

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 Douglas S. Massey
PAA President in 1996**

**Interviewed by John R. Weeks, Dennis Hodgson, and Karen Hardee
at the San Diego Bayfront Hilton Hotel, San Diego, California, April 30, 2015**



Dr. Douglas Massey is the Henry G. Bryant Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology at Princeton University in 1978 and then taught at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Chicago, and then back at the University of Pennsylvania before returning to Princeton in 2003.

WEEKS: I'm John Weeks, historian of the Population Association of America and chair of the history committee. And with me today are two members of the committee, Dennis Hodgson and Karen Hardee. We are interviewing Douglas Massey, who is the Henry G. Bryant Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University, and most importantly from our perspective today, past president of the Population Association of America in 1996—19 years ago.

MASSEY: Last century.

WEEKS: Last century. When you were still a baby. We'd like to get a little bit of a sense of how you got into the field of demography, and then talk about some of the many, many important things that you've done in the field. And then also talk to you a bit about the Association itself, and where you see demography heading in the future. Now, you were born in Washington, the state of Washington, grew up there.

MASSEY: Yes.

WEEKS: Went to Western Washington University.

MASSEY: Yes.

WEEKS: And I found, on the occasion of your being elected president of the American Sociological Association, a piece online by Ed Stephan, who is talking about your undergraduate days. He talks about how you came into his office. So, you pick up the story, when you came into his office, about demography.

MASSEY: Well, when I was an undergraduate, I wanted to do something in social science. And I actually started out in psychology and took a whole bunch of psychology courses. But the lab was too far removed from the real world for me. So then I swung 180 degrees and went and started taking anthropology courses. And that was *very* real world. But it was not very

cumulative, in terms of knowledge, because everything was relative. It was the heyday of cultural relativism. And so I got dissatisfied with anthropology. And then I discovered demography, which kind of put it together for me, because it had a set of methods. It had theories. You accumulated knowledge. But it was very real world: birth, death, migration, marriage—things that happened to people.

So I wanted to take a demography course, and I signed up for one. The local demography professor was a guy named Peter Mazur. But he got an NSF grant and then canceled his course. [laughter] So I asked who might be able to give me a reading course in demography. And I forget who told me, maybe Peter told me, “Well, Ed Stephan has had some demography. Maybe he would do it.”

So I show up in his office, and this is 1973. I have long hair down to my shoulders, a red bandanna around my head, probably a plaid shirt, jeans. It was Washington State. And I say, “Excuse me, Professor Stephan.” And he looks up at me kind of brusquely. “I heard that you might be able to give me a reading course in demography. They canceled the one I wanted to take this semester.”

So he looks at me and says, “Read Bogue.” [laughter] And looks down again. And I said, “What?” “Bogue. Donald Bogue, *Principles of Demography*. Read it. When you’ve read it, come back and see me.” And he looks back down again and keeps on writing.

So I back out of the office, go check out Donald Bogue’s *Principles of Demography* from the library, which is like 900 pages—[laughter]

WEEKS: Not something you assign to your students.

MASSEY: —and for the rest of the month I read *Principles of Demography*. Then I came back to Ed Stephan’s office and knocked on the door. He looked up at me like he didn’t really

recognize me. And then I said, “I wanted to take a reading course in demography, and you told me to reading Bogue’s *Principles of Demography*, so I read that. Now what do I do?” And he looks at me and says, “Well, now you know more demography than I do.” And that was it.

[laughter]

HODGSON: I hope you got three credits for that.

MASSEY: I got no credits.

WEEKS: But in truth, you probably didn’t need credit. Because you got a BA magna cum laude in four majors at the same time.

MASSEY: It’s really only three.

WEEKS: Okay. Well, sociology and anthropology combined. But anybody looking at your life and your CV has to ask, How did you do it all? How did you do all of that at the same time?

MASSEY: I just followed my interests and took more courses than I had to, accumulated a lot of credits. I had a minor in chemistry, but they wouldn’t let me have a minor because I had three majors. For a while I was toying with the idea of pre-med. But this was the 70s, and it was really cutthroat to go to medical school, and I didn’t like the assholes that were in my classes. So I ended up going out of pre-med, although I like chemistry. I just kept taking courses. Then I discovered demography and decided that I wanted to go to graduate school in demography. So I stayed a few extra quarters, prolonging my undergraduate experience by about a year, and boned up on math and statistics, computer science, so I would be ready to go to graduate school.

WEEKS: I remember from Ed Stephan’s comment that you took another year. But it wasn’t really like a gap year, like kids in the UK take.

MASSEY: No. I actually remained an undergraduate through the end of the fall quarter of 1974. Officially, I graduated in December of 1974. I had already applied to graduate schools by that point. But just to hang around, I entered the masters' program in social science at Western Washington, and stayed for two more quarters, the winter and the spring, and took more courses. I had already started publishing by then, and so I had already written [my first article](#).

HODGSON: Were you influenced by what was going on, you know, the "population bomb"? Were you at all focused on third-world fertility control?

MASSEY: No. That wasn't me. I was always heterodox. When I got to Princeton I ended up studying segregation and migration. Ansley Coale didn't know what to do with me. He hated migration research.

WEEKS: I didn't realize that.

MASSEY: He also managed to be absent the last lecture of the term when he was scheduled to give the migration lecture. He always passed it off.

WEEKS: Really.

MASSEY: So I got my migration lecture from James Trussell, a noted migration specialist. And it lasted 45 minutes out of a three-hour class. So I was very heterodox.

WEEKS: Well, even Jane Menken is quoted by Ed [Stephan] as saying she didn't know much about what you were doing on your dissertation, either, but she trusted you to be doing it.

MASSEY: I more or less was independent. I did it myself. My dissertation was the first nationwide study of Hispanic patterns of residential segregation, using the 1970 census. That's how old I am.

And it was a different world back then. Simply to do a study of segregation in 30 metropolitan areas, you had to order tapes, like 25 or 30 tapes from the Census Bureau. And

then it would come in a big box and it would go into the mainframe tape rack. Then you would go to the computer and read your cards in at 2:00 in the morning, and wait for the operator to mount your tape. And then, of course, if you made one little mistake on your card—

WEEKS: Fatal error.

MASSEY: —you wouldn't find out until next morning. So it was a long process just to get the data up to a point where I could calculate measures of segregation. And now you can get a low-cost diskette from GeoLytics with census tract information from 1970 to 2010. You could have it in any system you want. The 1980 tract boundaries, the 1990 tract boundaries, the 2010 tract boundaries: they've done it all for you. So it's a different world now.

WEEKS: One of your majors as an undergraduate was Spanish. Had you come into contact with the migrant workers in Washington, or how did that come on your radar screen?

MASSEY: Well, for whatever reason, when I was in third grade, the third-grade teachers in my school decided we should learn Spanish. Now, it wasn't much. It was like, "Me llamo Douglas." "Muchas gracias." That sort of thing. So I got exposed starting in the third grade. And I grew up in Washington State. On the west coast there were Mexicans around. Then in seventh grade, I started taking Spanish classes for real. So I took 7 through 12. And then I went to Spain between high school and college, in one of those summer study programs. And then when I got to Western, I just kept taking Spanish classes so I wouldn't forget what I had learned. I never really wanted to be a romance language major, or really wanted to do anything in Spanish literature, I just took a course every quarter. And if you do that for four years, you end up with a major. [laughter] So that proved to be one of the most useful skills I picked up in my life, learning to speak Spanish reasonably well at a young age. It gave me a foundation in

Spanish that I was able to build on when I later got involved in studying migration from Mexico.

WEEKS: Right. But it wasn't then the motivation to look at Hispanic segregation?

MASSEY: Partly.

WEEKS: Oh, it was partly that?

MASSEY: Because I was interested in Latinos. And they were just starting to make news.

HODGSON: But the census didn't have that Hispanic category yet.

MASSEY: They did in '70.

WEEKS: Spanish surname, right?

MASSEY: No. In 1970 the Census Bureau was sued to include an Hispanic-origin identifier.

And they lost in court, but it came too late to put it on the long form, so they did it on a 5 percent sample. That was the first time there was a Spanish-origin question, the 1970 census, but it was too small to really generate good census tract data. I did use other measures: Spanish surname in the southwest, Puerto Rican birth or origin in the northeast, Cuban birth or origin in Miami. In 1970, Latinos were only 4.7 percent of the U.S. population, and they were isolated in these three regions, basically. So most of the cities I studied, aside from New York and Miami, were in the southwest. Mexican—

WEEKS: So was that then a natural transition to looking at migration from Mexico? Because that's what you were initially especially famous for.

MASSEY: No. I was actually famous for segregation, first.

WEEKS: Okay. All right. We'll clear up the record.

MASSEY: I don't know when I got famous.

WEEKS: You got famous real early out the gate.

MASSEY: My first book was on Mexican immigration. But I had already published a lot on segregation by then. I studied Hispanic segregation. Just for the sake of comparison, I compared patterns of Hispanic segregation to black segregation. And of course, what stood out was the high levels of black segregation, so I got interested in that. Then I wrote grant proposals to do systematic studies of black, white, and Asian segregation using the 1980 census, which was still coming on tapes in those days. And that became the line of work with Nancy Denton that led to *American Apartheid*.

When I finished my Ph.D., I spent a year as a postdoc at Princeton and then another year as a postdoc at Berkeley. And right after I finished my Ph.D., a friend of mine in sociology introduced me to Josh Reichert, an anthropologist who had just come back from a year of field work in Mexico, where he lived in this town in the state of Michoacán where three quarters of the households had somebody who migrated to the United States to earn money and invest at home. It was almost all circular migration, back and forth. So my friend introduced me to Josh, and he showed me a notebook. Each section of the notebook was a family, and each person in the household had his first and last U.S. trip, and where they were, and the wages and everything. And then for the household heads, he had a lot more detailed information. It was all handwritten.

So I got a little money from Princeton—one of the privileges of being at a place like Princeton is money lying around for things—and had it key punched—also a word that dates me—and put it in machine-readable form and began analyzing it. And we published three papers together.

So I published two or three papers with Josh and was convinced that if you'd blended anthropological and survey methods, like basically he did, and did it more systemically than he

had done it as an anthropologist in the field, you could produce some really good information on what had been a clandestine process that was getting to be controversial and nobody knew anything about it. So after we published a few papers, I put together another NIH grant proposal to replicate what he had done in his Ph.D. fieldwork on a larger scale and do ethnographic surveys in four communities in Mexico. And that ultimately became the Mexican Migration Project.

WEEKS: Which is still going on, right?

MASSEY: Still going on. Just got funded for five more years. And Jorge [Durand] and I have written this one so that over the next five years, we fade out and a new team of PIs [principal investigators] fade in: David Lindstrom at Brown University, who is a former student of mine and former manager of the Mexican Migration Project, and his student Silvia Giorguli. She got her Ph.D. at Brown, and she's director of the demographic program at the Colegio de México. So Jorge and I will fade from the scene and they'll take over.

HODGSON: Intergenerational project.

MASSEY: It's been funded continuously since 1987. And the first wave of the fieldwork was 1982. So that's how I got into Mexican migration. I originally wrote the grant proposal thinking Josh Reichert would be the fieldwork guy, because I had background in Spanish, but I had never spent any time in Mexico. I think I had been to Ensenada once or something like that.

This was 1980. Reagan was elected and started putting the screws to social science research. And David Stockman was at OMB [Office of Management and Budget] cutting back on things. I got a borderline priority score and I didn't know whether I was going to be funded or not. Meanwhile, Josh didn't want to wait around for my priority score. So he went off and took a job somewhere. And on the last day of the fiscal year, I think it was 1980-'81 fiscal

year, that would have been September 30th of 1981, Jeff Evans calls me on the phone and said, “We have enough money to fund your project.” And that became the first round of surveys for the Mexican Migration Project.

But there I was with a grant—\$200,000, I think, in those days, which was a lot of money—to do ethnographic surveys of four communities. I had no fieldworker and had never been to Mexico, really. [laughter] So Josh did call around and ask who might be up for working with me, and he connected me with an anthropologist named Guillermo de la Peña, who had just set up a new masters’ anthropology degree at the Colegio de Michoacán. So I called him and talked to him, and he said, “Well, I don’t want to do this, but I have students that would be probably really interested in working with you.” So in April of 1982, I flew down to Mexico and went to the Colegio de Michoacán and met these students—Jorge Durand, Humberto González, and Rafael Alarcón—and arranged to put together a project. Actually, it was when the PAA meetings were in San Diego.

WEEKS: Yeah, that was ’82.

MASSEY: Because I flew to Mexico, and then I flew back to San Diego for the PAA meetings. And I was at Penn then, so I flew back to Philadelphia.

WEEKS: And this is the first time since then that the meetings have been in San Diego.

MASSEY: The circle is completed.

WEEKS: Exactly.

MASSEY: So that was the beginning.

WEEKS: A somewhat circuitous route in many respects, to get to that point.

MASSEY: Yeah. In my experience, success comes when preparation meets chance opportunities. So I have a background in anthropology and Spanish and demography and

sociology. And I meet an anthropologist who just spent time in Mexico studying migration. I was interested in migration, so I jumped in. My Spanish was pretty bad at that point. It was classroom Spanish, mostly, but it gave me the foundation I needed. And I've been working in Mexico 30 years now, so I speak Spanish pretty well. I don't even feel like a foreigner in Mexico at this point, I feel like a local.

HODGSON: And we changed our immigration laws.

MASSEY: Well, they did at that. I'm on sabbatical next year and I want to write two books. One is going to be the 25th anniversary update on *American Apartheid*. And another one is on the political economy of illegal migration. For the past 20, 30 years, watching what happened to Mexican migration and U.S. immigration policy has been like watching a train wreck in slow motion. Because I could see it was a disaster from the start. And I kept trying to tell people, this is going to backfire. You militarize the border, you're going to stop a circular flow that's been going on for decades and they're all going to settle here. You're going to increase the rate of undocumented population growth.

WEEKS: And the rest of us have been quoting you on that for a long time, because you're right, obviously.

MASSEY: Well, I proved to be right. The first inkling that this was happening officially was when the 2000 census came out and Hispanics had already passed Blacks as the largest minority, way before the projections had indicated. And that's because the census Bureau was just assuming the same thing was going on. And the inflow hadn't changed. But what changed was the outflow. And so they were totally blindsided by that.

I've testified before Congress many times, trying to tell them, Look, if you want fewer brown people in this country, less is more when it comes to border enforcement. Because they

want to circulate. They don't want to live here. They mostly want to go home. Some will settle, obviously. But if you harden that border, you're going to cut off the circular flow and you're going to end up with a larger population. But they didn't listen to me.

WEEKS: They should have, shouldn't they? Well, that is funny. Because honestly, and I say this not to flatter you, I say this as a fact. As a person who has written a variety of things in fields related to yours and more generally, you can't talk about migration, nobody can talk about migration without quoting a lot of what you've done. Nor can you talk about segregation without quoting a lot of what you've done.

MASSEY: *American Apartheid* is, I think, considered to be a bit of a classic in its genre. And it changed the terms of the debate about Black poverty and the underclass. I wrote it with Nancy after we had done all the empirical work, basically six or seven years of research on census data to show and study patterns of Black segregation. We wrote it in the early 1990s, because the underclass debate was raging at the time. It was between people like Charles Murray, who said it's our overly generous welfare system that's trapped all these people in poverty, and Bill Wilson, on the other hand, who is saying, it's the structural transformation of the urban economy.

I didn't agree with Charles Murray at all, and I think that he's full of hot air still. I agreed with Bill Wilson that that structural transformation of the economy was an important thing. But nobody was paying any attention to the fact that African Americans were uniquely segregated in the United States and had been for decades. And that segregation itself contributed to what was happening to African Americans. So we wrote *American Apartheid* to make that case, and I think it was successful.

WEEKS: I think it was. And last night I went back and reread your PAA presidential address, “The Age of Extremes.” Nineteen years ago you were prescient about the things that are happening, because what you were talking about, in terms of the concentration of poverty and the increase in crime and violence, basically spoke to what’s happening in Baltimore, it seemed to me.

MASSEY: Yeah. Baltimore. Ferguson.

WEEKS: Exactly.

MASSEY: Because of segregation and the concentrated poverty and deprivation that result from it, many American cities are tinderboxes just waiting for a spark to set off the conflagration. And it could be anything that sets it off. It could be the Bulls winning a championship basketball game. Or it could be another shooting death of a young Black male. You don’t know what’s going to set it off. But the conditions, the frustration, the anger, the lack of hope, are as bad in American’s ghettos now as it was in the 1960s.

WEEKS: Right. The point of your paper was to not just talk about that, but to talk about the concentration of affluence and the separation that we’ve got between the affluent and the poor.

MASSEY: This was a long time before people started talking about the 1 percent.

WEEKS: Precisely. Well before Thomas Piketty and even the Republicans getting on board with the idea that inequality is a bad thing.

MASSEY: I remember going to an Aspen Institute conference, and Abigail Thernstrom was there. This would have been the ’80s. And she was arguing that there was no rise in income inequality, that if you took into account the welfare and transfers, that income inequality went away. Even then, I could see that that was just make-believe.

HARDEE: You said that you've testified before Congress and tried to get your message out, but weren't listened to. With all of your experience, can you think of better ways for research to be actually used in policymaking?

MASSEY: That's a tough one, especially now. I think the U.S. is probably in the most anti-science, anti-intellectual, anti-fact era in all of its history. Logic, facts, information are held in low regard inside the Beltway. And people are very cynical. So I go to the Hill and testify, and then members of Congress posture, and either make up stuff or completely ignore what I've said. And then after the public performance, I'll talk to staff members and they'll say, Well, we know you're right, but we can't deal with the politics. The politics are such that we can't admit these facts.

WEEKS: How frustrating is that?

MASSEY: Some people believe me. When I testified before the House Judiciary Committee some time ago, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren from San Francisco was the chair. Democrats were in control. And before I made my presentation, she gave her speech for five minutes and said everything that I was going to say, basically that I was right and she was articulating a line of political thinking and policy thinking that I was supporting. But then the ranking Republican, Congressman [Steve] King, got up and ignored everything I said, and in so many words said, Take your lying statistics and go home, because here's the truth. He made up stuff right out of thin air about what was happening with Mexican immigration, despite all the data that I brought to bear on it.

The whole purpose of the Mexican Migration Project is to produce high-quality, reliable data on a subject that's very difficult to study using standard methods and make it publicly available to people. The one fundamental principle of the Mexican Migration Project is that all

the data are public, and they are put in the public domain as soon as we can get them cleaned and ready to go. This year, we just put up our 150th survey of communities in Mexico.

WEEKS: Yes. I've used your data. Thank you very much.

MASSEY: Last time I checked, we had around 3600 users around the world—including when people at Homeland Security want to really know what's going on, they use my data. But they don't like me at Homeland Security.

WEEKS: No? Because you have a different view of what they should be doing?

MASSEY: Yeah. I testified before Congress once, right before Michael Chertoff, who was Secretary of Homeland Security at the time. And later a *Washington Post* reporter told me that Chertoff told him that they didn't like me because I had a bad attitude.

WEEKS: Bad attitude? Okay.

MASSEY: Well, I was showing—proving, I think—that massive increase in spending in border enforcement had no effect on the probability of apprehension. And certainly no effect on the probability that anyone was coming to the United States or getting into the United States. And I put all these data up, so if they want to challenge me on that, they're free to do it. But nobody ever has.

HARDEE: It's easier to say you have a bad attitude.

MASSEY: That's right. When I retire, I think maybe I'll start a blog. And I'm going to call it the Bad Attitude Blog.

WEEKS: But thinking about policy now, one of the ways in which you ended that presidential address on “The Age of Extremes”—

MASSEY: I invited everybody to the bar for a drink.

WEEKS: Well, just before that. You were saying that you weren't in a position at that point to suggest what policy ought to be, but that you'd needed to get the dialogue going. Now, 19 years later, do you have a sense of those policies?

MASSEY: I understand it a lot better now, what was driving the rise in inequality. The deregulation and financialization of the U.S. economy is a big driver. That's what separates us from many other countries. You know, Canada is a lot like the United States, but they never decontrolled their banks like we did, and they never set up this speculative casino economy. So when everything blew up in 2008, in Canada nothing happened.

So much of what's happened is that Wall Street has become so powerful. And it's a bipartisan use of power. Chuck Schumer is in the pocket of Wall Street, senator from New York. They basically figured out ever more sophisticated techniques to extract wealth out of the real economy and put it in the pockets of a small number of people in and around New York City. And they did this in the savings and loan crisis. They did it in the dot-com boom. And they really did it in the mortgage meltdown in 2008.

Then they got bailed out—billions. And they were made whole and prosperous again. Meanwhile, all the people they victimized through predatory lending are underwater. In foreclosure. Destitute. It's basically because we have an oligarchy now, where policy is made by the rich and for the rich. They've stacked the deck against everyone else. They've manufactured a political economy where they can't lose. So they screw up, they make really bad bets, they drive the economy into the ground, and they get bailed out. And they're still rich.

And Obama, whom I supported and thought was going to be a progressive president, basically turned his treasury over to Goldman Sachs. The whole AIG bailout really was a bailout of Goldman Sachs. Because AIG was the insurer that insured through credit-default

swaps on all those bad bets that Goldman Sachs had made. So if AIG went under, Goldman Sachs would go under. So they bailed out AIG so AIG could pay off the credit-default swaps for Goldman Sachs, and Goldman Sachs could survive the crisis. And who was in charge? It was people from Goldman Sachs.

HODGSON: That's going to be the second book!

MASSEY: No. That's not my book.

HARDEE: You're slowing down, Doug.

MASSEY: I get that from people like Matt Taibbi and Paul Krugman and Gretchen Morgenson that I read. I've got several other books to write, too. Those were just the two that I'll probably try to get to next.

WEEKS: You said you've got a sabbatical coming up, and you have in mind to write two books?

MASSEY: I've done that before.

WEEKS: Have you? Obviously you've done that before. But I don't know of anybody else except you that has that kind of productivity. And I still don't understand. Do you have more hours in the day than the rest of us?

MASSEY: No, I don't. And I don't work all the time, either.

WEEKS: You don't?

MASSEY: No. I like to have a good time. I have a lot of help. If you look at my CV, 90 percent of the things I've written are coauthored. I rely a lot on students and postdocs to collaborate with me to help me get these things done. Nancy Denton was a postdoc. And Jorge Durand is a colleague. He didn't work for me. He started out working for me, but we both were co-directors of the whole project at this point. He gives me a lot of visibility in the Spanish-speaking world.

We're published jointly. And whenever we publish in Spanish, I write in English and he translates into Spanish. And whenever we publish in English, he writes his parts in Spanish and I translate it into English.

WEEKS: Can we talk just for a minute about the trajectory of your career? Because after Princeton, a postdoc at Berkeley, you went to Penn, then Chicago, back to Penn, and back to Princeton. You actually did complete the circle nicely there. Were there particular events that inspired you to do those things?

MASSEY: All things in my personal life. I met my first wife as a graduate student at Princeton. I got my first job at Penn. She got her first job at University of Illinois at Chicago. And so after seven years of a commuting relationship and marriage, I got a job at University of Chicago. And then she decided she wasn't happy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Penn offered two positions, so we went back to Penn, and I thought that would make her happy. It didn't make her happy, and we ended up getting divorced. Then I was divorced and living in Philadelphia, still at Penn, and I wasn't looking to move anywhere. Princeton had let it be known that if I were interested, they would be interested. But I had a daughter who was growing up in Philly. Her mother had primary custody. But then I married a Princeton professor, and that tipped the scales. I moved to Princeton.

Princeton is the only place I would have moved, because I didn't have to give up anything with my daughter. It's so close to Philadelphia. So I kept my house in Philadelphia and my same visitation schedule. From her point of view, nothing changed. I did the commuting for a few years until she graduated from high school. And I've been at Princeton ever since. And I'm still married to my wife. She's a professor of psychology.

WEEKS: That was one of your majors, yes?

MASSEY: One of my majors. I actually had read a paper by her father, Fiske and Campbell, on multi-trait, multi-method research. It's a classic in psychology. That's her father, my wife's father. He was a professor at Chicago.

WEEKS: Now, thinking about you in your year as president of the PAA. It's 19 years ago. Are there any things that stand out that you had to deal with that year, or that you remember in particular?

MASSEY: We were having some turmoil in the office then. I think we didn't have a stable person. We were moving from relying on American Statistical Association to our own office. It was before we hired Stephanie Dudley. We had an unstable person in the office, and we were in the process of solving that problem. It got solved after my term. I think they hired Stephanie after my term. But I remember grappling with some instability in the office. The person we had in the office at that time wasn't ideal.

WEEKS: I recall that. But Stephanie was a good choice.

MASSEY: Stephanie was a good hire. She was around for 15 or 20 years, 15 years maybe.

WEEKS: She just retired.

MASSEY: She just retired? So it must have been about 15 some-odd years. And now the PAA is much more on a stable basis. It's got a better funding model. It's raised some money. It's got a bit of an endowment. So I think it's in good shape.

WEEKS: Getting started while you were president, right?

MASSEY: Well, I don't know if it got started right then. It was a real transition period for a while, not just during my one year as president. There was about a five-year period where things were kind of unstable. People were charting the way forward.

WEEKS: Thinking about the field more generally, it seems like meeting after meeting we get more submissions to the meetings and more presentations. We keep trying to figure out how to squeeze more people into the meetings. So obviously the field of demography is getting at least more popular. Do you see it going in one particular direction or another?

MASSEY: Demography has expanded. It's always been interdisciplinary, but it's really become interdisciplinary. It's moved well beyond the original classic three fields of fertility, mortality, and migration. It's a much bigger field now than when I was a graduate student. I think there's a whole big area of expansion in research on biosocial processes. And I think demographers are uniquely well-positioned to be at the forefront of that, because we *are* interdisciplinary.

It's becoming increasingly obvious that there are these big interactions between human biology and the social structure in which human beings inevitably live. Everything from epigenetics, gene/environment interactions, to methylation processes to allostatic load to cognitive effects—all these things are on the table now. And demographers are taking the lead and producing the data and doing the interdisciplinary work that needs to be done. Ad [Adolescent] Health was an early pioneer in this, and is continuing to add genetic information and biomarkers to the Adolescent Health Survey. The kids are no longer adolescents at this point, they're moving into middle-age adulthood. But it's a very valuable data set.

Sara McLanahan with the Fragile Families data set is adding a lot of biomarkers, including looking at telomeres, which are the ends of chromosomes, and with stress and aging they wear down. She's already published a couple of papers showing that exposure to very disadvantaged circumstances reduced the length of telomeres in young black men, black boys,

raised in poverty. So I think that's the sort of thing that's really going to have major payoffs in the future. And demography is right there in the middle of it.

WEEKS: And you actually referenced some of those kinds of things in that "Age of Extremes" paper. You were talking about the brain chemistry changes among young people growing up in a violent, crime-prone neighborhood.

MASSEY: I actually did more of that in my presidential address for the American Sociological Association, and have subsequently written some more papers, including a lot in the book that I wrote called *Strangers in a Strange Land*, about humans in an urbanizing world. I actually built the book around my two presidential addresses, worked both into chapters into that.

WEEKS: Yeah. I meant to go back and look at your ASA address, but I ran out of time. It was about emotions, right?

MASSEY: It was about emotions and the importance of emotion, and also neuroscience. I'm trying to bring insights from neuroscience into the awareness of sociologists.

WEEKS: And so you think this brain initiative at NIH is something that demographers need to be involved in or will be involved in?

MASSEY: That seems to be more at the biochemical level than the kind of neural-structural level. See how it develops. So far it's been fairly micro. So I'm not sure. I'm more interested in fMRI data and brain structure, and stuff like that. But inevitably, those things have micro reference at the level of neurons and brain chemistry.

WEEKS: That is obviously the micro-level stuff, but your goal is to connect the micro to the societal-level activity.

MASSEY: The brain, we know, is incredibly plastic and can go in a whole variety of different pathways, depending on the experiences it receives. And what determines the experience that

any brain receives is positioned in a social structure. You're in a family. You're in a neighborhood. You're in a school. You're in a society. And the experiences that are socially structured determine basically who you become in a very real way.

There's a lot of evidence coming out now that sustained exposure to disadvantage in neighborhoods has these powerful effects on allostatic load—you know, overstimulation of your stress response—on cognitive development, on telomere length, all these sorts of things. The work of Pat Sharkey in particular suggests that particularly among African Americans, segregation and neighborhood conditions have become the nexus through which inequality and disadvantage is perpetuated across the generations. And it's largely responsible for the stall in black progress since the civil rights movement.

WEEKS: Getting into the subcultural kind of arguments?

MASSEY: It's all kinds of things. It's cultural. There are cultural elements. But there are also physiological elements. And there are just plain opportunity elements. So it's all wound up in a neighborhood package.

WEEKS: Getting back to the issue of what could we do, let's suppose you actually had a receptive congressional committee that you could talk to. What would you say to them about how to move the country forward out of this morass?

MASSEY: I think that we need more financial regulation. We've basically created a giant casino for rich people to play in, and created a simultaneous moral hazard, because they get bailed out when they screw up. That's an important feature.

You need to do more income redistribution à la Piketty. We're really in a crisis of overproduction where there's not enough demand from the middle class. All the money is concentrated at the top. What do you buy with your second billion dollars? If you get a yacht, it

doesn't produce much in the way of employment and economic growth. So that money has to be redistributed into the middle class so that the middle class will buy things and energize the economy. It amazes me that rich people don't even understand their economic interests.

They're just so ideologically driven. The work my wife does suggests they're just completely out of touch. And I think the work that I'm doing also suggests they're completely out of touch, because it's clear that the more one is isolated among other affluent people, the more out of touch one gets.

WEEKS: Right. So the spatial concentration you've been talking about for a long time is really working negatively.

MASSEY: Yeah. There's evidence to show that as the concentration of affluence in your neighborhood rises, the less people give to charities.

WEEKS: Is that right? Interesting.

MASSEY: Yeah. Poor people actually give more to charity, as a proportion of their income, than rich people. The more that rich people live in rich neighborhoods, the less they give. And just the sense of entitlement among really wealthy people drives me crazy. I almost got myself thrown out of a plane once by taking somebody on.

WEEKS: Do you want to tell us that story?

MASSEY: Not really. [laughter]

HODGSON: Verbally, right? Not physically?

MASSEY: Not physically, no. It's just the sense of entitlement that gets me. And my wife's work, she's a social psychologist. She shows that people filter themselves upward. Nobody tells Donald Trump he's full of shit. Nobody tells him he's an idiot and he's got a bad comb-over. And he lives oblivious to all of this, because he never gets the criticism. It's all filtered.

WEEKS: Maybe John Stewart, but that's about it.

MASSEY: Yeah. But he doesn't pay much attention to John Stewart. It's people around you giving you feedback constantly that governs your behavior. You don't get accurate feedback when you're rich and powerful. It happens to all the presidents over the course of their term as well. They surround themselves with people who are gatekeepers and they don't get feedback.

WEEKS: So now, as we wrap up here, can you tell us what advice you give to your Ph.D. students or even undergraduates that you might be wanting to recruit into the Ph.D. program and postdocs, people who are starting their career and thinking, what do I want my career in demography to be?

MASSEY: Well, I tell them, don't think about your career, think about the work you want to do and follow your interests. If you're doing work that energizes you, that you're passionate about, that you want to find the answers to, do that—because if you try to manage your career and your life and your research to please other people, it usually is self-defeating. If you don't like what you're doing, why do you do it?

Academia is a great place. My first year as an assistant professor, this old professor at Penn, Digby Baltzell, took me aside and said, "Doug, if you're not born rich, the next best thing is being a tenured professor." [laughter] And it's true, because I don't have a boss. Nobody tells me what to do. I do what I want to do. I follow my interests. And people pay me to do things I like to do and go places I want to go. So I think Digby was right. If you try to somehow manufacture a career beforehand, it probably won't work. I didn't sit around thinking, how am I going to build something called the Mexican Migration Project? How am I going to write *American Apartheid*? Those things just emerged organically. I just took one step ahead each time and built up to the point where I could do these things.

WEEKS: Right. And all of it starting back there at Western Washington when somehow or another, demography caught your eye.

MASSEY: Yeah.

HARDEE: It's all due to Don Bogue.

MASSEY: I think maybe I became a demographer in spite of Don Bogue, not because of Don Bogue. [laughter] That wasn't the best read of my entire career. I later got to know Don Bogue, of course. Marta Tienda and I went to the University of Chicago in 1987 together. Don Bogue and Phil Hauser had rival centers at the University of Chicago. And then the economists had a center grant. So there were three demographic centers in Chicago. And when Marta and I went there, we caucused with Bob Michael, who was running the economics one. And we decided we were going to merge them all into a single pop center, because it didn't make any sense. So actually Marta closed down Don Bogue's shop and merged it. The title that remained was Phil Hauser's Pop Study Center. But it didn't make any sense to have rival pop centers at the same institution, so we buried the ghosts.

WEEKS: Right. So Don Bogue needed an editor in more than one sense of the word.

MASSEY: I think so.

WEEKS: Do you guys have anything else that we should be asking?

HODGSON: Maybe one sort of big, general question. In the context of being in demography all these years—you've already told us some things about change in the field itself. You noted that we've moved well beyond the fertility, mortality, and migration. Do you see any challenges for demography, new areas that we ought to be going into that we haven't yet? Or perhaps there is a loss of coherence in the context of a discipline that formerly had been defined by a source

of data, census and vital statistics, and our focus on these three demographic variables. Now we've gone well beyond that. Is there a possibility that we've become too diffuse?

MASSEY: I have a lot of faith in demographers to figure things out as they go along. And if you try to replicate the past, you don't get anywhere. I think as the field broadens and expands, demographers will reconceptualize it and develop new ways of organizing knowledge and thinking about things. So I think in substantive terms, in research terms, in terms of the people in demography, I have a lot of faith.

My biggest worry is that a lot of forward momentum in demographic research has been driven by funding from NIH. And I think NIH is really, really broken at this point. Really broken in terms of its peer-review process. Really broken in terms of its bureaucracy and administration. Really broken in just so many fundamental ways that as a center director and an R01 grant recipient, just immeasurable amounts of time are now devoted to crap that don't have anything to do with the science. In the center, we have two FTEs [full-time employees] now just trying to keep in compliance with PubMed. And it doesn't accomplish anything—doesn't push the science forward, doesn't make it more accessible, nothing. And NIH's computer interfaces are so bad, we devote another FTE just to correcting mistakes from NIH itself. The human-subjects burdens are just becoming immense. They're empowering bureaucrats in universities to look over your shoulder and micromanage your research projects. I've been getting emails asking me, Why are you doing this? Why are you doing that? I'm the PI. It's between me and the grantors. That's the sort of thing that makes you want to retire, not the research.

The bureaucracy of the funding agencies and the bureaucracy of universities is just getting horrible. If you look at the size of the universities, the faculties haven't changed. Look

at the number of administrators earning six-figure salaries: that's mushroomed. And they're just a thorn in my side.

WEEKS: Can I ask you one more substantive question? Then we're out of time. I meant to mention this earlier. When you were talking about what inspired you to get into demography, you were talking about theory. There are a lot of people who complain that demography doesn't have theory. Now, when I read your stuff, I get a sense of theory. What do you think about demographic theory?

MASSEY: Well, demographers historically have been quite close to the data. The biggest theory that classical demography had was demographic transition, which is more of a generalized observation about how you went from high-fertility mortality to low-fertility mortality. But demographic research now is infused by the theories from all the various disciplines that come into demography. And demography mixes them together to create demographic theory. In my work on international migration, I'm constantly blending and contributing to theoretical understanding of international population movements. I'm drawing upon models from economics, from sociology, geography, even cognitive science now, thinking about how people make decisions and think. So that's where the theory comes from.

WEEKS: Good. Is there anything that you want to have down on the record that we forgot to ask?

MASSEY: No. It's a good life in demography. I've had a good time. Enjoyed the pop meetings all these years. And I'm happy to have made a contribution.

WEEKS: Well, I think we've all benefited from your contributions, so we appreciate that very much. Thank you very much for being with us—

MASSEY: No problem.

WEEKS: —and taking time this morning, because we know you're awfully busy, even if you do have twice as many hours in the day as the rest of us.

MASSEY: I don't.

HODGSON: You could have written a book.

MASSEY: At least an article. [laughter]

WEEKS: Okay. Thanks.

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