

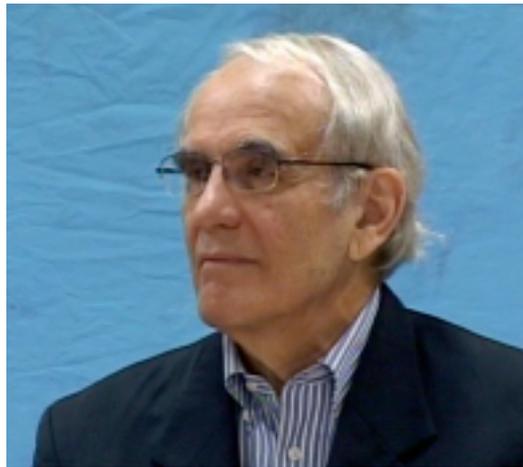
DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES

Interviews with Past Presidents of the Population Association of America A Project of the PAA History Committee:

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Interview with Charles Hirschman PAA President in 2005

**Interviewed by the PAA History Committee in at the Boston Marriott, Copley Center,
Boston, MA, May 2014**



Dr. Charles Hirschman is Boeing International Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1972. He taught at Duke University, and then Cornell University, before accepting a position at the University of Washington in 1987.

WEEKS: We are here today for the PAA Oral History Project to interview Dr. Charles Hirschman, past PAA president and professor of sociology at the University of Washington. Now Charlie, what we'd like to do is to start out with a sense of how you got into the field of population studies. You graduated from Miami University in Ohio. Did you grow up in Ohio?

HIRSCHMAN: I did.

WEEKS: Miami University has a long tradition in population studies. Is that where you were inspired?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, it's an interesting story because the Scripps Foundation for Population Research began at Miami University in the 1920s, and up through the 1950s, Warren Thompson and P.K. Whelpton did foundational work in demography. During my undergraduate years at Miami I didn't even know the institution existed.

I grew up in a small town in Ohio, on the other side of the state, where West Virginia and Pennsylvania intersect with Ohio. The dominant factors there were steel mills and coal mining, and farming was still active at that time. As I recall, I wanted to go to college as far away from home as possible, and Miami in the southwest part of the state was as far as I could go and still be eligible for in state college tuition.

I did take an undergraduate population course with David Lewis, who was a sociologist and a race relations specialist. He also dabbled a little bit in demography. Every week he would bring in mimeographed copies of materials from a demography textbook that he was writing. Later, I discovered that this was the fifth edition of Thompson's *Population Problems* text that was co-authored by Warren Thompson and David Lewis. That was my introduction in the field. So I had an indirect acquaintanceship with demographers at the Scripps Foundation, but it was probably not the motivating force to become a demographer. .

WEEKS: I think I have a copy of that book. So what was it that prompted you to go to graduate school?—

HIRSCHMAN: Well, after I left Miami, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school but didn't really know what field to study or whether I should go to law school. I was also part of the generation of the 1960s that President Kennedy inspired to do some sort of national service. I joined the Peace Corps and served in Malaysia for two years. At the end of my Peace Corps service, I applied to several graduate schools in sociology. I accepted an offer of a traineeship in demography and ecology at the University of Wisconsin. After a semester at Wisconsin, I decided that demography was the field for me.

WEEKS: Let's go back to the Peace Corps experience, because you've been involved with Malaysia most of your life since then. Was that the Peace Corps' choice, or did you have options about where you might go?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, I had led a pretty insular life -- I had never been outside of the Midwest or even been on an airplane. I suppose it was the desire to have an adventure as much as idealism that led me to volunteer for the Peace Corps. I sent in my application and some months later, I received an invitation to a Peace Corps training project in Hawaii to prepare for work in rural development in Malaysia. The first thing I did was to go the library to find Malaysia on the map and learn something about the country. The fact that Malaysia was half way around the world made it even more of an exciting option

WEEKS: You were working in rural development then. Was that actually what you were doing?

HIRSCHMAN: The job title was community development worker. Although there is a theoretical rationale for the field of community development, in our case, the practice was to put young American volunteers into a village as an agent of social change. In retrospect, that was

very naïve. Of course, the first job was to learn the language and culture. Three months of Peace Corps training was a start, but it took many more months before I had any idea what I was doing.

WEEKS: Malaysia is now different than it used to be. Can we attribute this to your experience?

[laughter]

HIRSCHMAN: I think it is fair to say that Malaysia has had more impact on me than I have had on the country. I spent much of my early career there. In addition to my Peace Corps service, I went back for my PhD dissertation research. I also worked there for 18 months as a Ford Foundation advisor to the Malaysian Department of Statistics in the 1970s and also spent a sabbatical at the University of Malaya in the 1980s. But for the last 30 years, I've had relatively little contact with the country, except for an occasional conference. During the 2012–2013 year, a Fulbright fellowship allowed me to return as a visiting professor at the University of Malaya. The country had changed beyond recognition. There were literally parts of the country; including places I'd lived before, where I did not recognize a thing. The names of the streets had changed as well as the construction of new office complexes and mega-shopping malls everywhere.

On the other hand, the language, the culture, the love of food, the camaraderie with old friends, and also the dysfunctional political system, were pretty much the same. So in spite of the physical transformation of the country, I felt at home.

WEEKS: We'll come back to that. Let's go back to your ending in the Peace Corps. You're heading off to Wisconsin, to Madison. Was it only that you had funding that took you into demography?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, it was a complex of things. The time period was an important variable. I joined the Peace Corps in '65, which was similar to the '50s in a political sense. By the time I

returned in 67, the 1960s had arrived. It was a very politicized environment, especially on university campuses. The end of the Lyndon Johnson era, the antiwar movement, the civil rights movement—all of these things were in the air at the time.

There was something else happening at the University of Wisconsin, namely the creation of the modern Center for Demography and Ecology. The University had a number of eminent demographers, including Norman Ryder, Karl Taeuber, Glenn Fuguitt, and Leo Schnore. But none of them were really institution builders. Hal Winsborough, who was the institution builder, and Jim Sweet arrived at the University of Wisconsin in 1967, just shortly before I did. Within a few years Larry Bumpass, David Featherman, and Bob Hauser joined the Wisconsin faculty. It was a really a powerhouse demography program that attracted a number of graduate students, and I was fortunate to be in the right place at the right time.

So, for me, the University of Wisconsin in the late 1960s was an interesting historical conjuncture of political forces and the emergence of a very strong intellectual and research environment. The political setting encouraged students to rethink American society, the problems of international development, and most importantly, our personal responsibility in solving all of those issues. The Center for Demography and Ecology (CDE) was also a formative influence because it promoted individual research and training, but it was also a collective, center-based enterprise whose impact was greater than the sum of its parts. I didn't understand any of this at the time, but I was very lucky to have been there at the creation of CDE.

I wasn't focused on demography when I entered graduate school, but there were a couple of factors that drew me closer to demography. . One was the people—my mentors and my fellow graduate students were people with whom I could identify. They were friendly, serious, and not pretentious in any way. They talked about things that I understood. Issues were addressed

empirically—as opposed to ideologically.

There was a contrast between demography and the content of some of the sociology courses I was taking. The issues in these classes were very abstract and did not seem amenable to empirical research. I had an interest in sociological questions, but I often struggled to understand the some of the abstract theories. Demography seemed to offer a clear way to do research that I could follow. I discovered there was no real conflict between being a sociologist and a demographer. Demography provided the tools and data to empirically address significant sociological questions. Within my first year of graduate school, I was converted to seeing demography as the way to go.

There was an old paper by Sam Preston about the different schools of demography. He contrasted several demographic traditions identified with Princeton, Berkeley and other universities. One he labeled the “Wisconsin/Michigan” school of sociological demography, concerned with stratification, inequality, race relations. This was the branch of demography that attracted me.

WEEKS: And who were you working with most closely in that?

HIRSCHMAN: I had pretty close connections to all of the Wisconsin CDE faculty, most of whom were just a few years older than me. Hal Winsborough who was CDE director, was in his mid 30s. Jim Sweet, Bob Hauser, David Featherman, Larry Bumpass were in their mid to late 20s. It was a remarkable period to have almost no age gap between faculty and graduate students. Jim Sweet was my advisor throughout my years in Madison, but other CDE faculty influenced me through courses, seminars, and informal interaction. Judah Matras was a frequent visitor to Wisconsin, and I was assigned as an RA with him one year. This led to a jointly author paper published in *Demography*.

The teachers of my teachers were also very influential through their publications and in other ways. Ron Freedman, a legendary demographer, taught the core graduate population course at Michigan that was the model for the course I took with Jim Sweet. I am sure that my graduate population course bears the imprint of Freedman's vision of the field.

Perhaps the most dominant influences on the Wisconsin school of demography were Otis Dudley Duncan and Beverly Duncan. They literally invented the modern field of social stratification, and many of us were trying to apply their insights and methods in our research. When I was at Wisconsin, David Featherman and Robert Hauser were designing their replication of Blau and Duncan's landmark study of social mobility.

WEEKS: So that influence from Michigan really was strong—

HIRSCHMAN: Very strong. It was only later that I realized that demography included many other topics beyond that of the Michigan/Wisconsin school.

WEEKS: You really have emphasized over your career these issues of race and ethnicity and social stratification.

HIRSCHMAN: Yes. Although I did not conduct research on racial segregation, I was very impressed by Karl [and Alma] Taeuber's, *Negroes in Cities*. It was the standard reference in the field before Massey and Denton's classic work [*American Apartheid*, 1993]. The issues of residential segregation, the structure of cities, racial inequality, civil rights were central to the agenda of the political world and the academic world. It was a very exciting time.

WEEKS: There's no question about that. And so then you went off from Wisconsin to Duke?

HIRSCHMAN: Right. I had five interviews at major research universities, but only received one job offer. But, as a friend said "you only need one job, right?" I was very fortunate to have had my first job at Duke from 1972 to 1981. The Duke population center was a much smaller

operation, mostly centered on the work of George Myers, who was the director. The other major figure in demography was Allen Kelley who had just arrived to replace Joseph Spengler in the Duke Department of Economics.

There was also a great group of younger colleagues who were good friends and role models for establishing a research oriented career, including Bill Mason, Karen Mason and Jim House.

WEEKS: And so what were the strands of research that you really took off with once you got to Duke?

HIRSCHMAN: I continued to do my work on the social demography of Malaysia, but I also began to work on immigration and ethnic stratification in the United States. A few years after I arrived at Duke, Alejandro Portes joined the sociology faculty. Alejandro is one of these people who create an energy field around them, and I was lucky to be part of his team. He received NIMH funding for a postdoctoral training program on “Immigration and Ethnicity.” He was Mr. Immigration at the time and I was supposed to develop a program on comparative ethnic stratification

One of our postdoctoral fellows, Morrison “Morri” Wong was interested in Chinese Americans. It was only a short step to develop a collaborative research project on Asian American stratification. Most of the ideas and methods were extensions of my prior work on Malaysia, which were borrowed from the foundational work by the Duncans and by Featherman and Hauser. This project also led to my career-long interest in immigration.

WEEKS: Thinking about racial ethnic relations in Malaysia, have they changed over time from what you were studying back then?

HIRSCHMAN: Yes. That’s one of the things I was thinking about last year when I was there.

Let me try to make a few points briefly. Concepts and methods can be applied in multiple contexts, but understanding the structure of American race and ethnic relations does not transfer to other societies. The United States is unique in terms of our black/white divide and high levels of immigration from many other countries.

The history of Malaysian ethnic relations is also quite different from other societies. The indigenous Malay population, which is also the majority, had been left behind during the colonial era. The colonial powers emphasized the export of primary products from tin mines and rubber plantations. The Chinese and Indian populations were brought in as laborers on these foreign-owned enterprises. They were highly exploited and experienced very high mortality. Although they were considered temporary workers, many stayed on. Their descendants gravitated to cities, where they had greater access to educational and economic opportunities.

The Malay-Chinese divide—with the Chinese being more urban and educated, and the rural Malay population left behind in rural areas—is the major research and public policy question. Following independence in 1957, and especially since 1970, the government has instituted a very strong affirmative action program that gives preference to Malays in schooling, government hiring, and in many other sectors. Although the Malay population was historically disadvantaged, the recent data show that Malays are ahead of Chinese educationally, but not economically. In spite of the considerable progress in narrowing the socioeconomic divide between ethnic groups, it seems that every group has grievances. The Chinese feel aggrieved because the affirmative action program has disadvantaged them—and it has. In spite of their political dominance, some sectors of the Malay population feel disadvantaged because much of the private sector is still in the Chinese hands.

WEEKS: I have a sense, and I don't remember now whether it's from your writing or the other

people, that Indians in particular have been discriminated against in Malaysia.

HIRSCHMAN: Discrimination arises from many sources. The government clearly discriminates in favor of Malays. Perhaps many firms in the private sectors discriminate in favor of Chinese. The Indian community is left behind, in part, because they do not have power in any major institutions. Indians receive fewer benefits from the government than Malays, and Indians have less power in the commercial world than the Chinese community has. The data show that on most measures, including infant mortality, education and employment, the Indian community has fallen behind.

WEEKS: You found that when you went back?

HIRSCHMAN: Yes, as measured in relative terms. With modernization, every group has floated upward. All assessments of absolute well-being, whether measured by longevity, consumption levels, home ownership, or other aspects of middle-class ways of life, show that all groups in Malaysian society are much better off than they were at earlier times. But people don't compare themselves to their parents or grandparents; they compare themselves relative to their peers, especially to other ethnic groups.

WEEKS: Classic case of structural mobility?

HIRSCHMAN: Exactly. One of the advantages of being an outsider is a comparative perspective. It also helps if you have an historical sense.

WEEKS: As you were working with Alejandro Portes, how did you translate those ideas back to American society?

HIRSCHMAN: Alejandro is a brilliant scholar and a very careful empirical researcher. He often stresses his own theoretical emphasis, "segmented assimilation" theory in particular, but he is always open to new evidence and ideas. In my writings, I have attempted to test segmented

assimilation theory, but I don't see myself as belonging to one theoretical camp or another. I'm primarily an empiricist rather than theorist, I like to test the ideas, so when there are good ideas out there, that's grist for my mill. Certainly Portes' ideas have been very important in my thinking and research.

WEEKS: You haven't tried to develop theories that are based on your empirical work?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, I do have interpretations. And I'm not sure they would rise to the level of theory. Perhaps I might give an example or two.

WEEKS: Sure.

HIRSCHMAN: In the field of immigration studies, the traditional question has generally been framed in terms of immigrant problems—the adjustment of newcomers to the dominant society, the costs of absorbing immigrants, including schooling for immigrant children, the provision of social services and so on.. In a series of articles, I've tried to address a different question—the gains and benefits to American society that come from the presence of immigrants and their children. My PAA presidential address was my first attempt along these lines—looking at the impact of immigration on American society along a number of dimensions [“Immigration and the American Century.” *Demography* 42 (November): 595-620].

In another paper, I have attempted to measure the participation of immigrants in the process of industrialization in the United States from 1880 to 1920[“Immigration and the American Industrial Revolution from 1880 to 1920.” *Social Science Research* 38: 897-920]. Immigrants, including their children and grandchildren, were significantly over-represented in the manufacturing sector. I do not claim that the U.S. would not have industrialized without immigrants, but rather that the presence of large numbers of immigrants allowed for a more rapid and cheaper economic transformation than would have occurred otherwise.

In a recent paper [“The Contributions of Immigrants to American Culture”, *Daedalus* 142 26-47], I described the cultural contributions of immigrants to American society. It extends the point made in my PAA address that immigrants (and their children) played an important role in creating popular culture in Broadway and Hollywood. In the follow up paper, I provide more evidence from a number of cultural areas, including music, dance, cuisine, science, and even sports. I also try to explain why immigrants have some advantages as outsiders and also how immigrants have helped to make American society more dynamic, meritocratic and more receptive to change than other societies. This work is not really theoretical, but I try to make an interpretation that’s a little bit different from the conventional research on immigration assimilation and adaptation.

WEEKS: But it’s also an interpretation that has a lot of political punch, I guess you might say, given all the anti-immigrant sentiment.

HIRSCHMAN: Right. One of the things that sociologists and demographers can do is to rephrase the standard questions in ways that open the door to new empirical evidence that broadens scientific and public understanding

WEEKS: Right. Going back now to your career path: you were there at Duke, and then you headed off to Cornell. What was that about?

HIRSCHMAN: That’s what my family would sometimes ask! I think the underlying direction of my career is an ambition to make a mark in research and also on the institutions where I worked. My graduate training at Wisconsin left a long shadow on my career aspirations. Wisconsin was a center of important research and training, and I wanted to be at a university where these things were also happening. Duke had a very good program, which I enjoyed very much. But when I had the opportunity to go to Cornell, I thought it would be a step up the ladder.

There was another reason: I wanted to develop my knowledge and scholarship on Southeast Asia as a region, which included Malaysia, but also Indonesia (which shares the same language with Malaysia), Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam in particular. Cornell was, and probably remains, the leading center for Southeast Asian studies in the United States. The Cornell Southeast Asia Program was not located in sociology or demography, but primarily in history, anthropology, political science, and in language and literature. I felt a strong intellectual and personal kinship with the Cornell Southeast Asia Program and that was a major attraction.

WEEKS: Then you were there for a little while—

HIRSCHMAN: Six years.

WEEKS:—and then Washington lured you.

HIRSCHMAN: Right. Careers have their own odd trajectory. I was not planning to move again so soon, but I felt drawn to the University of Washington for a variety of reasons. One attractive feature of the University of Washington was the much larger size of its Department of Sociology, which allowed for the development of a critical mass of faculty in specialized areas, including population studies. The much smaller Department of Sociology at Cornell allowed fewer options. In small units, each position is a larger fraction of the whole, which made hiring seem like a zero-sum game. The problem was exacerbated by strong personalities in the departments who framed the intellectual agenda of sociology in a narrow and exclusionary way

The Department of Sociology University of Washington was not only larger, but the organization, culture, and ambitions seemed similar to the Wisconsin model. I also had several good friends in the department, including Avery (Pete) Guest, a fellow graduate student from Wisconsin days. They recruited me to be the director of their population center.

WEEKS: And did they have an NIH center grant?

HIRSCHMAN: The Washington demography center was founded in the 1940s by Calvin Schmid who served as the director for two decades. Stanley Lieberman arrived in the late 1960s to build a national program, and I believe that he had gotten a demography training grant. Sam Preston was the director from 1972 to 1977, and his legacy was still strongly felt when I arrived in 1987. During his tenure, the Washington demography center received both NIH center and training grants. The program had drifted a bit in the 1980s and the expectation was that I would help to rebuild the program. During my tenure, the demography center received institutional support from the Mellon and Hewlett Foundations and a NIH training grant, in addition to research project funding. We came close to getting a center grant a couple of times, but didn't quite make it. In the early 2000s, long after my role as director, CSDE (the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology) received both a NIH center grant and a NIH training grant. I think I nudged the Washington program in the right directions, but it was really a team effort under several generations of leadership that led to its current stature.

WEEKS: Exactly. So now you became a named chair. What was the process by which that came about?

HIRSCHMAN: It was kind of a surprise. In universities, the career ladder is fairly short from assistant to associate to full professor. So for most of us, we reach the top rung of our career ladder when we are in our 40s. Of course, ambitions don't completely stop and there is always the possibility of moving to other universities. For the most part, I have managed to contain my ego in and remained in Seattle, with a lot of advice from my wife on what is really important in life.

One of the ways that universities to recognize achievement is through distinguished professorships. I have been very lucky to receive one of these—the Boeing Professorship of

International Studies. The reward is mostly psychological, but there is also a small stipend. I also have a joint appointment between the Department of Sociology and the Evans School of Public Affairs. Recognition by your university and peers provides a feeling that you are appreciated, and on days when the water fountain doesn't work and other things aren't going too well, you know that someone cares about you. In the academic world where money and power are less important than prestige, the recognition that you are doing a good job is very welcome. So, yes, I was pleased to be recognized.

WEEKS: That's great. That's very nice. So thinking about the 27 years that you've been at Washington, how do you see the demography program at your school having developed and changed over time?

HIRSCHMAN: Initially the program was wholly within the department of sociology, which I found quite congenial. But the program and the faculty affiliates were interdisciplinary, and I encouraged that trend by bringing in productive researchers from across campus, including history, social work, economics, anthropology, and also demographers from Battelle, a research organization located close to the UW campus. Demography centers are most effective when they are able to pool resources, including grants administration, computing, and other activities among productive researchers from a diverse set of disciplines and areas of research. Over the years, NIH has broadened the scope of population research centers and the UW program has moved to become even more inclusive as a university-wide interdisciplinary population research center. This is an evolutionary path, which has happened throughout the country. The UW Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology—usually referred by its abbreviation as CSDE—has upwards of 70 or 80 faculty affiliates from the University of Washington, Battelle, and from neighboring universities in the region. In the old days, it was primarily a group of

colleagues who knew each other very well and could all sit around one table at the Faculty Club.

With growth has come a much more diverse group of population scientists with concentrations in biological demography, population geography, statistical demography, and the health sciences. Overall, this has been a very positive development, which has created a much stronger program. Most of the credit for this development should go to my successors as CSDE director, including Pete Guest, Bob Plotnick, Martina Morris, Shelly Lundberg, and Mark Ellis. Several other colleagues have also made outstanding contributions to the success of CSDE, including Stew Tolnay, Adrian Rafery, Bill Lavelly, Darryl Holman, Kathie O'Connor and many more.

WEEKS: Right. Are you still involved in CSDE?

HIRSCHMAN: I'm still involved, but not in a central role. I have been fortunate to have many leadership opportunities as CSDE director, departmental chair, and also through university service. Whenever I left an administrative position, I tried to step back and not offer advice unless asked to do so. I think most new administrators appreciate not having former directors hanging around.

But if asked for advice, I do say what I think. A few years ago, when Shelly Lundberg was CSDE director, I offered my two cents on how the demography graduate program should be reorganized. Shelly called my bluff as an armchair critic by asking if I would come back to serve as the CSDE training director. I agreed.

The problem was that there were dozens of very talented graduate students from many disciplines who wanted to specialize in demography, but we had only a small number of CSDE traineeships and fellowships to offer. We responded by creating a high profile CSDE graduate fellows program that provided recognition for a concentration of study, but did not offer funding.

The program has proven to be very popular. Sara Curran, the current CSDE training director, has obtained university certification for specialized training in demography, which is a wonderful accomplishment.

WEEKS: Okay. And do you still take in graduate students?

HIRSCHMAN: I do. One of the things on my mind these days is the transition to retirement. The problem is that I still enjoy what I am doing, and don't really have a backup plan. There really is not anything else that I'm dying to do. I continue to enjoy research, working with graduate students and also teaching. So I'm continuing, sort of on a year to year basis, without a fixed plan for retirement.

When graduate students ask if I will serve as their advisor, I tend to go on too long about the uncertainty about my future career. It is a bit awkward because most of them probably don't care about whether or when I will retire. My philosophy is that a graduate student mentor is not just a short term advisor for the Ph.D. dissertation, but someone who will be there for them for the long term. For example, I used to call Jim Sweet and other Wisconsin mentors for career advice and one thing or another for at least a decade after I left Madison. I should probably just say "yes" when students ask to work with me rather than to go into this long discussion about the lifelong role of mentors and the alternatives of informal advisors relative to formal advisors.

WEEKS: Right. Now, looking at the PAA more specifically, what have been the involvements that you had that led up to your being elected as president of the PAA?

HIRSCHMAN: For the first 20 or 25 years of my career, I attended PAA meetings, presented papers, and got to know colleagues from around the country. The initial impetus was to reconnect with mentors and former graduate student buddies, but the PAA became part of my identity. Many of my research ideas originated from hearing papers at the PAA meetings and

also from informal conversations. Through PAA meetings, I met Stanley Lieberman whose research has had a profound influence on me.

Although I had chaired sessions at PAA meetings early in my career, I didn't serve on a committee or be in an elected office for at least 20 years into my career. I think I was first elected to serve on the publications committee and then a few years later I was elected to the Board of Directors. You know how things work, once you are on one list, then you wind up on other lists. It all happened pretty quickly. Soon, I was elected to serve as vice president when Karen Mason was president. This was the first time that I was closely involved in the PAA leadership and had a major role in organizing the program. The vice president organizes the poster sessions which is a huge job.

In 1999 I was nominated to run for president. It was a great honor, just to be considered in the pool of people eligible for the office. The only problem was the other candidate was Andy Cherlin. Given my belief that the PAA is a meritocracy, I voted for Andy Cherlin whom I considered to be the best candidate. The PAA membership agreed. Fortunately, I had another chance to run for PAA President again a few years later. Running for offices multiple times gives you name recognition, and perhaps that helped me to win the second time around.

There's a lot of stochastic variability in elective office and other honorific roles. It is not a reward for a good life or even a certainty for a very productive career. If you stay active through your scholarship, you may or may not be recognized and nominated for offices by your peers. At various times in my career, I thought my number would never come up; however, there is no doubt in my mind that I have been over-rewarded for my accomplishments. Reality exceeded my expectations.

WEEKS: But you didn't feel like you regressed to the mean?

HIRSCHMAN: No. One of the nice things about life is to experience social mobility. I came from relatively humble origins, so everything from going to college, graduate school, an academic job, and a rewarding career were far higher than anything I ever expected to have. I think these rewarding experiences have also helped me psychologically to maintain a positive and optimistic attitude.

WEEKS: Did you actually grow up in a rural farming community?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, the official geographical classification would be a “rural non-farm” area. My father had not graduated from high school, but he worked hard in a variety of jobs in furniture stores and advertising to make ends meet. My mother was a registered nurse and more than anyone else, she encouraged me to think that I could do anything I wanted to do. I had a vague plan to go to college, but certainly did not have plans for an academic career. It just happened with lots of support from friends and mentors along the way.

WEEKS: It happened. Okay. In thinking about things happening, as you became PAA president, what were the specific issues that you were confronted with during your time as president?

HIRSCHMAN: The PAA sort of runs itself. Stephanie Dudley manages the PAA office and she gives each president their marching orders – here are the tasks to be done and the timetable to do them. One of the major responsibilities of the president is to ask PAA members to serve on committees and to chair sessions. I must have asked dozens of PAA members to serve in one capacity or another, and remarkably everyone said “yes.” The PAA is really a collegial group and most members feel a sense of commitment and responsibility.

If there is one PAA activity that my name is associated with more than any other it is the Development Committee. The committee started when I was president, and I seem to have been over-identified with it over the last ten years. Would you like me to tell that story, briefly?

WEEKS: Please. Nobody else has yet and you are the person to do it.

HIRSCHMAN: Okay. The immediate situation was not a budget crisis, but the fear was that some of PAA activities might have to be cut back unless we could raise more funds. There is an important context to understand. The PAA runs a very tight ship. We are not big spenders in any way, but we have been able to do a lot with very little. In addition to our frugal habits, foundation grants have historically allowed for very innovative programs, such as supporting visiting scholars from developing countries to attend the PAA meetings. Another valuable program is the Public Affairs Committee and the part-time Public Affairs Specialist (jointly supported with the Association of Population Centers) who keeps federal agencies (NIH, NIA and NSF) and Congressional committees informed about the importance of support for population research and training. About a decade ago, the Mellon Foundation decided not to continue its population program and there were fears (unfounded it turned out) that the Hewlett Foundation might also leave the population field.

The discussion of these issues at a PAA Board of Directors meeting, which I was chairing, seemed to stretch on forever. In order to get onto other topics on the agenda, I suggested we appoint a development committee and they could consider fundraising options. I thought that I was being very clever to get the topic off the table and to hand it over to a committee to worry about it. The only problem was that I had to appoint the committee.

I turned to my good friend Sara Seims to chair the committee. At the time, Sara was the director of the population program at the Hewlett Foundation. She had previously worked at AID and the Rockefeller Foundation, and had been president of the Alan Guttmacher Foundation. She knew literally every person in the field and especially everyone in the donor community. The only hitch was that she made a condition of her acceptance as Development Committee chair that

I would become her co-chair. Since I had sort of connived to get her into the role, I could hardly say no to her. Working with Sara and the PAA Development Committee actually turned out to be some of the most rewarding experiences of my career

Through Sara's connections and persuasive abilities, the Development Committee raised a million dollars from major foundations for the PAA. One of the things we decided early on was if we were going to raise money from foundations, we had to get buy-in from PAA members. The first reason was that Foundations were much more willing to give grants to the PAA if it is to be matched with PAA member contributions. The second reason for getting PAA members to participate was that we do not want foundation funding to direct the priorities of the PAA. All of the funds from the development campaign were deposited in a reserve account called the "PAA Fund," which had been receiving member contributions for a number of years. Putting the foundation grants in the PAA Fund, along with members' contributions, fostered a sense of ownership over these monies. Thus, expenditures from the PAA Fund would have to be closely aligned with the values of PAA members, whose hard-earned dollars were a primary the source of these funds.

We purposely separated the allocation of expenditures from the Development Committee's fundraising effort to avoid any conflict of interest or the perception of conflict of interest. The PAA Board of Directors, which is elected by the membership, is responsible for the approval of expenditures from the PAA Fund. I am sure that the PAA is just as frugal as ever, but now there is a discretionary account that members can apply to for small grants for innovative projects that advance the field. Every year the PAA has supported a number of small budget highly meritorious projects.

The fundraising effort has transformed the PAA from its perennial worries about how do

we pay for the basics to an organization that's fiscally solvent and can actually invest in innovative ideas and projects. In addition to the million dollars from foundations, I think there has been over \$800,000 in contributions from individual members to the PAA Fund. This is an incredible achievement. More than 1000 of the 3000 PAA members have contributed. This illustrates the deep loyalty and commitment of PAA members

WEEKS: In fact, our project is funded by the small grant from the PAA.

HIRSCHMAN: I'm pleased that that's made it possible for you to do your very extraordinary work.

WEEKS: I appreciate that. How do you see the whole field of demography changing over time—and thinking about new young scholars coming into the field, what do you think they are going to be doing in the future?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, all the trends that were incipient before—interdisciplinarity, problem-oriented, highly empirical research: all these kinds of things have been reinforced over time. We have always been interdisciplinary, but sociology had been the dominant discipline with a few token economists, geographers, statisticians and those in applied settings in government and foundations. Now, sociologists are no longer the dominant intellectual discipline at PAA meetings. Economists and researchers from all social and health sciences are very visible at the PAA meetings and also as authors of articles in the journal *Demography*.

When I entered the field, the dominant issue was fertility in developing countries. In recent decades, interest in fertility has receded, in part, because the demographic transition is well underway in Asia and Latin American and beginning to take hold in many parts of Africa. . Other issues have arisen, for example the shift in age structure to an older population and the implications for Social Security and other age-related medical expenditures. The health sciences

are increasingly a part of demography with data on biomarkers. Genomic sciences are now part of demography, and I suspect that demography is more present in the genomic sciences. The frontier keeps expanding.

Demography has also become increasingly a core field in many other branches of sociology and other social sciences. For example, there used to be a strong sociological school of family studies, which was largely independent of demography. However, reading the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* now, suggests that demographic data and analyses have become much more central to contemporary research on family issues.

One of the major contributions of demography has been the increased availability of data. I am particularly impressed with the IPUMS [Integrated Public Use Microdata Sample] project at the University of Minnesota. Steve Ruggles has assembled a brilliant team to collect, harmonize and distribute demographic data from every country in the world. In the old days, I had to go to the Malaysian Department of Statistics (their census bureau) to get access to Malaysian census data. Now, I simply download the data from IPUMS. I know that most Malaysian researchers also get their country's data from IPUMS: it is so much easier than going to the statistical agencies. By the way, this is also true for researchers working with census data in the U. S. There are also new data available for historical periods through IPUMS.

We also have additional resources that have become available through NIH and NIA. Your original question was about the younger demographers. First, they have to continue to do the basics as previous generations have done -- land a job, publish high quality research and, establish their careers. They also have to decide what important questions that they are going to devote their lives to, whether the health of the population, the problems of the cities, race and ethnic inequality, or some equally compelling topic. I have always thought that the work of

scholars and researchers was more akin to a calling than simply a job or career. This is particularly true for demographers because we have more institutional resources than many other fields, including population centers and grant support from NIH/NIA, in addition to our knowledge of analytical techniques and deep familiarity with data sources.

In some branches of the social sciences, there is a certain small-town insularity to protect their turf from outsiders. Demography is generally the opposite, we tend to welcome scholars from other fields and often work alongside or with them. One of my favorite examples is Dick Udry's effort to bring the biological sciences closer to the social sciences. Thirty years ago, concepts from economics were foreign to most demographers trained in sociology. At present, we all are conversant with human capital theory and opportunity costs. I think the same thing will happen when the biological and health sciences enter our field. Of course, we have a few things to teach them, including causal modeling and an awareness of the problems of data and measurement.

WEEKS: So a final set of questions here. I'm wondering how you see your own personal contribution to the field over time. As you said, you're thinking of coming to the end of maybe a more active career. As you look back and think, well, this is the research or these are the contributions that I'm really most proud of, what would those be?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, we pretend that we don't think about our legacy. But of course we do.

WEEKS: That's why I was putting the question to you. [laughter]

HIRSCHMAN: Every once in a while, I look up my name on Google Scholar or the Social Science Citation Index to see if anyone has read my publications. I was surprised to learn that some of my review essays are more widely cited than most of my empirical papers. It is a bit of shock to someone who aspires to be an empirical researcher to learn that my commentary on

other peoples' research is more widely read than my own empirical work. One paper is my essay on "Why Fertility Changes," which was published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. I wrote the paper when I was in the middle of a big empirical project on fertility in Southeast Asia. Perhaps my effort to come to grips with the field helps others to see the big picture. I also have another essay in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, entitled "America's Melting Pot Reconsidered", which is my overview of the field of American race relations. Another essay is "The Role of Religion in the Adaptation of Immigrants," published in the *International Migration Review*. Perhaps I should have taken up writing textbooks rather than putting my priority on demographic research.

I also have a series of other papers on ethnic categories and how ethnic categories are shaped by power, ideology and social institutions. This work was influenced by the example of William Petersen's article on how the race and ethnic classification in Hawaii were shaped by politics ["The Classification of Subnations in Hawaii"]. I have a paper on how colonialism shaped the ethnic categories in Malaysia and several articles on American race and ethnic classifications and subjective identities. So those are small contributions, I hope.

WEEKS: In a classic way, an empirical look at your sense of contribution?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, I hope so. But I'm going to stick around for a while and perhaps I have a few more original ideas left.

WEEKS: You are not through contributing?

HIRSCHMAN: As I mentioned before, I don't play golf, I don't have any other burning things that I want to do. Maybe a little bit less undergraduate teaching would be ok. I will probably continue to work full-time for a few more years and then begin a phased retirement program. I hope to continue to come to my office every day and write. I enjoy that too much to stop.

WEEKS: I think that's good for all of us, for you to continue to contribute.

HIRSCHMAN: I hope so.

WEEKS: Well, thank you very, very much for taking an hour of your time this morning to talk with us.

HIRSCHMAN: Thank you, John. It's been a great pleasure.

WEEKS: Thank you.

HIRSCHMAN: Thank you, Dennis and Karen, for joining us.

WEEKS: Before we shut off—I intended to ask Dennis [Hodgson] and Karen [Hardee] if they had questions.

HODGSON: My only question is, you're unbelievably optimistic about the discipline, and you gave us a wonderful explanation of how it's changed over time, becoming many more disciplines, many more methods, much more inclusive. Is that a challenge for the discipline? You paint it always in a very positive sense, but you always say we, with a clear idea that you are talking about demographers and demography, and if we become so dispersed in terms of the questions we address and our methodologies, and the people who do demography, is that a possible challenge for the field?

HIRSCHMAN: Yes. That is a great question. Demographers have responded differently to the challenge of interdisciplinarity than most other fields. We have simply absorbed many research issues from other fields as part of the expansive purview of demography. Consciously or unconsciously, we have decided not to erect closure around our field or to form disciplinary departments. This is quite unlike most "new fields" in the recent past. Many newly emerging academic fields, such as ethnic studies, public policy, nursing, women's studies have created schools or departments in order to institutionalize the field and train new scholars. Demography has been, for the most part; content to focus on interdisciplinary research and training centers. In

academia, this means that we rarely have control over academic lines, when faculty retire or move on. Overall, I think we have gained more by remaining as an interdisciplinary field, where we have to compete on the basis of our ideas and research results rather than control over lines. My impression is that demographers are relatively confident that this is a winning strategy. But it does carry certain risks.

The other reason for our reliance on interdisciplinary centers is that the field is too diverse to have coherence. For example, my interests in sociological demography centered on stratification, race and ethnic relations and cities is a very far cry from the formal models of population growth and also from applied demography in family planning and local population estimation. I certainly would not like to have to define the boundaries of demography—they keep expanding.

HODGSON: My one observation is that we are all of a certain generation, and I think we had the identity of being demographers built up in terms of our experience. I'm just curious about today's new people. If we went around to the PAA today and took a look at the people offering sessions, et cetera, how many of them think of themselves primarily in terms of demography, as opposed to a variety of other disciplines?

HIRSCHMAN: Well, we have chosen to do that with the election of PAA presidents who sometimes claim--on the presidential podium—that “I am not a demographer” [laughter] They think that because they do not know how to compute a life table or do not teach demography courses that they are not members of the demographic tribe. I beg to differ. If the membership of the PAA elects someone to be president of the association, they are certainly important figures in our field. This seems to be a good example of the gains to demography by weighing the quality of scientific contributions more importantly than adherence to a core identity

HARDEE: I always call myself a social demographer. Thank you, Charlie. As you were talking about your work on immigration—as you know, I live in Washington, D.C., now, so I was thinking of the intersection between academia and public policy. I was wondering, have you testified on the Hill? Could you come testify on the Hill? And what do you think is the sort of appropriate relationship between academia and public policy? Is it just contributing writing? Is it more of an activist/advocate role? Maybe that’s something you could do in your retirement.

HIRSCHMAN: In the late 1990s, there was a National Academy of Sciences panel on the economic and demographic consequences of immigration to American society. They were primarily economists. Jim Smith was the chair of that committee. A volume came out, *The New Americans*, edited by Jim Smith and Barry Edmonston. It was an important work that had a powerful impact beyond the usual reach of academic research. The work of Ron Lee, in particular, showed that if you use intergenerational accounting, immigrants are a net positive economic benefit to American society. We also came out and showed that there were no measurable consequences of immigrants on the wages and employment opportunities of native workers. Now, that hasn’t stopped the critics of immigration, but I think the results did inform policy thinking and popular understanding.

A few years ago I was appointed to the Committee on Population (CPOP), which is a standing committee of the National Academy of Sciences. One of my priorities on CPOP was to encourage more studies of immigration. Not much happened for a long time, then a couple of years ago everything seemed to click. In fact, there are currently two new NAS panels focused on immigration. One of them is focused on “immigrant integration”-- how well are immigrants doing in American society. And the other is to be an update of the 1997 reports on the economic consequences of immigrants to American society. I was concerned about overlap and

coordination between the two panels, and the net result is that I have been appointed to serve on both panels.

These projects present an opportunity for demographers, and other social scientists to speak beyond the traditional confines of academic research. My feeling is that demographers have a special role to play because we are able to present data to address important issues in the policy sphere. Disconfirming data offer the possibility for people to change their minds. Most intellectuals, policy analysts, and even social scientists are generally reluctant to give up on their pet theories but demographers do that routinely. You can probably go into almost any session at these meetings and hear speakers report that their results have challenged some of the theoretical expectations. I think we need to speak out more frequently on issues for which we have clear evidence.

I wanted to follow up on Karen's last question about the link between demography and public policy. Some years ago, Gavin Jones asked me to write a comment (sort of an op-ed) for his journal, *Asian Population Studies*. This was as the time when Mellon, Hewlett and other foundations were losing interest in population, or at least university-based demographic research and training. Here is what I wrote: [http://faculty.washington.edu/charles/new_PUBS/Reviews and Other Publications/R37.pdf](http://faculty.washington.edu/charles/new_PUBS/Reviews_and_Other_Publications/R37.pdf) It is a bit dated, but I still believe that demography has a solid future as an evidence-based policy-relevant field, even if the glory days of the 1960s and 1970s are not likely to return.

WEEKS: Thank you.

End of interview

Audited and edited by Revan Schendler, January 2015

Reviewed and approved by Charles Hirschman, January 31, 2015.