has been largely economic. In 1954, 53.6 percent of the farm operators in southern Appalachia were engaged in nonfarm work, a sign that farming was failing to provide a livelihood. Unemployment combined with the economic and social effects of World War II to impel a migration from the region, which swelled in the postwar period. The railroads' conversion to diesel fuel, the change over to electric ovens in the steel industry and to gas furnaces in residential heating, and the automation of mining above and below ground put thousands of miners out of work in the central Appalachian coalfields. The number of bituminous coal miners in southern Appalachia in 1940 was 170,385, but by 1954 the average number of miners working daily in the same area was only 108,902.

The move was social as well as economic. Manufacturing jobs were opening up in the industrialized cities of the northeast and midwest. Post-war improvements in travel and communication systems added to the lure of the cities. Southern Appalachia lost more than 13 percent of its population between 1940 and 1950, 19 percent from 1950 to 1960, and another 5 percent during the 1960s. Although there is evidence of net return migration during the 1970s, out-migration from Appalachia seems to have resumed in the 1980s.

The destinations of the migration streams have changed over time from cities in the Midwest and the Northeast to urban growth centers in the South and Southwest. In the 1960s Washington, Detroit, Chicago, and Cleveland ranked among the top 10 receiving cities. By the early 1980s Houston, Nashville, Tampa/St. Petersburg, Phoenix, Dallas, and Los Angeles were showing rela-

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**Favorite Cities for Appalachian Migrants**

- Appalachian Region Boundary as designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission in 1965.
- Old destination – Major metropolitan area with historically large Appalachian community.
- New destination – Metropolitan area among the top 10 for migrants from the Appalachian region, 1980-81. (Also includes Houston, not shown.)
- An old and a new destination – Metropolitan area with historically large Appalachian community that remained among the top 10 destinations for Appalachian migrants into the 1980s.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Internal Revenue service data complied by authors.
tively large net gains of Appalachian migrants. Metropolitan areas within the Appalachian region such as Birmingham, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Charleston, Huntsville, Huntington, and Tuscaloosa are also popular destinations.

As we begin the 1990s millions of Appalachian people are living in cities as far apart as Baltimore and Phoenix or Detroit and Ft. Lauderdale; some are recent migrants, while others are the children and grandchildren of migrants.

The impact of migration on Appalachian people has been well documented by authors such as Harriet Arnow, Jospeh Howell, Robert Coles, James Brown, and William Philliber, but the effect of Appalachian migration on the receiving cities has been largely neglected. The urban costs and benefits of what Brown and Hillery called “The Great Migration” probably will never be calculated accurately because they are likely immeasurable. Nevertheless, we will suggest a few areas where the impact has been felt.

The first and most obvious contribution of the Great Migration has been economic. Many Appalachian workers stopped trying to fill coal cars in the countryside and began to build cars in the cities. They moved from West Virginia to Akron to make tires for Firestone and Goodyear, to Cleveland to refine gas for Sohio, to Canton to make engine bearings, or to Youngstown to make wiring harnesses for Packard Electric. From Kentucky they moved to Dayton to make batteries at Delco and to nearby Middletown where they rolled steel into sheet steel for auto bodies at the Armco plant. Workers came by the thousands from Appalachia to the GM, Ford, and Chrysler assembly plants in Detroit, Flint, Pontiac, Fort Wayne, South Bend, and Cincinnati. Many others went into construction, building the streets, homes, factories, and offices of urban centers. Many of these workers had roots in the United Mine Workers of America; they contributed to the growth and vitality of the various construction brotherhoods and to the automotive, rubber, and chemical workers’ unions as well.

Appalachian migrant families moved from the mountains to the cities with their work ethic and their social roles fairly intact. Appalachian women joined the urban labor force in large numbers, adapting their traditional familial roles to the urban environment. In Cincinnati, where nearly 80 percent of the Appalachian women hold full-time jobs outside the home, they found work as teachers, nurses, and social workers, continuing their involvement with children, the sick, and the elderly. They left their kitchens for food processing plants, potato chip factories or commercial bakeries; they translated their crafts into assembly work at Kenner Toys.

In short, Appalachian people made up a large part of the midwestern labor force that stimulated economic growth after World War II. Appalachian men and women played an important role in building the physical infrastructure, producing the durable goods, and providing the human services that fueled the post-war economic expansion in our cities. Their role was especially critical in the face of the heightened nation-alism and other factors that slowed the influx of immigrants from other countries, the barriers that prevented black workers from holding many jobs, and the relatively undeveloped state of automation at the time. Without Appalachian workers, the rate of economic development in the receiving cities would have been much slower.

The new urban environment had its effect on Appalachian migrants as well. They worked hard to maintain the cultural values and institutions they had brought from the mountains. Upon arrival in the cities, Appalachians connected with family and peer networks which were usually concentrated in heavily Appalachian neighborhoods. These urban areas were dotted with the bars, restaurants, churches, stores, and workplaces which other Appalachians frequented.

In Cincinnati, the cultural differences of the newcomers gave rise to stereotyping and negative labeling by natives. New urban myths arose to explain the behavior of the “hillbillies” moving into the city. Rather than identifying with these stigmatized images, most migrants reject all labels (including “Appalachian”) and identify with their state of birth or simply with being “from the mountains.”

Appalachian values and folkways have adapted to the city. For instance, bowling has replaced fishing and hunting as a pastime for some migrants. Gender roles changed as well, with women experiencing more independence through paid employment and careers outside the home. Many Appalachian churches have evolved from small inner-city storefronts to stained glass and stone sanctuaries serving hundreds of suburban families.

A Tale of Two Cities: Cincinnati

Its diversified industrial base is a key factor in Cincinnati’s record
of economic stability and balanced growth. Early immigrants from manufacturing cities in Germany established metal casting foundries and precision machine tool companies that endure to this day. One of the area’s largest employers, General Electric, fabricates and assembles precision parts for jet engines. Automobile companies such as Ford and General Motors also employ many skilled workers in their local plants.

Germans from more rural areas founded stockyards, abattoirs, and meat packing plants that earned Cincinnati the sobriquet of “Porkpolis.” These thrifty immigrants were famous for using “every part of the pig but the squeal” and their industrial legacy is just as diverse: the Kroger meat and grocery chain, Proctor and Gamble soap products, and Jergens cosmetics all have headquarters in Cincinnati.

Following a pattern similar to that in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati’s early industrialists founded schools, philanthropic foundations, hospitals, banks, and insurance companies that provide a wide array of job possibilities. With its blend of employment opportunities in manufacturing, marketing, finance, health, and education, Cincinnati has long been a magnet for migrants in search of work.

Cincinnati is a city of strong neighborhood identities that convey more than a sense of location; they are also associated with specific ethnic and racial groups and with varying economic conditions. Historically, Cincinnati and its environs have been a major destination for Appalachian migrants. The migration peaked in 1958 but continued strongly into the next decade; between 1965 and 1970 one out of 10 recent migrants to the city was Appalachian.13 By 1981 greater Cincinnati ranked ninth of the 30 major receiving cities; nearly one of every four residents of the metropolitan area was either a first- or second-generation Appalachian migrant.14 Most Appalachian families came to Cincinnati to find jobs. They were generally young, married, less well-educated than their urban counterparts, and frequently in the unskilled or semi-skilled sector of the labor force. Many Appalachian workers found regular employment, joined unions, and became an integral part of the urban economy. Others, however, were less fortunate. Used by employers as a pool of surplus labor to augment the local labor force during cyclical busy seasons, these Appalachians became the working poor, who often slipped unnoticed into the urban underclass.

Taken as an aggregate, first- and second-generation Appalachians are not doing badly. When compared in 1980 with non-Appalachian whites and non-Appalachian blacks in the Cincinnati metropolitan area, white Appalachians have a socioeconomic status lower than that of other whites but higher than that of blacks. As for schooling, work, and income, Appalachians are doing better than blacks but less well than their white counterparts. White Appalachians have 26 percent fewer high school graduates, 26 percent fewer workers in white-collar occupations and skilled trades, and 14 percent less average annual income than do other whites in the area.15

A different picture emerges, however, when the metropolitan Appalachian population is divided between residents of Cincinnati and residents of the suburbs. About one-third of the Appalachian population lives within the city limits of Cincinnati, and members of this group fall consistently below their suburban counterparts on a variety of economic and social indicators: they are younger and less educated, earn less money, work at less prestigious jobs, and are more likely to be living alone.16

When Appalachians living in the city of Cincinnati are contrasted with their non-Appalachian black and white counterparts, their situation appears even poorer. The three indicators of socioeconomic status — education, occupation, and income — show non-Appalachian whites to be at the higher end of the scale, white Appalachians at the lower end, and blacks in the middle. Only 32 percent of the non-Appalachian whites have less than a high school education, for example, but this proportion rises to 47 percent among blacks and 67 percent among white Appalachians. Similarly, one-third of non-Appalachian whites are employed in professional, technical, or managerial occupations, but only 19 percent of blacks and only 8 percent of white Appalachians hold such positions. Whereas 22 percent of the non-Appalachian whites report annual incomes of $40,000 or more, only 16 percent of blacks and 7 percent of white Appalachians have incomes at this level. Although the Appalachians’ lower socioeconomic status is attributable in part to the higher percentage of females in the group, it is evident that Appalachians living in the city have a lower overall socioeconomic status. As a group they are closer to blacks in these characteristics than to non-Appalachian whites.17

Slightly more than 13 percent of Appalachians in greater Cincinnati are black; nearly 22 percent of the blacks in the area are first- or second-generation Appalachians. Black Appalachians have somewhat less education but earn slightly
more income and enjoy higher occupational status than do other blacks in Cincinnati. Yet these differences become inconsequential when compared with the much larger differences between blacks and whites in the city. Overall, the socioeconomic resemblance of black Appalachians to other blacks is much stronger than the similarities between white Appalachians and other whites. Black Appalachians have assimilated into the urban black community to a degree that white Appalachians have not achieved in relation to the larger white community in Cincinnati.18

Like black Appalachians, Appalachian women form a minority within a minority in urban areas. Although nearly four-fifths of urban Appalachian women are working full time, they are less educated, hold lower status jobs, and live in households earning less average annual income than their male counterparts. The subordinate status of Appalachians in greater Cincinnati seems to intensify the stratification between Appalachian men and women.19

A Tale of Two Cities: Pittsburgh

The steady decline of the steel industry over the past 60 years has affected Pittsburgh’s demographic profile directly. The story has been one of out-migration rather than in-migration; the Steel City has lost 80,000 industrial jobs and more than 90,000 residents in the last two decades. Between 1980 and 1989 the Pittsburgh metropolitan area experienced the largest population decrease for any U.S. metropolis. The city’s demographic losses are the highest in the nation, whether considered in terms of net population loss (134,000) or as a percentage of total population (5.7 percent).20

According to research on Appalachian migration to Pittsburgh using 1960 and 1970 census data, Pittsburgh was an unpopular destination for migrants from southern Appalachia.21 In 1960 Pittsburgh was ranked 27th out of the 30 top-ranked metropolitan destinations for Appalachian migration; by 1970 it had dropped to 29th and was ranked a distant last among the seven metropolitan receiving areas located in the Appalachian region.

Surprisingly, 1980 figures on Appalachian mobility rank Pittsburgh at the top in the same ranking for metropolitan receiving areas. Indeed, the 14 southwestern Pennsylvania counties alone contributed 32,215 migrants to Pittsburgh and Allegheny County in 1980.22 But we must keep in mind several factors that make drawing a precise picture of the migration flows difficult when interpreting these data. First, in terms of net Appalachian migration (the number of people entering Pittsburgh from elsewhere in Appalachia minus the number of people leaving Pittsburgh for some other destination in Appalachia), Pittsburgh actually experienced a net loss of 1,789 migrants in 1980. Second, the 1960 and 1970 data consider only migrants from southern Appalachia; they disregard those from Appalachian counties in New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Those statistics excluded the ring of Appalachian counties surrounding Allegheny County, whereas these counties were included in the migration for 1980. This makes the more recent data on migration to Pittsburgh in 1980 from the Appalachian counties of southwestern Pennsylvania difficult to interpret. The balance of the migrants came principally from the other Appalachian counties in Western Pennsylvania, as well as in southwestern New York and southeastern Ohio; migrants from West Virginia are a fairly small part of this migration stream.

Pittsburgh, like Cincinnati, is a city of neighborhoods. Natives and visitors alike are keenly aware of this reality; one gives and receives directions that begin with statements like “Oh, that’s in Oakland,” or “Yeah, take the Liberty Bridge over to Mt. Washington.” In both cities natural neighborhood boundaries such as rivers, hills, and ravines are supplemented by parks, boulevards, and railway tracks.

Long-established ethnic group settlement patterns give Pittsburgh residents a good idea of who lives where.23 Polish Hill, of course, was Polish. Bloomfield remains heavily Italian. Much of the black population lives in the Hill District northeast of downtown. Squirrel Hill is heavily Jewish. Oakland, near the city’s universities and hospitals, is diverse and cosmopolitan. Large-scale out-migration of blue-collar families since 1970 has weakened but not destroyed these ethnic enclaves. Gentrification has occurred in some areas, but these demographic changes will not soon alter basic neighborhood characteristics based on ethnicity and social class.

The area has suffered heavily from loss of population and of blue-collar jobs, but Pittsburgh’s ethnic neighborhoods remain intact, primarily through the resilience of their residents. In the past, three generations of working-class families in ethnic neighborhoods usually occupied three separate houses in their community. These families are now doubling and tripling up in one house. As one informant told the authors, “Grandma moved in and the kids are staying or moving back in.” Family income lost in the former

Women experienced more independence through paid employment and careers outside the home.
industrial economy is replaced partially through informal exchanges and casual labor, the “off the books” transactions such as flea market sales, odd jobs, repair work, and babysitting. One informant reported, “The jobs are not here to support the yuppies the city seeks. The ethnic neighborhoods are safe.”

Home ownership is another factor in the relative stability of Pittsburgh’s neighborhoods. Nationally the home ownership rate is 63.8 percent; in Pittsburgh it is 74.4 percent. Moreover, housing in this area is less expensive than in other U.S. cities. Only four of the largest 150 cities in the county have average housing costs lower than Pittsburgh’s.

The existence of ethnic neighborhoods is not enough in itself to explain why West Virginians and other Appalachians have not established their own neighborhoods in Pittsburgh. Ethnic succession in urban neighborhoods is a fact of life in most major metropolitan areas; in 1940 several Cincinnati inner-city neighborhoods were predominantly German Catholic or Jewish; by 1970 these same neighborhoods were Appalachian or black. Yet this process does not seem to have affected as many neighborhoods in Pittsburgh as it did in Cincinnati and other midwestern cities.

In Cincinnati, Appalachians make up at least 10 neighborhoods. They are organized politically and culturally, operating several community centers and celebrating their culture with local and regional festivals. The Frank Foster Library on Appalachian Migrants is located in Cincinnati, as is the Urban Appalachian Council, the Appalachian People’s Service Organization, and the Appalachian Community Development Association. Appalachian churches can be found across the city and (more frequently in recent years) in the suburbs. Urban Appalachians have gained recognition by city government, the school board, and community social agencies as Cincinnati’s second largest minority group after blacks.

Blue-collar Appalachians are a major part of the work force in local factories; their white-collar counterparts work in hospitals, schools, and social service agencies across the metropolitan area. Urban health care delivery systems are learning to adapt to the special needs of Appalachian migrants, such as screening and treatment of pneumoconiosis. As early as the 1970s the superintendent of the Cincinnati Public Schools stated that serving the educational needs of Appalachian students was one of the most serious challenges facing the school system.

Because one of every four residents has Appalachian roots, Cincinnati long has been a focal point for academic research on patterns of internal migration, urban social problems, and ethnic group formation. The research has resulted in numerous journal articles, four scholarly books, several novels, and the organization of Appalachian studies courses at local colleges and universities.

No such expression of an Appalachian presence can be found in Pittsburgh. On our visits to the city residents easily gave us directions to other ethnic neighborhoods in the city, but no one could direct us to an Appalachian neighborhood, a “hillbilly” bar or restaurant, or to a preacher with an Appalachian congregation.

We visited poor white neighborhoods in and around the city. The central institutions located in these neighborhoods — grocery stores, bars, and churches — stocked no Appalachian food on their shelves, played no bluegrass music on their jukeboxes, and included no traditional mountain hymns in their services. We checked for West Virginia plates on cars and trucks in driveways and on the streets. We looked for Church of Christ and Holiness Church congregations. We listened for regional accents and asked people whether they knew of anybody from West Virginia living in the area. All to no avail. All of the people we spoke with were technically “Appalachian,” in that they lived in the federally defined region. Some no doubt are rural-to-urban migrants, but we found no evidence of large concentrations of people who had migrated from the mountains of West Virginia or who could be considered culturally Appalachian. Even in the steel towns along the Monongahela and Ohio rivers, we received the impression from our interviews that West Virginia migrants were relatively invisible. They settled in, socialized among themselves, and got along peacefully enough with their neighbors of Croatian or Polish descent. They did not, however, take over large sections of the towns or build any permanent edifices equivalent to the domed and spired churches of the European immigrants. Perhaps a typical pattern was that the first-generation migrants moved back to West Virginia to retire, and their children, second-generation migrants, moved on to other midwestern cities as the decline in the steel industry grew more severe.

Hypotheses

There are many possible explanations for the different outcomes of Appalachian migration to Pittsburgh and to Cincinnati. The first
we call the spatial argument: Pittsburgh offered no physical, social or economic space to the newcomers. Tight-knit ethnic neighborhoods prevented the relatively late-arriving Appalachians from establishing a toehold in the city. These ethnically homogeneous communities had been maintained over time because individual houses were often inherited by family members or sold to neighbors. The same consistency typified the blue-collar job market in Pittsburgh; working-class ethnicities controlled the unions and lower management positions, ensuring that new hires would come mostly from their own networks of kin, neighbors, and friends. The abiding solidarity of early migrants to Pittsburgh may have acted to exclude Appalachian newcomers from communities, housing, and jobs. Whether through elaborate or direct channels in the chain migration process, word would have filtered back to others in the mountains that Pittsburgh was just not a good place to move and find a job.

Another, similarly possible explanation is based on the nature of ethnic group behavior. Patterns of ethnic clustering by occupation and industry have been well documented. Groups not only are excluded from occupational opportunities, but also self-segregate in the labor force through ethnically specific job search patterns and employment preferences. According to this view, Appalachian workers in the Midwest gravitated toward the automobile industry rather than the steel industry, for whatever reason. This tendency would account for the presence of large numbers of Appalachians living in Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and Cincinnati, as well as for their absence in Pittsburgh. (The only exception to this pattern we are aware of is found at Armco Steel in Middletown, Ohio, but most of Armco's output is consumed by the automobile industry.) This theory is also supported by the recruitment practices of industries; having found a reliable and satisfactory source of labor, they tend to tap it again and again.

Another possible explanation for the absence of Appalachian neighborhoods in Pittsburgh is a variation of the ethnic argument. That is, the migrants to Pittsburgh from the Appalachian region are themselves of immigrant stock, and have blended quietly into the various ethnic communities. The urban Appalachians in Pittsburgh may have been, for example, miners of Italian and Polish descent from the Appalachian coalfields of southwestern Pennsylvania. These ethnic miners may have moved to Pittsburgh to become steelworkers. Evidence supporting this ethnic argument comes from the recent migration data for Allegheny County cited earlier.

From a different viewpoint, we can hypothesize that Cincinnati and Pittsburgh experienced different types of migration streams from Appalachia. Unlike the fairly direct moves from the region to midwestern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and Cincinnati, the flow to Pittsburgh may have been interrupted by diffusion. In short, migrants coming up the Monongahela Valley or across the Ohio River valley may have encountered intervening opportunities in the mill towns and suburbs south and west of Pittsburgh. The opportunity to avoid the "big city," combined with job opportunities closer to "home" in West Virginia and southeastern Ohio, may have siphoned off many potential migrants to Pittsburgh. In a variation of this idea, the migrants may have stopped short of Pittsburgh and may have taken up residence in the ring of counties surrounding the city. By commuting, these people could participate in the city's labor force while retaining some semblance of rural life. This line of thinking gains credence from the presence of a large white Protestant underclass in towns such as Beaver Falls, Aliquippa, and Washington. These people, living in Appalachia as defined by the federal government, display some Appalachian cultural characteristics and may have been early Appalachian migrants to the area.

Another set of explanations comes from an understanding of the respective social structures of the two cities. The long-term decline of the steel industry and the concomitant downward trend in the Pittsburgh-area economy began in the 1930s and was reversed only briefly by World War II. The area may never have had the same attraction to migrant workers as industrial cities not dependent on steel, such as Cincinnati, Baltimore, and Columbus.

Social mobility also was limited in Pittsburgh by an abiding working class. In Cincinnati, by contrast, working-class people of German heritage moved into the middle and upper classes, providing an opportunity for blue-collar Appalachian migrants to move into the neighborhoods, housing, and jobs left behind. Thousands of Cincinnati Germans, for example, joined the post-war movement to the suburbs. The stagnant Pittsburgh economy, on the other hand, inhibited mobility socially and economically.

Does this situation mean that Pittsburgh's current efforts to move from reliance on blue-collar
to white-collar industries will create new social and occupational opportunities for Appalachian migrants? We think not. Jobs in the primary and secondary industrial sectors are vanishing, even as jobs in the tertiary sector are being created. Ethnic succession in Pittsburgh’s labor force and neighborhoods is less likely to occur than the social immobility caused by the decline in blue-collar work.

Which of these hypotheses accounts most accurately for the absence of Appalachians in Pittsburgh? Probably all of them, in some combination. As observers from Cincinnati we have raised the question and have brought it to this point. Now students of Pittsburgh’s history must take up the task, examine the historical evidence for each hypothesis we’ve offered, and determine their relative importance.

7 Council of the Southern Mountains, “Are You Thinking of Moving to the City?” (pamphlet, Berea: 1965).
8 Obermiller and Oldendick, op. cit.
13 Clyde B. McCoy and James S. Brown, “Appalachian Migration to Midwestern Cities,” in Philiber and McCoy, op. cit. (Note: Due to the nature of this data, a raw number indicating southern Appalachian migration to Pittsburgh cannot be calculated.)
14 Obermiller and Oldendick, op. cit.
16 Ibid. and William W. Philiber, op. cit.
19 Community Chest and Council on the Cincinnati Area, op. cit.
21 McCoy and Brown, op. cit.
22 Obermiller and Oldendick (1987), op. cit.