

# **DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES**

## **Interviews with Presidents of the Population Association of America**

### **Interview with Harriet Presser PAA President in 1989**



This series of interviews with Past PAA Presidents was initiated by Anders Lunde  
(PAA Historian, 1973 to 1982)

And continued by Jean van der Tak (PAA Historian, 1982 to 1994)

And then by John R. Weeks (PAA Historian, 1994 to present)

With the collaboration of the following members of the PAA History Committee:  
David Heer (2004 to 2007), Paul Demeny (2004 to 2012), Dennis Hodgson (2004 to  
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## **HARRIET B. PRESSER**

PAA President in 1989 (No. 52). Interview with Jean van der Tak at the Department of Sociology and Center on Population, Gender, and Social Inequality, University of Maryland, November 15, 1989.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:** Harriet Presser was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1936, and grew up in Miami Beach, Florida. She received a B.A. in sociology from George Washington University in 1959, an M.A. in sociology with a minor in mathematics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1962, and the Ph.D. in sociology from the University of California at Berkeley in 1969. Between getting her degrees, she worked at the Census Bureau, at the Institute of Life Insurance and the Population Council in New York, taught demography at the University of Sussex in England, and spent a year in Puerto Rico doing research for her doctoral dissertation. From 1969 to 1976, she was Assistant and then Associate Professor of Sociomedical Sciences in the School of Public Health and the International Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction at Columbia University and also Associate Chief of the Demography Division (from 1973). She also taught sociology at Rutgers during that time. She has been at the University of Maryland since 1976 as Professor of Sociology and, since 1987, Director of the Center on Population, Gender, and Social Inequality, which she founded. In 1986-87, she was a fellow at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences. She has been a consultant to many government agencies, survey organizations, and other universities and has provided testimony at several Congressional hearings. She is well known for her research and numerous publications on sterilization, the timing of first births and teenage pregnancy, work schedules, women in the labor force, and child care, among other topics. [Dr. Presser died in 2012 in Maryland.]

**VDT:** To begin at the beginning, how and when did you first become interested in demography?

**PRESSER:** Maybe the beginning should be how I got to be interested in a profession, because that goes back a little and helps explain the demography. I had gotten my B.A. at a time that I also separated from my husband.

**VDT:** Were you separated before you went to university or during the time?

**PRESSER:** During the time. I had had a year and a half, or two years of college, got married. My husband was in the Navy. I joined him, we traveled around, and we got to the Pentagon and the Washington area, in Arlington, in 1958. I had just had a child.

**VDT:** Your daughter Sheryl?

**PRESSER:** My lovely daughter Sheryl. I was debating about going back to school, because it was something I had thought about. But I had grown up in the 1950s and the ideal at that time was to get married, have lots of kids, and have your husband support you. Going back to school when I did--in 1958--was actually associated with a shaky marriage. I thought it might improve my marriage by making me more active and happier--but it did not.

**VDT:** You went back to George Washington?

**PRESSER:** Yes, I went there because they had a night school and I could go at night and feel I was not abandoning my daughter to go back to school, which was the ideology at the time also.

**VDT:** You went at night--who looked after her then?

**PRESSER:** My husband did sometimes; he was working for the Navy and had a rotating shift. When he could not, we got a babysitter. Except for one course in French, which I could not take at night, all my courses were at night. GW had really great faculty at night. There was a course, I remember, on social research that was really quite good, in the department of sociology, and there were several other faculty there that had gotten their degrees at Chapel Hill.

I separated from my husband while I was going to school and thought I would stay in the area initially. After graduation, I went to work at the Census Bureau; I was sent there by the university's placement office. That was in 1959, before the census of 1960. In 1960 the census enumeration was still person-to-person rather than by mail. I went to work for Jack Silver in the field methods research branch, not knowing anything about what demography was. I was classified as a statistician, because I had had some statistics in the social sciences and I wanted this job. As a matter of fact, I didn't think I was qualified, but the GW placement office told me the Census Bureau would be flexible if they wanted to hire you by considering the content of all your courses and if there was some logic, mathematics, or statistics, they could classify you as a statistician.

So I met with Jack Silver and it sounded like a really interesting job, which it was. It was to go out in the field with all the packages they had, instructions they created . . . Do you want me to go through all this?

**VDT:** Absolutely. This is obviously where your first interest was roused in rotating shifts and who looks after the child when a lone parent has gone out to school or work. Please go on.

**PRESSER:** So I went out in the field, used the various manuals they had created for the average census-taker, crew leader, etc., for the taking of the 1960 census. They thought I was a good person to do this, since I came in fresh and didn't know the census terminology. They wanted to see if I could follow the instructions as a typical person out in the field that wasn't exposed to Census Bureau terminology, etc. I went out in the Greater Washington area, as a crew leader, saw if I could follow the maps, went out with instructions about being an enumerator. I got really interested in field methodology. They had issues about quality control, determining how many callbacks to make before quitting. I really didn't identify then as being a demographer; that was survey research.

This was in the fall of 1959. Unfortunately, I found I really couldn't afford to work. My husband was not making that much money; we were young and hadn't much assets. It was hard for him to help maintain two residences or to provide adequate support for both me and my daughter if I didn't work. And with my job and the cost of child care--which I was expected to pay--and the fact that I really did feel badly being away from my daughter, who was just a few months old, for the whole day, plus a long commute from Arlington to the Census Bureau, because there was no Beltway then; you had to go into Washington and out.

By the way, one of the most interesting aspects of the job was the commute, because various people from the Census Bureau were discussing the politics of the Bureau en route. That was far more fascinating than any tutorial would have been. We had carpools and the carpool had several interesting people in it that worked in various parts of the Census Bureau, much higher in status in every sense than I, as a lowly GS5.

Speaking of GS5, I had taken that job, rather than as a secretary which I had been in the past, at a lower salary than I could have gotten as a secretary, because I was quite a good secretary. But having gotten my B.A., I didn't want to go back to being a secretary.

I found that working was really difficult. I missed being with my daughter; I wasn't making much money; it was very hard to make ends meet. So I decided to go home, which was Miami Beach,

to my mother, who was separated or divorced at that time. And speaking of work schedules, my mother worked in the daytime and I worked as a hostess in my uncle's restaurant in the evening, so we could alternate child care and, therefore, with the little money I made, along with minimal child support, I could manage to both work and be with my daughter all day.

I found it was not a very satisfying life style--to be living at home with my mother, whom I loved dearly and got along with very well, but I had no friends down there who were in my situation. This was . . . my daughter was born in 1958 and I moved to Florida in 1959, after working briefly at the Census Bureau. Before I had graduated from college, I had been encouraged to go to graduate school by the faculty at GW.

**VDT:** Because you had done well in sociology at GW?

**PRESSER:** Right. Then I got a letter from Richard Stephens at GW, when I was down in Miami Beach and feeling that this was not the way to live the next few years of my life. He asked if I would be interested in being nominated for a Woodrow Wilson award; the notice had come across his desk. That's what got me thinking seriously about graduate school. "Gee, I'd really like to get out of here. If I go back to school, I wouldn't have to work a full day. If I can get support for school, then I would be able to combine taking care of a child and doing something worthwhile for myself."

I was thinking only about a master's degree; a Ph.D. was totally out of my mind then. I don't know if I'd even heard the word before. That's a joke; I just really didn't understand what a Ph.D. was and it seemed like a really long-term commitment that I probably wouldn't be able to make. So I went back for my master's. I had applied and said I was only seeking a master's. Actually, if I had said I was interested in a Ph.D. maybe they would have been more interested.

**VDT:** This was a Woodrow Wilson fellowship for GW?

**PRESSER:** No, I'm talking now about my application to the University of North Carolina. Woodrow Wilson fellowships, if you were awarded one, were offered for any school you chose. I only applied to Chapel Hill because Chapel Hill had a child care center.

**VDT:** I was going to ask what took you to Chapel Hill, and that was it!

**PRESSER:** My former professors at GW suggested it and they had a child care center. It probably was one of the first universities with a child care center on campus. What was interesting about it was I believe I was the only unmarried mother with a child that was in graduate school at that time. I had to live in family housing with a child; they wouldn't let you live in single housing because you had a child. I knew almost all the other people there and I was the only single mother. And at the child care center, I believe I was the only mother that was putting her kid into child care in order to go to school. The center was there for the students but typically it was that the mother was working so her husband could go to school and that was the main rationale for providing child care to students--male students who were fathers. They also used the center to do research on children and it was tied in with the university. It is now one of the leading child care centers at a university. I think it had been formed not too many years before I arrived in 1960.

Anyway, that was a critical consideration in choosing Chapel Hill. I received child support of \$40 a month and child care cost \$36 a month.

**VDT:** They gave you \$40 a month with your fellowship?

**PRESSER:** No. This was child support from my husband--with no alimony. As I said, we had no

savings to speak of, either of us. On the other hand, by now he had a good job and it wasn't very generous.

So I saw graduate school--with the assistantship--as a way of managing my life. I went to Chapel Hill. I did not get the Woodrow Wilson award, but it had started me thinking along these lines, and I had gotten a very positive letter from the department saying, "We can't promise you an assistantship, but it is very likely that if you come up you will get one." I had maybe three or four hundred dollars in my bank account when I left for Chapel Hill.

When I arrived, I was not well received by the chair of the department. I don't mind saying his name--Charlie Bowerman; he was a family sociologist. He reacted very negatively to the fact that I had a child, was divorced, and wanted to be a graduate student. In those days, one was very explicit in expressing such views; it wasn't considered wrong to be prejudiced in this way. He told me that I was a bad risk, that the letter they had sent me was a form letter and I really shouldn't have interpreted it so positively. He didn't think there was any chance for support from the department.

**VDT:** Support in the department?

**PRESSER:** Financial support--any research or teaching assistantship. He sent me to apply for secretarial jobs on campus. That meant I could not get my tuition waived, which was extremely important to me because I was an out-of-state student and the amount was substantial for me.

I went around to various faculty members and Richard Simpson, who was then an assistant professor, now a leading sociologist, gave me work that I could do at home, coding occupations. I also managed to get a half-time teaching assistantship--which waived my tuition--for Harry Crockett, who was teaching marriage and the family. The job was just grading papers. It was only 10 hours a week rather than 20 and paid \$900 a year, rather than \$1,800, but it did waive my tuition. I did that on top of doing coding for Richard Simpson. I don't know if he had a grant then; who knows where the money came from.

**VDT:** Some of which you could do at home, when you were there with Sheryl?

**PRESSER:** Right. In those days also, even though the child care center was a full-time center, the ideology was such that it was generally considered a very negative thing to put your kid in a center so you, the mother, could go to school. It was better if you did it so that your husband could go to school. So I used to pick her up early and take her with me, feeling she was better that way.

**VDT:** Meaning before 5 o'clock, before closing hour?

**PRESSER:** Oh yes--much before. I'd take her to the library with me, tell her to be quiet, feeling that was somehow better than being in a well-organized child care center. I took her with me to the data lab. We had those old calculators where the numbers roll around and, on call, she would push the buttons; she would do the calculations for my research with me. Even though I had access to a full-time child care center, I felt very guilty about her being there--at ages two through four--and probably put her through more than she should have been put through, having her tag along with me at various places that were not fun for her. But we got through all that.

Then, while I was doing all this juggling with two jobs, I had a note on my desk to see Dan Price. I don't know if he said in the note or I had determined from others why he wanted to see me, but I learned he was looking for a research assistant and this would be full-time; it would be the full \$1,800. The money was very appealing, so I went around and asked what does he do. I knew of him because his office was in the sociology building. He was a demographer but I really didn't know what demography was all about. I'd picked up the word at the Census Bureau, but it was really hard to know

what it was. So I went to the dictionary--as I understand others have done; at least one other past PAA president--and looked up the word, and it still didn't tell me much. I wanted very much to say that I was interested in demography. I was interested in the money.

**VDT:** You were not interested in demography per se?

**PRESSER:** I didn't know if I was interested or not. And I teased Dan Price afterward, because he never did ask if I was interested in demography and I was so relieved. [Laughter] But he offered me the job and that was very significant for the rest of my career. So that's the answer to your question, how I got into demography.

**VDT:** Okay! And you did the master's in two years, at North Carolina. Did you have a thesis?

**PRESSER:** I had a master's thesis. What I did was work on a topic that became part of Dan Price's 1960 census monograph on blacks [Changing Characteristics of the Negro Population, 1969].

**VDT:** He was working on it already in 1961 or 62? How did he get the data so fast?

**PRESSER:** I don't know. My thesis covered the period 1920 to 1950 and he added the 1960 data later. I examined occupational trends for blacks and whites from 1920 to 1950, using census data. I learned then how you could make age cohorts over time with census data. I was working with published census volumes, not with tapes or anything modern like that, spending a lot of time in the library. That's when I took my daughter with me, going through the volumes there and copying lots of figures from them. A lot of it was manual copying--no xeroxing even!

**VDT:** And that became a chapter in his census monograph?

**PRESSER:** Yes. He updated the figures and he didn't use it verbatim. He used the data, but it was not a chapter that I had authored in the monograph. I mean, I didn't think of this possibility at the time, nor do I think he did. I probably could have done something to publish my thesis, but I wasn't thinking along the publication track at that time.

It was very interesting to work with him. He's a wonderful person to work with. He always had his door open; you could go in for any reason. I never realized how unusual that was. Actually, graduate education at Chapel Hill was terrific that way; most faculty were very open and accessible. I never realized how fortunate I was in that regard until I went to Berkeley many years later. It was very nice for demography students working with Kingsley Davis, but students in general complained often about inaccessible faculty. If I had come to Berkeley never having been to Chapel Hill and had my first indoctrination into graduate school this way, I think it would have been a very cold first experience.

**VDT:** North Carolina had this caring approach?

**PRESSER:** That's right. The department [of sociology] was all in one building. There were receptions, various functions with students. We still called all our faculty by last names, Dr. So-and-so. Years after my Ph.D., I couldn't call Dan Price "Dan" without difficulty. There was no mixing between faculty and students at each other's homes or anything like that, which is more common now; it certainly is here at Maryland, we have a lot of social mixing. But relative to Berkeley at that period, Chapel Hill was a very warm, nice place to be as a student.

And it was politically active. There was a lot going on then; there were the sit-ins in the South.

When I was there, they started picketing the two movie theaters in the town, the only two movie theaters, because the owners would not allow blacks to come in.

**VDT:** And you were interested in that?

**PRESSER:** That was my first exposure to such issues, to political action of that kind--blacks. By the way, I mentioned that my master's thesis was on black occupational mobility as compared to whites. All my comparisons were black males relative to white males and black females relative white females. It never occurred to me then to study females in relation to males. Nor did it occur to anyone else at that time, I think, which is interesting. I had all that data on both sexes and we never thought about studying males versus females; it was always whites versus blacks within gender.

**VDT:** Well, perhaps it was a non-issue then. Black and white was enough to grapple with at that time. Of course, this was before Chapel Hill got into population in a big way. The Carolina Population Center and so on came in the mid-1960s. But obviously, the seeds of demography were there, with people like Dan Price.

**PRESSER:** Yes. And they made it very appealing for me to stay. Although the beginning time was difficult--my first few weeks in getting established with an assistantship--when I said I wanted to leave after my master's, they made some very generous offers beyond what they do normally for students, offering me a research associate position at the Institute for Social Research, that would have paid more money than a student assistantship. Even Dr. Bowerman tried to get me to stay, thinking I was leaving because of how I was initially treated, which was not so--I would never have cut off my nose to spite my face. I think I thought I had come for my master's, I had gotten my master's. I was very young--only in my mid-twenties, with a child--and my high school friends were all in the big city and I wanted to go to New York.

**VDT:** So that's why you went to the Life Insurance Institute?

**PRESSER:** Dan Price, again being very instrumental, set up some interviews for me for jobs, with my master's degree. One was at the Russell Sage Foundation. It was really the job I wanted at that time. However, they were paying only \$6,000 a year and there was no way I could live there and pay child care costs, which were much greater in New York than in Chapel Hill, and my child support remained \$40 a month. The Institute of Life Insurance was \$7,500, I remember. It's interesting that I remember these figures; they were so important to me at the time.

**VDT:** Of course.

**PRESSER:** Survival. So I went to work at the Institute of Life Insurance. They had been doing summer workshops for teachers, educating them on family finance. The intent was that as they got more sophisticated with family finance, they'd get more sophisticated with insurance. This would carry over into the curriculum and, therefore, the Institute of Life Insurance, which is a trade association for all life insurance companies, would be having an impact in making both teachers and, more importantly, students more aware of the importance of life insurance. They'd been running this program for years, spending millions of dollars, and they had never evaluated it. So I was asked to do a national evaluation--which was terrific for a person with just a master's degree--on the impact of the family finance workshops that they had in the summer. And who was my boss?--Al Hermalin! [He became the 56th PAA President in 1993.]

**VDT:** Interesting!

**PRESSER:** Al Hermalin had only a master's degree then; he was a statistician. He was an associate director in the statistics division of the Institute of Life Insurance. He was a fantastic boss.

I had completed the field work for the survey and had worked there close to a year when the sociology meetings [American Sociological Association] were being held in Los Angeles. The Institute of Life Insurance was getting interested in funding some sociologists to do work on the family, seeing that as part of their agenda to develop social science research. Al may have had an important influence on that. Since I was going to the meeting, I was asked if I would talk to people like Reuben Hill, whom I met for the first time, and others whose research the Institute was funding, or thinking of funding.

So I went to Los Angeles and happened to go up after to San Francisco, for the first time in my life. Until this point I had only traveled on the East coast in the United States. I absolutely fell in love, not only with San Francisco but the Bay area. And I thought if I ever go back to school, which I had been thinking I might do at some point after my daughter was of school age, this is where I want to go. So I came back to New York after the meeting and wrote to Dan Price in Chapel Hill and asked, "Do you know anything about sociology at Berkeley?"

Well, Dan Price, unknown to me, was at the Center for Advanced Studies [in Behavioral Sciences] in Palo Alto, at Stanford. My letter got forwarded. He contacted Kingsley Davis and I either got a letter or a phone call offering me an opportunity to come right away. It was already September or October, so this meant for the January semester, the next semester. Judith Blake was at the School of Public Health at Berkeley when Dan contacted Kingsley Davis and apparently Judith and Kingsley had talked about Dan's call. It turned out that Dr. Yerushalmy--he was a very distinguished biostatistician in the School of Public Health; he's dead now--needed an assistant right away.

When I arrived in January, I had an assistantship in the School of Public Health even though I was a sociology student, because while I was at Chapel Hill I took a minor in mathematics. I did that because of the Census Bureau. When I worked there and they heard that I had never had calculus, my boss Jack Silver said, "You haven't been educated without calculus." So I took undergraduate calculus as a graduate student and decided to take a minor in mathematics at the graduate school. Mathematics at Chapel Hill was a very hard department to take a minor in, especially as a sociology major. I sweated that one out, but somehow made it. And when Yerushalmy saw I had a mathematics minor, he offered me this assistantship. I could be either a teaching assistant or a research assistant. I took the teaching assistantship because I thought the hours of work would be more clearly defined, which was important because of having a daughter and other responsibilities. I think it was the right choice. With a research assistantship, I know now, it's very hard to end work for the day. Yerushalmy was a wonderful man.

**VDT:** You went to Berkeley in January of 1964? You were just two years at the Institute of Life Insurance?

**PRESSER:** A year and a half, actually.

**VDT:** You took that job that was available right then?

**PRESSER:** Yes. I was really writing Dan about the following year, September 1964, but I went earlier. My daughter was of kindergarten age, so child care to go to school meant kindergarten with an occasional babysitter after kindergarten, which was only half day. This way I could financially make it. This time I came with money being promised before I got there.

I worked for Yerushalmy one semester and then Kingsley Davis offered me . . .



**VDT:** You were teaching . . .

**PRESSER:** Biostatistics. I didn't have my own class; I was an assistant. I did the labs for Dr. Yerushalmy's class. At the end of that semester, Kingsley Davis offered me the departmental Population Council fellowship. This was a fellowship given to the departments which in turn decided who would receive it. You didn't have to apply to the Pop Council as a student, which was a great advantage. If you look at my CV, you'll see I had a Council fellowship for three years, which is generally not the case; you can only get a second-year renewal. But the first year didn't count, as far as the Council was concerned.

An interesting thing about Pop Council fellowships . . . I did an evaluation of the fellowship program some years ago and noted, which people had forgotten, that when the fellowships were initially given in the 1960s, if you were a man and had a child or a wife, you could get additional support for them as a dependent. If you were a female, even if you were quote "head of household," you could not get extra money for a dependent child. I was happy to be told that they don't do that anymore.

**VDT:** Even though there were obviously some women like yourself who had a child?

**PRESSER:** A woman like myself was so happy to get a fellowship she would never complain about this. I felt it was unfair, but I would never write to complain because I'd fear losing the fellowship.

**VDT:** That's an interesting side note. I've interviewed Dudley Kirk and he's so proud of the Pop Council fellowships, which he nurtured along. I thought very few of them, if any, went to Americans. I thought you had to be from an LDC or Paul Demeny, who was in a special situation. But you were an exception?

**PRESSER:** There were a few other Americans during the time I had the fellowship. I remember because we had an annual meeting in Washington and we had a picture taken and there were mostly developing country people but there were a few Americans in the picture. You'll be interviewing Larry Bumpass next year probably [PAA president in 1990]; he had a fellowship at the time I did.

**VDT:** Was he at Berkeley then?

**PRESSER:** No.

**VDT:** I was going to ask you about Larry later. Besides being successor presidents in PAA, you wrote some papers together.

**PRESSER:** That's a different track; that came much later.

**VDT:** What was the atmosphere like at Berkeley at that time? I've interviewed Ron Lee and he explained that you and Ruth Dixon and others were in the department of sociology but you were taking some courses in the Graduate Group in Demography, and of course the connection was there because of Kingsley Davis.

**PRESSER:** It wasn't called the Graduate Group in Demography at the time.

**VDT:** That's true; I take that back. [Group in Demography.]

**PRESSER:** What it was, we took courses from Kingsley Davis and some students like Ron Lee were not in sociology. This is also related to my subsequently going to England. David Eversley, the British economic demographer, was visiting Berkeley one year and what he did, which was very good for all the students, was invite us regularly for gatherings at his home, which other faculty did not do. Berkeley was not a place for informal mixing between faculty and students in general, although demography was an exception. We had IPUR [International Population and Urban Research], our own research center, and that facilitated students getting to know each other pretty well. Kingsley let me have a desk there; even though I was on a Pop Council fellowship and not doing research for him, I was allowed to have a desk in the institute where all the demographers were. So demography was one of the few sub-areas in sociology where students got to know each other quite well. The student body was very large in sociology and it was hard to be in touch with faculty unless you were in a situation as we were where the faculty were in the same physical place. Faculty came to the office and shut their doors in the main sociology department, generally, so you typically didn't see faculty unless you were in their class.

When David Eversley came, he organized a regular seminar series and had all the people interested in demography, from whatever discipline, come to his home regularly for this series. And Sheila Johansson--her maiden name was Ryan; she wasn't married then--was going off to England to do her dissertation. At that time I was going off to Puerto Rico, but soon after, when I was in Puerto Rico, I got a letter from David Eversley, who had returned to England. I had earlier taken his course on economic demography, or something like that, taught in the economics department at Berkeley; it had a very historical perspective, a very different kind of course. I just audited it. I had also broken my leg skiing, so I had this big full leg cast on and David Eversley told me once he couldn't help but notice me every class, hobbling in; I had three months with a full leg cast. He knew me first from this class and he also knew me from the seminar that he ran at his home. He wrote me from England after he returned, saying that Kingsley Davis had indicated that I was close to getting my Ph.D. and would I be interested in a position at the University of Sussex. It was a new university and they had just created this position in demography, lecturer in demography, which is a tenured position; assistant lecturer is the lower level. This sounded interesting to me, although I indicated that I didn't want to make a permanent commitment, but I would be interested on a temporary basis. He urged me to take the permanent job and leave it after a year if I wanted to, because they did not want to create the job as a temporary job.

**VDT:** Let's backtrack a bit. You keep anticipating my questions. Going to Puerto Rico was, of course, at Kingsley's suggestion. Kingsley had been there in 1940, one of his first demographic excursions, he told me. What was the appeal of Puerto Rico?

**PRESSER:** I don't think it was appeal. I was scared, very scared. I had a young child; she was only six years old at the time and she'd been moving around a lot. I was very reluctant to do that. But on the appeal side, I had been doing class papers on Puerto Rico as a consequence of Kingsley Davis.

**VDT:** Kingsley had the connection still with Puerto Rico?

**PRESSER:** He had given me the name of Jose Janer, an older demographer, close to retirement. I was going down there to study what was happening to sterilization in Puerto Rico. We had no idea what data were available. Kingsley thought I might find a hospital that was doing sterilizations and do sort of an in-depth analysis of a particular hospital. The Pop Council funded me to go; they gave me extra money for this. However, when I got there, it was so expensive that I wrote Dudley Kirk telling him I had to put my daughter in private school because she couldn't go to the Spanish-speaking public

school; the housing was far more expensive in San Juan than it was in Berkeley. I itemized my expenses, asking for \$50 a month more, and Dudley sent me \$100 a month. I never forgot that--it was the nicest gesture that had been made to me as a student, financially. It was really tough making ends meet.

At any rate, Jose Janer told me about this national island-wide survey that was recently completed, the 1965 round of the Master Sample Survey. They had been doing this survey regularly to measure health conditions on the island but they had asked about sterilization only in 1965, and he suggested I use that as a data set. That sounded great and I got access to the data tape. After the Department of Health closed for the day, they would let me use their sorting machines for the IBM cards. I started doing some analysis of the data this way and found that a third of women in Puerto Rico were sterilized. I couldn't believe it; it was really a surprise.

**VDT:** It turned out to be such an interesting dissertation, which was published in Kingsley's series of population monographs from IPUR, in 1973 [Sterilization and Fertility Decline in Puerto Rico, Population Monograph No. 13, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1973]. He's very proud of those and they are still in every population library. Those orange monographs were very important and particularly yours. Was there any fuss made at the time about the fact that one-third of the women in Puerto Rico had been sterilized by the mid-1960s? Any media coverage, anything like that?

**PRESSER:** No, I never thought about publicizing it. I'm much more aware of the potential use of the media now than I was then. I was just doing my work. As a matter of fact, I was writing to Kingsley Davis and I was collecting all kinds of data because I didn't think what I had was enough, this Master Sample Survey. I was going to family planning clinics, collecting data on male vasectomies. I didn't know, as most graduate students don't know, when enough is enough for a dissertation. You don't know until you really get down to the nitty-gritty of writing it. Kingsley very appropriately told me to interview various people around the island, to make use of the fact that I was down there, so I interviewed hospital administrators all over the island about sterilization. One chapter of the book was on that.

But for the most part while I was down there, I didn't have a good sense of how significant the overall finding was. I wrote to Kingsley from Puerto Rico and the response was, like, "Keep up the good work," but I didn't know if he thought it was really good or not. When I came back, I remember complaining to him that I didn't get much feedback while I was down there and he said, "I thought you were doing great, so you didn't need it."

So I came back to Berkeley in the spring. By the way, the time I was at Berkeley--which we aren't talking about because it's not really relevant to demography per se--was the time that the free speech movement began.

**VDT:** That's right. Did you miss out on the student riots?

**PRESSER:** I missed out because I had broken my leg. When I broke my leg, that night I went into the university hospital. I had gone skiing for the first time, with skilled skiers; they really should not have let me go along with them on the slopes. I must say I was responsible, because I wanted to go with them. I had rented skis, they weren't that good, and the ski didn't release when it should. I was taken back from Tahoe to Berkeley to the campus hospital and was in there when--I think the next day or the day after were the student riots on campus, the taking over of Sproul Hall. That was in November 1964, before Puerto Rico. I was in the hospital when all these students who were hurt by the police were coming in.

**VDT:** The real Berkeley riots, which really led off the student riots, the campus movement of the whole 1960s.

**PRESSER:** Right. It was a very exciting time to be there. Although, because of having so many constraints on my time--I either went to school or I had to take care of my daughter; I really couldn't afford to have babysitters and I didn't psychologically feel it was appropriate to use a babysitter so I could sit in the coffee shop and talk about the student movement. So there were constraints on my time. I think I would have been politically more active; I was certainly politically very interested in what was going on. That dominated student conversation and whatever; it was a very exciting time.

**VDT:** When you came back from Puerto Rico, there was still unrest but then you left immediately?

**PRESSER:** Yes. I came back in the spring, worked very hard on my dissertation, did as much as I could, but I didn't finish it then. I finished it actually when I came to the Pop Council [after Sussex]. I was teaching at Sussex full-time after Berkeley, so there was not that much time to work on it; I had hoped to finish it there.

**VDT:** In the book, Sterilization and Fertility Decline in Puerto Rico, you give credit to people who typed it and so on at Sussex, so obviously it was still on the go then.

**PRESSER:** Right, the writing.

**VDT:** You spent the year in Sussex [1966-67]. Why did you decide to leave? You went with the idea that it would be temporary?

**PRESSER:** I was a little lonely. If it had been London it would have been different, I think it would have been more exciting, I always liked big cities. That's one reason I left Chapel Hill, when I was a student; it wasn't a big city. I felt like an outsider as an American. I remember the assassination of Martin Luther King while I was there . . .

**VDT:** You mean they singled you out as an American because of that?

**PRESSER:** No, not because of that. But I felt like things were happening in the States; I was a foreigner in England. You feel marginal; I think everyone really does, most people who live in other countries, at least in the first few years. Also, they told me it was only an hour to London from Sussex, but they didn't tell me that the trains don't come back after ten o'clock at night, so if I ever went to London I'd have to stay overnight and I'd have to either take my daughter with me if I would spend an evening in London and get a sitter there, which was difficult, or hire someone to stay with her overnight in Sussex. It was not an easy place to be as a single person.

I lived in a very quaint village, called Piddinghoe; I think it's mentioned in a Kipling poem. It was really idyllic; I lived in Church Cottage, which was a renovated 18th century cottage. The owner liked to rent it to academics who would use it during the academic year and release it in the summer so they could get high rents from the summer tourists.

It was really a very good year and I felt that a second year wouldn't have the advantages that a first year had. I went there because I had never been abroad--California and Puerto Rico were my first big ventures--and had never been to Europe, and thought I would never have a chance again in my lifetime to go. That was my perspective at the time. And they would pay my fare and my daughter's fare and it was an exciting opportunity. But I never really thought of it as long-term. The question was should I stay two years or one; that was really the question.

When it got to be spring and I was thinking about coming back, I wrote to Dudley Kirk. He had interviewed me in Berkeley for my Population Council fellowship after the one-year fellowship I had from the department. He knew me from the interview and I later received a letter from him, also when I was in Puerto Rico, asking if I was interested in a job at the Population Council. By the way, I had also gotten an offer at the University of Texas at Austin, because that was where Dan Price and some of my fellow students from Chapel Hill now were--on the faculty at Texas. So there were choices for me. Even though the market in general for women was not that great, I think I had been thinking I had some good opportunities. Maybe the whole job market was better then than now, I don't know, but I didn't perceive getting my first job as a Ph.D. as difficult.

**VDT:** And no question of discrimination because you were a woman?

**PRESSER:** Well, there were little things. Like I was not interested in a job at Brown. However, Cal Goldscheider, who had come to Berkeley from Brown . . .

**VDT:** He was on your dissertation committee, I noticed.

**PRESSER:** Right. He came on late because he had come to Berkeley while I was in Puerto Rico, but I put him on my dissertation committee when I came back, since Bill Petersen had left. He said, "You really should apply to Brown because they are looking for someone." I said, "I don't know if I want to live in Providence." As I mentioned, I like big cities. But I applied anyway, really to satisfy him. Then I remember wondering why I never heard from them and he called them up and they said--he told me this; that was the first time I had heard this explicitly--he said he didn't understand why they felt this way and he was not sympathetic to this, but, he said, "They don't want to hire a single woman."

**VDT:** A single woman? You mean if you had been married that would have been okay?

**PRESSER:** Well, then I said, "You're damned if you do and damned if you don't." Because if you're married, they'll say you're more interested in your family than a career. Had I not had other opportunities, if I'd had to search more actively for a job, maybe I would have heard this more; I'm sure I would have. Even when I came back to the Pop Council or when I went to England, I never searched for alternatives.

I decided I was coming back to New York; I wanted to come back to New York. I asked the Pop Council if they were still interested. Parker Mauldin, whom I didn't know at the time, wrote back and said, "Yes, we are and this is what we can offer." And I took it, because I couldn't search for other jobs in New York while I was in Sussex, and I couldn't afford to come earlier and look things over. I took the job at the Population Council.

**VDT:** It was mainly to get yourself back to New York?

**PRESSER:** And it seemed like an interesting job.

**VDT:** And what was that job?

**PRESSER:** Well, accepting the job at a distance and without an interview, I wasn't sure what it was. I was the first Ph.D. female they'd had, at least in the New York City office; I don't know what their field operations were like. And Paul Williams was the first black, a black demographer with a Ph.D. from Chicago. We had very similar careers. We had worked professionally between our master's and Ph.D.s; we had some teaching experience, he at Vanderbilt just before he had come to the Council.

We joked about the fact that he made \$500 a month more than I did. I learned an interesting lesson from this. Why did he make \$500 more? When he had gotten the job offer, he asked for a higher amount. It never occurred to me to ask for more than I was being offered. That was an interesting lesson that was very useful for the future. We had quite an experience at the Council, he and I; we compared notes often about whether being a black or a female Ph.D. there was worse, and the pros and cons of each. You have to remember--what year was this?

**VDT:** This was 1968-69, just before you went to Columbia.

**PRESSER:** Right. I came in September 1968, finished my dissertation on Puerto Rico within weeks of returning. I had the last chapter to do when I came back. I think most of the time completing it was spent typing; I was doing the final typing myself. We didn't have the word processor; there was lots of retyping and the tables. I had to get the manuscript into final form myself.

I also had an agreement with the Council that if I accepted their full-time research job I could also do part-time teaching elsewhere. Livingston College had just opened and they approached me.

**VDT:** I don't know that. That's in New York?

**PRESSER:** No, it's part of Rutgers University. It was a campus that was starting with a special interest in minorities, both Puerto Ricans and blacks. It was near New Brunswick [New Jersey, site of Rutgers]; it still exists. It was a very experimental school when it opened. They had very few regulations; they had girls living with their babies in dorms. It was quite an interesting time.

Irving Horowitz was the chair, a political sociologist, and I think he saw the advantage to having part-time faculty, which would not cost much and would mean having more faculty listed than they otherwise could afford as a brand-new department. So he made a nice offer which was more than was usually paid for part-time teaching and I was expected to be on campus one day a week. I mentioned that to Parker and he said, "Why go all the way out to Livingston? Columbia University is looking for someone to teach on a part-time basis." Well, I went to talk to them, at Columbia, and they made me an offer to come full-time. Parker later said he could have kicked himself, because he had told me about this opportunity.

So I accepted the Rutgers job part-time. I asked them at Columbia if this was acceptable to them and they said, fine. So I taught full-time at Columbia, which was mostly a research position, and part-time at Rutgers.

**VDT:** After the Pop Council, which only lasted a year, you decided you wanted to get back into the academic field?

**PRESSER:** Yes. It wasn't too pleasant as a female at the Council then. You were not allowed to travel as a female, when everybody else was traveling--the men. I was told it was not good for their international image, that women wouldn't be as well received as men. The head of the AID equivalent from Sweden would come to the Pop Council and she was a female, but that was what I was told.

There were a lot of disturbing things like that. I worked on a worldwide sterilization report ["Voluntary Sterilization: A World View," Report on Population/Family Planning, July 1970]. I could see why I was asked to do it, because I had done work on sterilization in Puerto Rico, but it was really reviewing and integrating a lot of literature. I was told by Joe Speidel and others that it was extremely important to their work. He regards it as my most important work, although I would never regard it as such, but it had some impact on changing attitudes more positively toward sterilization as a birth control method. Joe Speidel was then at AID and he found it useful. But I'm too much of a researcher to really want to do this type of work. I wanted to do my own research more. And it was clear that at

the Council that was not something I would be allowed to do. And I wouldn't be allowed to travel.

Then one day, there was a memo in my in-box stating that there was a reorganization of the staff; titles would be changed. There were three women then on the professional staff: Emily Moore, who had a master's degree; Dorothy Nortman, who had a master's degree; and myself, who had a Ph.D. The three women were all made research associates and all the men were made staff associates. There was no explanation given for the difference in titles. There was Bill Seltzer, with his B.A. at the time, with far less experience than he obviously has now at the UN, he was changed from a research to a staff associate. There were other people--even Parker Mauldin has only a master's degree.

**VDT:** Has a master's only?

**PRESSER:** Parker has no Ph.D. It clearly wasn't the degree that was the reason. So I wanted to know why my title had been changed from staff associate to research associate.

**VDT:** Oh, you had been called a staff associate?

**PRESSER:** Yes, that was initially my title. But then the men who were called research associates were made staff associates and I as a female was made a research associate and the only ones who were left alone as research associates were Emily Moore and Dorothy Nortman.

I couldn't understand this and went around and talked with my colleagues, with whom I got along very well. There were people like Gavin Jones, who is now in Australia. There were lots of new people that were being hired around then. I liked my colleagues and there was no antagonism among us. I just say that the atmosphere at the Council was such that if you were a woman, certain policies were a little repressive. There was a whole fuss about wearing pantsuits. They tried to make a regulation that women were not allowed to wear pantsuits, which was the style then. To me at the time this was less serious than this issue about titles.

I had gotten this memo on titles just before the PAA meetings were to be held in Atlantic City [April 1969]. I couldn't believe the memo, so I went to see Parker and he was at the meetings already. I didn't want to bump into Parker at the meetings and bring this up because I knew that wasn't the place to bring up such an issue. So I decided to write a memo to Parker about this. I stated that given my education and years of experience relative to other professionals in the division, the criteria they had used to change the titles were unclear. All I could think of were two things: one, that they were dissatisfied with my performance and therefore were demoting me, in which case I resign, and, second, that it was sex discrimination, that they wanted all women to be research associates and men staff associates, in which case I resign. Then I said I hoped there was another reason that I was unaware of, and I was sorry that I couldn't speak to him--Parker--because he wasn't there. I left the memo on his desk and also copied it to David Sills, who was associate director.

**VDT:** Parker was your boss?

**PRESSER:** Yes, he was the director of the demography division. David Sills was the associate director. I had left a copy on his desk, not knowing that he had not left yet. He came into my office later and said, "I don't understand this either. Don't make any decision yet and we'll talk about it when you come back from the meetings." I was going to the PAA meetings the next day.

We had a staff meeting afterwards in which Parker said someone was unhappy about the title changes, not mentioning my name, but everybody knew it was me because I had talked to them all about this. A lot of people knew about the change in my title prior to the memo and said they hadn't told me because they knew I'd be upset. Well, I don't know what that resolved, but they didn't want to be the bearer of bad news. So when we had the staff meeting, I asked what the criteria were for the

different job titles and nobody could come up with criteria that weren't gender-based. So they made everybody staff associates as a consequence.

I remember Dorothy Nortman thanking me afterwards. She felt held back. She had joined the Council prior to Parker. The title of staff associate was a way of upgrading her, rightly so, because she was certainly far more productive than some others with this title and had done a lot for the Pop Council.

Parker argued that the difference was that staff associates could travel; that was the only distinction he could make. But that was sex discrimination also, not permitting women to travel. So for the time being, I decided to stay, and it was not until months later that I decided to go to Columbia University. But I think I saw my future as being very limited at the Council. I would never move up within the division. David Sills, after I was at Columbia, talked to me about coming back to the Council. I said I was happy in academia, thought I would stay, but if I ever went back to the Council it would be with the expectation that I could think about being an associate director. He ruled this out as a possibility, and that was the end of his recruitment effort.

**VDT:** It was ruled out even several years later?

**PRESSER:** This talk was about five or six years after I left the Council, after a strong research record and being a Board member of PAA. I said that if I were to come back I'd expect a higher status position than what I left. And he said, "Well, you don't want to do administration, do you?" And I said, "I think I would like administration, as well as research." This was not "working-out-the-details" talk, because I was not that keenly interested in returning. It was sort of "feeling-the-waters" talk; he had invited me over to talk about the possibility. It was nice that the Council wanted me to return. I did not leave the Council feeling I was pushed out. It was just that I didn't like the role I was given there; the future didn't look too promising.

**VDT:** Well, now you're at Columbia, teaching full-time, and part-time at Rutgers. Did you seek out the job at Livingston or did they come to you, because it sounded like the sort of place that you would be interested in, given your interest in discrimination, at least at that time?

**PRESSER:** I knew Irving Horowitz; I may have met him at Berkeley when he had been a visiting professor there. Later in New York, perhaps at a meeting, I may have mentioned I wanted to do some teaching. I don't remember actually pursuing the Livingston possibility; it somehow came my way.

By the way, I didn't feel that Livingston was the right place for me on a permanent basis. It was mostly undergraduate teaching and the department was a very radical sociology department, which meant anti-empiricism. Nevertheless, I felt I played an important role teaching population at the undergraduate level. I also was a key informant teaching family planning. The questions that students raised--many of whom were minority women, and they or their friends were having babies while they were in school--were often about controlling fertility.

Given the way the department was going, I decided to stop teaching there. Again, the money was important, because my daughter went to private school in New York City and so this helped to pay for private school. So when Matilda Riley heard I was going to stop teaching at Livingston and asked me to teach at Rutgers' New Brunswick campus, I agreed. I did this for two years, one day a week. It worked out very well. I only taught one course a year at Columbia, so my total teaching load was not heavy.

**VDT:** Let's talk about Columbia. How did you get the idea for the interesting survey of women who had had first births in 1970, 71 and 72 and who were interviewed in 1973, 74 and 76?



**PRESSER:** You've done your research.

**VDT:** Well, you published so many papers on it [timing of first births and teenage pregnancy] and I went back and read some of them now.

**PRESSER:** The idea of doing a New York City study was initiated by people at Columbia. Jeanne Ridley was director of the demography division at that time; Mindel Sheps had just left. It was the International Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction, funded largely by Ford. What made it very appealing to go there and have a, quote, "academic-type" position was that they provided a full-time secretary and a full-time research assistant, thanks to the Ford Foundation money. So it was a very good, supportive start for doing research.

The International Institute had a biomedical side and a demography/family planning side and Sam Wishik was the head of the family planning part. Mindel Sheps had been head of the demography part. She had left for Chapel Hill. Jane Menken had been there; Jane had left. Jeanne Ridley was still there and it was essentially Jeanne Ridley, myself, and Moni Nag. Moni was initially on the main campus most of the time and later moved up to the medical campus, where the Institute was located. So the demography division was very small.

This was the time when there was a lot of feeling around Columbia University that Columbia was doing all this international work and wasn't doing much for the local community. So someone at the Institute thought it would be a good idea to do a New York City study. They said it would be nice to do something on fertility; take it from there. I think they were thinking about a study focused on ethnicity, but I had just done this work on sterilization, both for Puerto Rico and for the Pop Council, the worldwide study.

**VDT:** The Commission on Population Growth and the American Future--you and Larry Bumpass?

**PRESSER:** No, that was after I had gotten to Columbia. I had done this worldwide study of sterilization for the Pop Council, as well as my Puerto Rican research. I felt that sterilization was important as a birth control method; it doesn't have many of the side effects that some other methods do and it clearly should be a voluntary option. But in terms of the status of women, it was controlling fertility at the end of women's reproductive careers, by definition. And to me the more important issue for the status of women--not necessarily for demography per se--was the timing of the first birth. I thought it would be more interesting to look at the consequences of the timing of the first birth and consider ethnic differences in this context. Now given how the field has moved on, it's hard to believe that no one was particularly interested in this issue at the time.

**VDT:** That's right, you certainly were ahead of the game.

**PRESSER:** I wasn't thinking of the timing of births strictly in terms of adolescent fertility, which shortly after became a major issue.

**VDT:** I was going to ask if it grew out of the concerns at that time about adolescent fertility.

**PRESSER:** That was part of it, but I really saw this as a more general issue. Demographers were focusing so much on family size and the number of births women had, but the more critical factor for women might be the timing of births and particularly the first birth, because in many ways, the first birth is the unplanned child more than the later children. So that must have some effect on women's status.

**VDT:** Well, of course, it grew out of your own experience.

**PRESSER:** Actually, my own experience shows that early first births don't necessarily hold you back.

**VDT:** Exactly, even if problematic.

**PRESSER:** Right, and an early first birth requires a lot more energy and motivation to compensate for than if you didn't have a child.

**VDT:** So you conceived the idea of focusing this study on that?

**PRESSER:** Yes, focusing on the timing of first birth and using New York City as a test population. The city provided a very diverse population to demonstrate that the timing of the first birth may have important consequences for women. The study also considered possible determinants.

I spent a lot of time developing the proposal and submitted it to NICHD, both as a contract and as a grant, because the contracts were general enough for most fertility studies and you could dually apply. The contracts were not as targeted as they are now to very specific subjects. You could submit your proposal for a contract as well as a grant review. The proposal was accepted by both, but the grant they offered was only for one year, because I was a new investigator and they didn't know me and wanted to see how I did in the first year before funding the second. The contract offered me two years.

I only mention this because I took the contract, thinking it was the better offer. Then all federal contracts to Columbia University got held up because they were not providing the federal government the requested information on affirmative action issues, such as the salaries of men and women they employed. There was a lot of tension between Columbia University and the government. Columbia was being stubborn in not wanting to comply with the federal regulations about affirmative action.

**VDT:** Which had gone into effect when--in the late 1960s?

**PRESSER:** Yes. And the federal government could respond to non-compliance by holding back all federal contracts, whereas they couldn't do this with grants because that type of money is given up front. So it turned out to be a mistake to take the contract, because it held up the research.

That was when I had an opportunity to collaborate with Larry Bumpass [e.g., "Demographic and Social Aspects of Contraceptive Sterilization in the United States: 1965-1970," in report of the Presidential Commission on Population Growth and the American Future, 1972]. Charlie Westoff called me from the Commission on Population Growth and the American Future and wanted to know if I'd be interested in analyzing the U.S. data on sterilization.

**VDT:** You put in your contract and you didn't get it at all?

**PRESSER:** We got it, but it got held up.

**VDT:** You must have done the report for the Population Commission in 1970 or 71, because they only existed from 70 to 72 and then the report came out.

**PRESSER:** Right. It took a while to write the NICHD proposal. I spent a full year writing the proposal, along with doing other research, and then it took time for review and funding. The award had been made when this problem with the university emerged, but it was being held up.

So when Charlie called about doing work on the U.S., I agreed to do it, never dreaming that

we'd find such high figures. I believe it was the major method then, in 1970, for couples who wanted no more children. Now it's the major method for couples--period. The 1970 finding turned out to be a surprise. Larry Bumpass called me, because he knew about the data and that Charlie had asked me to analyze it and asked if he could collaborate with me.

**VDT:** The data of the National Fertility Study?

**PRESSER:** Yes. Larry had the tapes up and running at Wisconsin, and that was the primary reason I agreed.

**VDT:** He had it from Princeton?

**PRESSER:** Right. He had been at Princeton, moved to Wisconsin, and then he called me and asked if he could collaborate, which I agreed to. So that's how the collaboration happened. It was specifically to do that study.

**VDT:** And the abortion was sort of thrown in as an extra because abortion was such an issue then?

**PRESSER:** My research with Larry on abortion came about when Ortho Pharmaceuticals ran a conference to highlight the findings of the Population Commission. Charlie was organizing this and asked me to present a paper on sterilization and abortion. I asked Larry if he wanted to collaborate with me on this and he did [Bumpass and Presser, "The Increasing Acceptance of Sterilization and Abortion in the U.S.," in C.F. Westoff et al, eds., Toward the End of Growth: Population in America, 1972]. Charlie also asked me to present a paper on the consequences of perfect contraception.

**VDT:** "Perfect Fertility Control: Consequences for Women and the Family." That was how it came out, the chapter in Toward the End of Growth.

**PRESSER:** Right, that was the title they had given; I never really liked the title.

**VDT:** That conference was sort of simultaneous with the Population Commission?

**PRESSER:** It was held after the Commission was finished.

**VDT:** After the report came out and was almost totally ignored.

**PRESSER:** Yes. I didn't do any research on abortion for the Commission, but they wanted a paper on abortion for the conference. Speaking of abortion, when I was at the Pop Council and Emily Moore was there--Emily was very instrumental in the early abortion movement. I believe she was one of the key people who started NARAL, the National Abortion Rights League; I don't know if it was called that then. I had just come back from England and was working at the Population Council. Here was this woman at the Council who was very much involved in the abortion issue, on her own time, and was forming an umbrella group of organizations that were interested in abortion. I remember being very impressed by what she was doing and wanting to learn more, but feeling I had to finish my dissertation first and then I could get more involved. And I did.

New York City was then considering reforming their abortion laws, which were very restrictive, and they were holding hearings down in city hall but they had no women testifying and no women on the Board of Health at the hearings. The Board agreed, under a lot of pressure, to add a woman to the group listening to the testimony and they put a Catholic nun on. So Emily Moore

organized a group of women to go down to city hall to demonstrate against this. Several of us were from the Council. That was direct political activity. Berkeley was politically active, but I was watching on the sidelines. This was the start, for me, of getting into the action.

I remember they all said at the Council be clear to others that this was being done on your own time; it had nothing to do with the Council. They were very concerned about that. But we went down. It was quite interesting. Emily was extremely impressive talking with the press. We staged a walkout, which got a lot of media attention.

**VDT:** A walkout?

**PRESSER:** We picketed in front and then went inside to the hearings and then we staged a walkout. Which at first was a little distasteful to me, but I came to realize after that this was the only way that the issue would get attention. And it did. We were characterized on television as being in our teens, kid-like. But the interesting thing was how hard it was for Emily to get a group of women to do this; we were only ten or twelve, at the most. We were not all Pop Council people. Ruth Dixon was in town; she joined us.

**VDT:** Yours and Ruth's activism in women's issues started then?

**PRESSER:** Yes--at least that's true for me. Emily was also very involved in the formation of the National Organization for Women, which started in New York City. So that was my exposure then to the feminist movement, as a movement, having just come back from England. And it was a very good start. It was very fortunate that I had been exposed to someone like Emily at that time.

**VDT:** Back to your New York study. You plumbed it beautifully, because it just fed into the interest, as you yourself mentioned, the increasing interest in the early 1970s in teenage pregnancy. You then realized, of course, that this was a good vehicle for studying that too. Then in 1976 you came to Maryland. What prompted that?

**PRESSER:** Well, one thing, my daughter graduated from high school, so the timing was right for a move. I had decided when I was in New York after all the moves I had put my daughter through that when she was going through high school she was going to stay in one place, so I was committed to staying in New York until she had graduated from high school.

I never really actively looked for jobs. At that time, by the way, Brown was interested in me coming to Providence, which was an interesting thing--many years later wanting me to come.

**VDT:** Woman and all?

**PRESSER:** Yes. I think they were under some kind of legal problem also for not recruiting enough women, the university as a whole. I remember being sent some legal papers to sign off later on something about being in their pool of potential candidates, which was related to a class action suit against the university. But I think at that time they were genuinely interested in considering me for a position, and they did hire a woman; I don't know whether it was Fran Goldscheider or Barbara Anderson. The Brown story I was talking about earlier was the 1960s, but by the mid-1970s they were making a more concerted effort to hire women. I don't know if a woman's marital status in the 1970s was as relevant as it was when I was first considered.

But I had an offer at Maryland and I really loved Washington. I liked New York too. Again, a major job criterion was that it be in a large city, or very near one, like Berkeley being near San Francisco. And I had a lot of friends who either had moved here or I came to know by being on

various committees that met in Washington and coming down often. I had come to an NICHD meeting in Washington that Ken Kammeyer also attended. He was the new chair of the department of sociology here at Maryland and wanted to build it up. He had just recruited Manny Rosenberg, who is a distinguished social psychologist. He also recruited David Segal from Michigan. Many full professors were being hired. I was just an associate professor for three years at Columbia and did not have full tenure. I had the equivalent of "tenure of title." This means that unless there was external support, which for me came from the Ford Foundation and my grants, there was no assurance that you would be paid by the university.

So the full professorship with tenure I was offered at Maryland was appealing. But tenure wasn't the reason I left. Allan Rosenfield, whom I liked a lot, had just come to Columbia to direct population activities at the Institute. He was very supportive of the work I was doing. Non-tenured senior positions are very characteristic of medical schools; they don't offer tenure to all their faculty. A lot of the physicians are also in private practice and don't really care. So often it's the chair of the department who has full tenure and maybe a few others. Allan came and they told him that they would create a tenured slot for him. He didn't have it the first year he came. When he heard I was leaving, he said he was willing to give up his slot for me. I say tenure wasn't the reason I left, because I remember explicitly saying to him, no, thank you very much, it was a lovely thing to have offered, but it wasn't the full reason. I was ready to move.

I had gotten the offer of a full professorship here--the first woman full professor ever in this department--and I loved the Washington area. There's a lot of demography going on here. So it wasn't that important to me that there wasn't much demography here at Maryland; Ken was offering an undergraduate course. I had decided that as long as there was departmental interest in demography, that was sufficient.

**VDT:** There were enough demographers in the Washington area?

**PRESSER:** Right, and that it is a really good demographic community in many ways. It's excellent, as you know.

**VDT:** Yes. Well, you established Maryland's credentials in demography, as a complement to Georgetown, and all the people in government, etc., in the Washington area. Is that what you consciously set out to do, to establish Maryland's credentials in demography?

**PRESSER:** I wasn't thinking when I came of building a major program, because I don't regard myself--or didn't then--as someone who would be interested in building a demography center. It wasn't that important to me to establish demography credentials for Maryland. I don't think Maryland was that interested in expanding in this area. Soon after I arrived, Ken Kammeyer stepped down as head of the department and Jerry Hage, who subsequently became chair, was not interested in developing this area.

**VDT:** Ken was the only other demographer?

**PRESSER:** He regards himself as a family sociologist interested in demography. So I didn't feel any special mandate at all from the department. The faculty liked the fact that I was generating research money and overhead and my release time from teaching was giving the department discretionary money for other activities. So that was the basis for any positive feelings about demography, because research money is generally more available in demography than some of the other sub-areas of sociology. That was viewed as positive, but there was not that much interest in the department or among the department chairs in particular for expansion of this area.

However, the year I was leaving to go out to the Center for Advanced Study at Stanford, we had hired a new chair, Bill Falk. I had been on the search committee. Bill is a rural sociologist and when we talked with him, he was very supportive of demography. I was away for the year at the Center [1986-87], with plenty of time to think, and was thinking about what I wanted to do the rest of my career. Did I want to be at a research center, if so, what kind of a research center? I realized that the ideal place that I wanted to be at didn't exist. That would be a place that was focused on what we now call our center, the Center on Population, Gender, and Social Inequality.

I was thinking that if the department wasn't interested in establishing this, I would do so, as a separate entity outside the university, or go somewhere else that was interested in creating it. I anticipated that Bill might have lost his enthusiasm for demography, that when other demands were made for departmental resources he'd forget his interest in demography. Well, it wasn't that way, fortunately. He was very keen on my building the program, and also setting aside new lines for hiring. We began by hiring Joan Kahn.

**VDT:** When you came back from Stanford [1987], you right away established this new center you'd conceived?

**PRESSER:** Yes. While I was there, I was talking to Bill about it and we agreed that we would hire a person while I was gone who would start the year I came back, which was Joan Kahn, who was a junior appointment. And that when I came back, we would hire a senior person, who was Jay Teachman. Now [end 1989] resources are very limited, but he's agreed to hire another assistant professor in demography, because he agrees we need someone who does research on developing countries, someone who combines population, gender, and development issues.

We were able to get a Hewlett grant for the Center--I wrote that proposal as soon as I came back--to give us money for graduate students and for a part-time programmer. That was important money, because it told the university that people outside think this is a good idea. This in turn helped us get money from the university. With our additional funding for research projects, things are going very well.

**VDT:** I wanted to ask what its role is.

**PRESSER:** We've had these monthly seminars that you've come to.

**VDT:** Religiously--except when I'm away. Obviously, the Center grew out of the research that you had been doing through the 1970s and 1980s, for which you've become well known. So let's talk a bit about that--your work on work schedules. It's all summarized in a way in your PAA presidential address this year, "Can We Make Time for Children? The Economy, Work Schedules, and Child Care" [Demography, November 1989]. You looked at shift work among dual-earner couples. Were you the first to look at that? How did you conceive of this way of looking at women in the labor force and child care?

**PRESSER:** I think it's a combination of interests. I think all these topics, like the timing of first births, work schedules, and child care, are combinations of personal, in that sense political, and intellectual interests. I was interested in demography and I got involved in fertility. I thought demography was interesting at Chapel Hill, but I really loved it when I got to Berkeley and focused on fertility because it had so much to do with women. It was very easy to read; I read not only because it was assigned but because it was intrinsically interesting. And it obviously had something to do with important personal issues as well--although the jargon is often artificial.

For example, in demography we talk a lot about fertility and births, but we don't often use the

word children in our papers; we mean children but we don't talk about children and child care, even though the rearing of children has something to do with fertility. And the work place--we talk about labor force status but we don't talk that much about work-place issues.

My feeling is that to really understand demographic behavior, you have to conceptually extend some of these very crude, census-type variables into more meaningful dimensions. And now that we're conducting national surveys on such a broad scale, and writing our own questions and not having to rely as much on secondary analysis of census and vital registration data, it's a real opportunity to broaden our perspective of demographic behavior and get a better understanding of its causes and consequences.

**VDT:** It grew in part out of your own experience, as a woman and as a lone mother juggling work and child care. There weren't too many data. You said now you can make up your own surveys. One of your articles I re-read was the one you wrote with Wendy Baldwin back in 1980 ["Child Care as a Constraint on Employment," American Journal of Sociology, March 1980], using CPS [Current Population Survey] data. Have you managed to get some questions on the CPS?

**PRESSER:** Yes. The data on child care were for June 1977. I was on a committee formed by the National Center for Health Statistics on data needs to implement the Population Commission report recommendations. One of the Commission's recommendations, which I had helped formulate, had to do with child care. It was mentioned that demographers had to look more at its relation to fertility. So this was on my mind when the NCHS committee was formed. The committee was chaired by Mary Powers and Maurice Moore was a member. Maurice held the position at the Census Bureau that Martin O'Connell now holds, working with the June CPS fertility supplement. I mentioned to him that it was really important to look at the experience of raising the first child to understand fertility expectations after the first child is born and that it was too bad we didn't have such data. He indicated that the fertility supplement on the CPS was such that there was about two inches of space on the bottom of the page to add a few more questions.

So we went to Jerry Combs, who was then head of the demography branch of the Center for Population Research of NICHD, to see if he would be interested in funding the Census Bureau to do this. Maurice was more than willing to add some questions about child care to the June supplement, which asks fertility and fertility expectations so that the interrelationships can be explored. Jerry Combs was a little reluctant. He particularly didn't like our question that had to do with whether or not child care was a constraint on employment. What would we do if we find that a lot of women say that child care is holding back their employment? It was viewed as a political question, measuring whether women felt child care was constraining their employment activities. Which in fact it was. Wendy Baldwin was very supportive of this and also she wanted to work on it. That's how Wendy got involved in the project.

**VDT:** Child care vis-a-vis employment issues?

**PRESSER:** Right. I believe Wendy played a very instrumental role in getting Jerry Combs, whom she worked for, to support this project. Actually, I drafted the proposal that the Census Bureau submitted to NICHD. I must say that Maurice Moore met with some resistance at the Census Bureau; some were not happy about doing child care research.

**VDT:** Even though they would collect the data?

**PRESSER:** They didn't think it was a legitimate Census Bureau topic. It was very hard to get the Census to go ahead and submit the proposal to NICHD, but finally they did. It's very interesting,

because after the report came out, Martin O'Connell, who worked in Maurice's division and became head of the division when Maurice left, did a very nice descriptive report on child care in the United States.

**VDT:** From that 1977 CPS data?

**PRESSER:** Yes, and we had no other child care data of this kind. What Wendy and I did--and Mary Powers also did a paper based on those data--was look at child care in relation to employment and fertility in a more analytic way. But the Census Bureau did a descriptive report on the prevalence of child care. And they received tremendous positive feedback, so they then became interested and approached NICHD some years later to repeat the data collection in 1982.

Some child care professionals have complained about the limitations of these data, that it was collected in June, which isn't the best month, and all that stuff, and I remind them it wasn't meant to be a child care study. It was a fertility supplement with some child care questions. It's very telling that we had no other current data in the United States, that this became very important as a source of basic parameters on use of child care.

**VDT:** You mean the child care people would have liked it in March, with more labor force data?

**PRESSER:** Yes, when kids are clearly all in school; June is not the greatest time. And then we only ask this of women with children under age five and they wanted it asked about older children. They just don't realize that, number one, it wasn't a child care study; number two, we had just a few inches across the bottom line of an interview schedule, which was very limiting.

This was a learning experience for me: that you can use this small amount of space for questions that would help to define problems and generate interest in more research. In other words, one could take advantage of piggybacking on other surveys, get some questions added, and they may not be all the questions you want, but people are not going to do all you want all at once. With a few questions, you could show that child care is a problem and that it is of interest to pursue further.

**VDT:** Then you did have something to do with the 1980, was it, data on the shift workers?

**PRESSER:** This interest came from analyzing the 1977 data and looking at the care of children when mothers were employed. I was doing a preliminary analysis for a paper and saw that 15 percent of employed women with children, regardless of marital status, were saying that the fathers were the primary caregivers when they were employed. I thought, 15 percent of employed fathers are taking care of children when mothers are employed? Who are these fathers, and who are these mothers?

I looked at several variables and when I examined detailed occupation, I saw that it was women nurses, women waitresses, telephone operators who disproportionately reported care by fathers. To do this, it was very clear that these dual-earner couples had to be staggering their work schedules, not necessarily purposely, but had different work schedules and that's how 15 percent of fathers could take care of kids. If you looked at particular occupations, like nurses, you had 30 percent or more of all nurses in the United States with preschool-aged children reporting that the father was the primary caregiver of the child. And if you consider that a lot of nurses work rotating shifts, there are probably many more fathers who are secondary caregivers.

So then I asked, "Gee, what do we know about work schedules in the United States?" I'd never thought about this before. I then learned that the Bureau of Labor Statistics had collected data from 1973 to 1980 on work schedules; it was actually the May supplement to the CPS on dual-jobholding; that's what they referred to it as.



**VDT:** Dual jobs?

**PRESSER:** Trying to learn more about people who had two or more jobs; that was the prime motive of their May supplement. They also happened in that supplement to ask the hours work begins and ends on the principal job. These findings were reported in a three- or four-page circular from the BLS, which indicated how many people work in the evenings or night, by selected variables. Until 1980 they didn't ask about shift rotation, which is important.

**VDT:** What does rotation mean?

**PRESSER:** That your hours change regularly. A nurse often works the morning shift first, then the evening shift, then the night shift--changing every few days or every week, whatever the schedule is. It's important to determine this because at the time of the interview, you can get someone who's working days but is a rotator and overestimate the number of people that have a regular day schedule because they're on the day shift the week that you're interviewing them. There's a lot of shift rotation in the United States. So you really underestimate the prevalence of shift worker or non-day employment that way. But in 1980 they corrected this and asked about rotation, and they included information about children in the household for the first time in the May 1980 CPS tape, including the age of the children.

Virginia Cain was a student of mine here at the time and was looking for an independent study project. I said I didn't have funding for a shift work project but I'd love for her to work with me on it, do a lot of the computing work, and perhaps coauthor a paper after we see what we find.

The May CPS data that the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported was all on individuals; the data tape wasn't set up to study families as a unit of analysis. So we had to use the ID numbers of all individuals and consider the relationship of everyone in the household to each other, whether the children were related to the "household head," etc., and create families. Virginia worked very hard and diligently with me to do this. We found that a third of dual-earner couples in the United States with preschool-aged children had very different work schedules, where only one of them was working regularly in the daytime.

**VDT:** This is fascinating. As I've said, you've always been right on top of issues, often at the leading edge. Were you aware that you were in this issue and, well, all the way back to sterilization and also in your timing of first births? Your research has been focused on things that have sort of anticipated what would become a policy concern?

**PRESSER:** I don't think of it that way. I just like to get into my data and think about things while I'm working that are not necessarily what other people are thinking of. It's fun to explore.

**VDT:** But you have also talked to policymakers. You've served on many panels. You're right now finishing up on the National Academy of Sciences Panel on Child Care Policy. Do you think it important for demographers to speak to policymakers?

**PRESSER:** I guess, yes, is the answer to that. I think what we're doing is policy-relevant. If we don't talk to them, someone else will, who will be less educated or informed on the subject, and this is our field. I felt this way being on the Academy panel. It's composed primarily of people in child development, and child care has a lot to do with the development of children; that's clearly an issue. But also there's a society out there and there are macro issues to address. For example, there's concern about women's employment that child development people are not especially interested in, how child care relates to that. I think there's really a need for more people to pick up on that and provide that

perspective to policymakers.

**VDT:** More demographers?

**PRESSER:** Right. Demographers are in the right field for that because they have a national, macro perspective on issues that goes beyond what's happening within the family.

**VDT:** Toward the end of your PAA address you said there are people who are concerned about whether fathers should take more part in child care and you said demographers can give another perspective on that.

**PRESSER:** Right. We can be looking at what's happening in the society that is in fact structurally enabling fathers to do that. They are not necessarily taking odd-hour jobs because they can provide child care. Odd-hour jobs may be the only jobs they can get because of the changing economy. The growing diversity of work schedules is permitting the sharing of child care between husband and wife and between mother and grandmother, when all are employed. The workplace and child care are important societal issues. There's no doubt about that; they affect everybody.

**VDT:** And you're being sought out because you have looked at them, with this macro view. And you've also felt it's important to talk to the press. You got quite a bit of press coverage on your dual-worker shifts.

**PRESSER:** Yes, there is continued interest. When the Science article came out, the first one on shift work [Presser and Cain, "Shift Work Among Dual-Earner Couples with Children," Science, February 18, 1983]--Science regularly distributes their table of contents to the press prior to publication and the press is eagerly waiting, so when each issue appears there is potential for tremendous coverage. Our findings appeared in The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post. What's interesting to me is the recycling of it. It got into the New York Times twice, into the Wall Street Journal at least twice, the Post at least twice, and the Chicago Tribune several times, as well as in the Los Angeles Times. It usually is written as a short piece first in the main part of the paper and then someone does an elaboration in "Style," where they'll discuss their own interviews with shift work couples or whatever. It seems to be something that's not a one-time coverage item.

I find it has a lot of ramifications, that first you can focus on work schedules, then you can focus on child care. An issue that I want to pursue that came up as I was analyzing my data for the PAA talk was the fact that there are a lot of women with children who say the main reason that they're working irregular hours is to care for other family members, not their children, and many more may be doing so for secondary reasons. Care for the elderly, for example, which is a major interest now, may be facilitated by people working nonstandard hours.

Now, because I write about it a lot doesn't mean that I necessarily think it's all 100 percent great.

**VDT:** Your research or . . . ?

**PRESSER:** I mean it's fun writing about work schedules, but it doesn't mean that I think working nights is the greatest thing. It's part of the present situation, and there may be negative consequences. It's going on whether we like it or not and we better take a good look if we're interested in the family and the consequences of work schedules. On the physical side, there's growing evidence that it is not a good thing to work at night, particularly a rotating schedule.

**VDT:** You feel you haven't necessarily reached out to the press but that's come as a result of your research on these very interesting topics?

**PRESSER:** And the same journalists come back to me, like Carol Kleiman, who does the syndicated column for the Chicago Tribune. She does a sort of Ellen Goodman column, in the business pages. She covered this while I was out at Stanford, so it was several years ago. Now she just did it again last week from a different perspective. She focused more on the work schedule issue the first time and more on child care this time. It's the same person, that's what I find interesting--it isn't just the same newspaper--the same person wanting to stay with it and repeating it in a different way.

**VDT:** I was very interested, having worked a lot with the press when I was at the Population Reference Bureau, which is one of the reasons for PRB's existence, in the fact that you had the session in the last PAA meeting [1989] on the press, called "Research, Policy and the Press." The only press person you actually had on the panel was Alan Otten from the Wall Street Journal, whom I knew. Unfortunately I missed it; I was interviewing Don Bogue; of course, he got press attention in the past. Art Haupt from PRB was there and said it was very good but very few were there. That's too bad. We have talked from time to time about PAA encouraging demographers to get their research into the media. How do you feel about that?

**PRESSER:** I feel very strongly about it. I think Gordon De Jong is doing a marvelous job right now with Demography.

**VDT:** Right, he's doing some press releases.

**PRESSER:** Right, he's taking each issue and getting press releases out [on individual articles].

**VDT:** You think he did one on the article in the latest issue, on cohabitation, by Larry Bumpass and Jim Sweet ["National Estimates of Cohabitation," Demography, November 1989]? They're getting so much out of that marvelous National Survey of Families and Households. Their last article [Teresa Castro Martin and Larry L. Bumpass, "Recent Trends in Marital Disruption," Demography 1989] reporting that two-thirds of [recent first] marriages will end in separation or divorce got a lot of coverage [data were from June 1985 CPS].

**PRESSER:** Right. Everybody's interested in that. As I say, we are the demographers; we should be saying this.

**VDT:** And write the press releases first. And Gordon De Jong is really doing it.

**PRESSER:** The other thing that's relevant right now for PAA, I think, is related to this. When we had the Board meeting in Baltimore last April [prior to main meeting], there was discussion, I think initiated by me, of shouldn't we be doing not only more press releases but thinking more of what we can do as an association to promote our discipline. In part we didn't get enough press interest in the meetings because we have no standard procedure that goes on about press releases of the meetings themselves. That's the first test.

**VDT:** Cynthia Green and I manned the one press release office we ever had, which was for the 1981 50th anniversary meeting.

**PRESSER:** I asked Jean Smith whether we should have a press office for that and she said PAA

members don't provide press releases. Of course, they don't. The thing is that you need someone who can be in charge of it.

And that relates to the more general issue that we need people who can be in charge of a lot of issues. The PAA president does the meeting program, partly as president-elect, the presidential address, and there's a lot of other responsibilities. He or she really can't think about doing more than what has to be done. And the secretary-treasurer is loaded down with work. The officers' positions are not subsidized to provide release time at their institutions; we're all doing our teaching and our other responsibilities as well. What we really need, in my mind, is someone who can play the role of an executive director, who cares about the PAA and has the kind of interest that can provide continuity over the years.

**VDT:** That's an issue we'll get onto when we talk about PAA. You've established that, yes, you feel demographers need to get their research out into the press.

**PRESSER:** Not all demographers' research is policy-relevant, nor should it be. So I don't think every demographer has that responsibility.

**VDT:** But if you have something interesting, you should put it out, like Larry Bumpass and Jim Sweet getting out of their survey things that are of such interest, like cohabitation.

On some of the big questions I warned you I'd be asking. Who have been the leading influences in your career? You have mentioned Dan Price, whom you invited to be your introducer at the last meeting as president of PAA; it's become a convention that somebody who has been important in your career is asked to do that. And you have mentioned Kingsley Davis.

**PRESSER:** He gave me that first fellowship; he's certainly been supportive and influential. The reason that I think of Dan Price more is that came at an earlier and more critical point in my career, when I wasn't yet identifying myself as a demographer or professional. As I said, I had this 1950s mentality; going back to school was a way of surviving at the time, it wasn't primarily to be a professional. And Dan got me the first job in the Institute of Life Insurance. He was the person who first nominated me to go to the Center for Advanced Studies.

**VDT:** Oh, he was--even in the 1980s?

**PRESSER:** He had nominated me earlier, in the mid-1970s. I was at first told it was highly likely I'd be invited, since I passed preliminary review and it was going to the board, but then the board didn't approve it. Few women had been Center fellows at that time. But an invitation re-emerged later. I don't know why I didn't get the invitation earlier, but Dan had nominated me earlier, so that was key. And he has always been supportive.

I got a beautiful letter from Kingsley Davis after the PAA address this year, saying that he thought the whole program and the address were among the best ever. And that was very important to me.

**VDT:** So he has been in on-going contact with you. I'm sure you're one of his leading students. Of course, I've asked that of him. I can't remember if you're on the list, but then he didn't have a list prepared for the interview as some people have had, like Phil Hauser. [In answer to the specific interview question on his "leading students," Kingsley Davis replied, "It's hard to say one is more outstanding than another; they do different things." But on editing the transcript, he added six names, including Harriet Presser's, to those of other students mentioned during the interview.]

You mentioned in passing, well, people at the Census Bureau. Who jumps out in your mind,

like Dan Price and Kingsley Davis--influences on you, as a demographer?

**PRESSER:** There's a big gap between them and all the others, so it would be hard to spell out the others. Kingsley Davis was the demographer at Berkeley; Dan Price was the demographer at Chapel Hill.

**VDT:** What about Judith Blake, who was on your dissertation committee too?

**PRESSER:** I had just that one semester at the School of Public Health, where she was. I didn't take any of her courses; I audited some, but I never was a student of hers. This was before she had established her graduate program in demography. Before I left for Puerto Rico, she called and asked if I wanted to join that group, it was just starting, and I had already had all my sociology requirements then and there was no point in switching to another program. I thought being a sociologist and a demographer was better than being in the demography program and possibly having trouble with my credentials as a sociologist.

I would say that Kingsley Davis and Cal Goldscheider really were the ones that worked on my dissertation when I came back from Puerto Rico. But I had little time with Goldscheider, because it was only a few months, coming back and working on it. And Goldscheider and Kingsley Davis had some friction at that time between the two of them and Goldscheider left Berkeley.

**VDT:** Was that just a personality conflict?

**PRESSER:** I wasn't there at the time because I'd been in Puerto Rico most of the year and also, as I mentioned, I think most of us students were so far removed from what was going on with the faculty that I didn't know what was going on. Even if I had been there longer I probably wouldn't have known.

But after I had finished my dissertation and was at the Pop Council and revising it for a book, Goldscheider wrote me a letter with some comments that he'd had on my dissertation that he thought he wouldn't introduce earlier in terms of approval, because of the difficulty between him and Kingsley. He hadn't wanted to suggest these revisions earlier, as they would not necessarily be what Kingsley wanted for my dissertation. But he thought it might be helpful on the revision since it was going to be a published monograph. I thought that was considerate, because I'd have been torn if I had two different positions to consider and had to get my dissertation finished. And they were very constructive comments.

I would say, as a student, it really was Dan Price and Kingsley Davis--oh, and Bill Petersen, excuse me. He was at Berkeley. I took courses in the family from him, but of course he's a demographer and taught the family from a demographic perspective. He was extremely supportive of me as a student also. Dan Price was helpful in different ways at critical times, but in terms of just getting positive feedback, that you're doing well, that they really think well of you and keep it up, which is very important at graduate school, I was getting that very much from Bill Petersen.

**VDT:** This is the student-mentor relationship. Are there any of your colleagues who've been influential?

**PRESSER:** Well, you have to remember that I've not been in a population center with many demography colleagues. Jeanne Ridley at Columbia University was not helpful to my career. As for graduate students, I haven't been in a major place where there's been a high concentration of demography students.

**VDT:** I also note too--I was going to ask this when we got to your publications--that you usually publish on your own. Remember that content analysis of Demography a couple of years ago, over 25 years?

**PRESSER:** Yes, I think Jay Teachman did that.

**VDT:** Of course, he did [Jay D. Teachman and Kathleen Paasch, "The Sociology of Demography: A Content Analysis of the Journal," paper presented at the 1988 PAA meeting in the session on "Two Centuries after Malthus: The History of Demography"]. He found that very few women were single authors of articles in Demography, but you're an exception. Almost all your articles are yours alone. You have coauthored with Virginia Cain, Wendy Baldwin, Larry Bumpass, a few times, but generally you're the sole author. Is that explained by the fact that you worked as almost the only demographer in the places you've been?

**PRESSER:** Yes. And I think the research has been motivated by me, so that when it's been coauthored others have joined my project. Even with Larry Bumpass; I think at one time we exchanged authorship or we rotated it [senior author]. But essentially the projects have been mine in which people joined.

Now we just put in a project to do some research on Puerto Rico again, and that's the advantage now that Joan Kahn and Jay Teachman are here. We submitted a big joint project to the National Science Foundation. That will be different if we get funded and go on with it, because we're starting together and that's very different. That's a function of having colleagues at your institution. I think co-investigation is different when you're physically both in the same place. You can bounce things back and forth; it's better than when you're in different places. My minimal coauthoring is partly structurally determined by being the lone demographer in an institution.

**VDT:** Interesting point. Who have been some of your leading students?

**PRESSER:** I haven't had that many "leading" students. Several have taken non-academic paths; Virginia's one. Lilian Floge worked with me. She was a Columbia University student; she's now at Bowdoin. She does research on child care issues and I don't think is known so much as a demographer, although she identifies as a demographer. There were various students at Columbia University, but I don't think they would be known to demographers that much. Helen Ginn, one of my first students at Maryland, did a text on population with Ken Kammeyer. I had a student, Konia Kohelan, who is Liberian and is teaching at Eastern Shore and trying to get some demography going in a predominantly black school, he himself being black. I could list names, but I don't think . . .

**VDT:** Not yet that well known in demography?

**PRESSER:** Right. Again, I think that's a function of not being at a population center.

**VDT:** What do you consider your leading publications and why?

**PRESSER:** I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that one. I think you've highlighted the areas that I've focused my research on, but that's different from leading publications. My book that elaborated on the finding that a third of the women in Puerto Rico were sterilized [Sterilization and Fertility Decline in Puerto Rico, 1973]; my MMFQ article that argued that the timing of the first birth matters for women ["The Timing of the First Birth, Female Roles and Black Fertility," Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly, July 1971]; the Science article that revealed that a third of American dual-earner couples with children

work different shifts [Presser and Cain, "Shift Work Among Dual-Earner Couples with Children," Science, February 18, 1983]. These are discoveries that I am proud of.

**VDT:** And you have treated all those topics in several different articles.

**PRESSER:** And with different data sets. We discussed my role in getting the CPS questions on child care included in June 1977 and that led to a repeat in June 1982, with additional questions on work schedules. This played a significant role in having such questions included in the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth.

The limited but interesting findings at each stage generated a desire to know more. I see my role as legitimating these issues as demographic concerns and getting relevant questions added to data sets. The Wisconsin study, I played a role in having work schedule questions asked and I hope to analyze the data.

**VDT:** You got work schedules onto the National Survey of Families and Households?

**PRESSER:** The Wisconsin group clearly were responsible for agreeing to it, in doing it. I don't take full responsibility for it, but I certainly played a role in arguing for it and they agreed, so they get the credit.

**VDT:** You were on the committee for the questionnaire of that survey, I noticed. And you've done that also for the National Survey of Family Growth. Have you put some specific questions on that?

**PRESSER:** Well, for the most part they have not taken the advice I offered; they have other agendas. They did a bit on child care; they did very little on women's occupation. Their agendas are defined differently than mine, so I wasn't very successful.

I'm now on the Board of Overseers for the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics and just came back from Ann Arbor a couple of days ago. The Board had commissioned papers on the future of that survey because the current funding ends in 1991 and the question was where should they be going and what topical areas should they be adding.

**VDT:** They're still following the original 5000 families?

**PRESSER:** There are these families, but they're also doing all their offshoots. I believe they've done special studies on the parents and parents-in-law of the original respondents or family heads. It's a wonderful, complicated data set for sociologists interested in the family network--the giving of time as well as money between family members and issues like that. Sandy Hofferth's presentation on possible new areas in sociology and demography included the need for work schedule data, which I know she's sensitive to, doing work on child care, but the economists came out for this also. That was very pleasing; they really wanted more data on work schedules. I thought, "Okay, we've made it!"

**VDT:** That in a sense answers the next question: What accomplishments in your career to date have given you the most satisfaction? You've just said, perhaps, rousing the interest of people who can do something about it and these issues you . . .

**PRESSER:** It was very satisfying after the PAA presidential address ["Can We Make Time for Children?: The Economy, Work Schedules and Child Care," delivered March 31 at the 1989 PAA meeting in Baltimore]. You know, people will offer congratulations, etc., and that's satisfying. But what was especially pleasing to me was that several women whom I didn't know came up and said, "I

never thought we'd have a presidential address on child care. Thank you so much." It was very touching. This really legitimated the area for them and, hopefully, other demographers.

**VDT:** They were into it themselves. Like Suzanne Bianchi, our current secretary-treasurer, whom I told you I just interviewed [then pregnant with her third child]. [Suzanne Bianchi became the 63rd PAA President in 2000.]

**PRESSER:** I told her I'd be most interested in what she had to say. [Laughter]

**VDT:** Well, she's going through it right now. By the way, where is your daughter Sheryl? We left her last . . .

**PRESSER:** In Puerto Rico.

**VDT:** No, we got her . . . you could leave New York because she'd finished high school. What did she do after that?

**PRESSER:** She's now a lawyer. She finished high school, went to college, graduated from Penn, in economics, then went to work. She writes very well and had thought initially of being a journalist and was, I think rightly, advised by some of my friends that she shouldn't major in English, she should major in a substantive area and would be more competitive as a journalist. She graduated from Penn and then worked for Facts-on-File as an associate editor. That is a major weekly economic news service in New York. It publishes a book of demographic facts, by the way. Then she went back to law school, graduated, worked for the Commission on Human Rights in New York. She's interested in public interest law, which is on the decline now. And she is now working for the city of New York in personnel, as an assistant general counsel.

**VDT:** She had a fabulous role model, and obviously nothing was neglected in her upbringing.

**PRESSER:** I think that's an overstatement. Speaking of role models, someone I haven't mentioned but who was very important to me is my own mother. I had a mother who thought the best thing for me would be to get married and have lots of children; that was the ideology in the 1950s. She had a very hard life and worked a lot herself and wanted my life to be easier. She was a very capable, competent woman. She was divorced with three children and had to fully support the three of us when we were young, although she subsequently remarried.

**VDT:** That's why you left New York [when Harriet was in the third grade] for Miami Beach?

**PRESSER:** No. My parents moved together to Miami Beach and then soon after, my mother and father were divorced and my father left the state and my mother had sole financial responsibility for three children. I never remember her ever saying anything negative about how tough her life was. She started with nothing and she ended up owning a hotel. She leased the snack bar behind that hotel for many years and learned the hotel business that way, initially. She was very competent and despite adverse conditions really made it, in a non-complaining, positive way. So I would say I had a great role model.

**VDT:** It's carried on through three generations--great! We're going to get on to PAA in a moment.

**PRESSER:** And discuss the Women's Caucus, which I really want to talk about.



**VDT:** Absolutely. My final question on your career and views on demography: What do you see as leading issues in U.S. demography over the years you've been involved? We've talked about those you worked on. For the future, what do you think the outlook is? You've talked about women and work. Low fertility, an aging society? An interesting point you made, you found many women who were choosing non-traditional work shifts had to look after other members of their family, not just children.

**PRESSER:** The care of the aged, I think, is a big issue that merits the attention of demographers. I think another important issue is why women aren't having the children they want; in developed countries that's the big issue. We used to talk about unwanted fertility, why women were having births they didn't want. Now I think the issue is why women aren't having the births they want. And that's timing on the other side. Instead of adolescent fertility, it's postponed childbearing as a problem. There's a large cohort of women who are not married or not having children but want them. I think that's a critically important issue that is going to lead to concerns about, quote, "deficit fertility."

**VDT:** Interesting. You haven't worked so much in Third World demography, though you mentioned that you now have a proposal in to go back to Puerto Rico.

**PRESSER:** And we're recruiting now at the Center for someone interested in Third World countries and I hope, again, that will lead to more collaborative work. I'm working with three students now on papers. One is occupational segregation in Puerto Rico. That's a separate issue; I'll be giving a paper on that at the next [1990] PAA meeting [Presser and Sunita Kishor, "Economic Development and Occupational Sex Segregation in Puerto Rico: 1950-1980"]. It taps into a general interest I have that I'd love to work on more and that is what happens to the status of women during the process of economic development. People studying women in development are asking the question, but there aren't that many demographers. Ruth Dixon may be one of the few, and Karen Mason. I think it's a very important issue. You're getting this tremendous increase in "female-headed" households. By the way, I have to put household head in quotes. I played some role in getting the head of household concept off the census. I think that in developing countries the rise in father-absent families is a very important issue.

**VDT:** Let's talk about the outlook for demographers and demography. Do you think there's still room in demography in the U.S. for research as you have done or are the applied demographers on the rise now and that's where the jobs are?

**PRESSER:** What do you mean by that? I think of myself as an applied demographer. [Laughter]

**VDT:** Well, it's a matter of degree. By applied demographers, I mean in state and local government and business. Do you think there's still room in demography for academic, like yourself, researchers or are the majority of jobs going to be in applied, meaning business, demography in the future?

**PRESSER:** As a person in the Association, thinking of it as a discipline as opposed to a job market, I would say there's plenty of room to go all ways. My own research has sought to expand the definition of what are the relevant variables. I don't see a problem intellectually or in terms of the profession of defining demography to include a lot of what state and local people do, and business demography, and expanding in all areas.

Your question is, I think, what will the job market be like? I don't know. One of the reasons I'd like PAA to get an executive director is that the profession, demography, is so much bigger than the number of PAA members would suggest. Relative to other disciplines--people are always shocked that

we only have 2,700 members [2,679 at end 1989; 2,752, end 1990].

**VDT:** That's not many. Should we reach out?

**PRESSER:** Not only just reach out but increase public awareness of our field. People think that PAA is a huge organization because demography is such a huge discipline in many ways--huge in terms of its impact on the issues of interest. We don't make the most of it because we don't have--I'm going back to the need for professionals in our home office. We can't charge enough dues to generate a large staff because we're just a small group of people. Relative to what other associations or disciplines have, we're not representing ourselves, in my mind, well enough in a public sense.

**VDT:** Now we're on to PAA and that's, of course, one of the main things I wanted to ask you about; you want to talk about the Women's Caucus. Let's jump into the PAA part of this, which is the reason this series of interviews got started. However, these careers are fascinating and how everybody networks with everybody else.

What was the first meeting you attended? Here's a list, the famous list of meetings that Andy Lunde put together.

**PRESSER:** It was in Philadelphia, I think in 1963.

**VDT:** Philadelphia was . . . 1963.

**PRESSER:** The reason I know was at that time I was doing this national survey of teachers who went to family finance workshops of the Institute of Life Insurance. I was going down to Philadelphia for the Institute and Al Hermalin said, "The PAA is meeting in Philadelphia. While you're there, why don't you go to the meeting?" I had just finished my master's degree and I went to the meeting. I had other business there, so I didn't spend much time at the meeting. I remember this wonderful reception that we had at the museum [of the University of Pennsylvania] in Philadelphia. Were you there?

**VDT:** No, but it's been mentioned in several of these interviews.

**PRESSER:** That was my first; it was wonderful. I got to meet people that I had known about as a student and was awed by. I had the sense that I was one of very few females; I don't know how true that was, but I was very conscious of that. And I remember a panel with Charlie Westoff and Judith Blake on it and I remember thinking they were great. I don't remember what it was about, but I thought this was really something; it was terrific. At that time I hadn't yet decided to go to Berkeley, so it was just an impression.

**VDT:** What about other early PAA meetings you attended? San Francisco was 1964.

**PRESSER:** Right, I was out there then. Berkeley was the host, so we were in charge of the registration, all that stuff. I remember volunteering to be behind a desk and handing people their pre-registration packets. So then I put the names to people's faces and I loved that; that was really nice, participating in the meeting in that context.

I enjoyed all the meetings. I've gone to almost every meeting, except when I was in England that one year, and Puerto Rico, and there was one meeting when I was on the East coast and it was in San Diego [1982] and for various reasons, there was a period of family illnesses and deaths and I didn't go that year.

**VDT:** You've played a leading role in PAA for many years. It's interesting that you say you were aware of being one of the few women at your first meeting in 1963 and yet you must have been very much into women's issues. Let's now get onto the Women's Caucus, which, of course, you were very much into.

**PRESSER:** Yes, I was.

**VDT:** You wrote the first vignette in the PAA Affairs history series and it was on the Women's Caucus ["Vignettes of PAA History: The Women's Caucus," PAA Affairs, Winter 1981]. When Andy Lunde started the series, obviously it must have been a leading issue, because the first topic he thought of was the Women's Caucus and went to you to write that story.

**PRESSER:** It was good to do because I went through the files and put things together that might have gotten lost otherwise. I just re-read my writeup last night and thought, it was really a very interesting time. Someone noted in the introduction that I found it sort of frustrating that I couldn't communicate in this writeup the level of excitement and how radical it was to bring up women's issues in the PAA. [From the introduction to the vignette: "Harriet has indicated that this format has made it difficult to reveal the true level of excitement and frustration in trying to move the PAA forward on women's issues or in the extent to which the movement was regarded as radical."]

One of the first things we wanted to know was how many women were in PAA. I remember going to a session--I was not on the Board then, although I did go on the Board soon after [1972-75]. This was when the Women's Caucus was just formed [1970] and we wanted to know who the women in PAA were, how many we were, and whatever. We wanted some kind of mailing to the membership to survey the sex of members. We had discussed it first at a Women's Caucus meeting to which many non-members came, to watch the crazy types--it was really radical to do these things. We knew as feminists what radical feminism was and we were not radical feminists. Radical feminism in the beginning of the women's movement was very hostile toward men and a lot of that ideology wasn't part of our ideology. We were interested in the status of women and as good demographers we really wanted data.

I remember someone got up at the session where this was discussed later, a distinguished demographer, I forget who he was, who said that we could not ask the sex--and ethnicity, which we also thought would be useful--of our people because it was too sensitive for a questionnaire. I remember that because my reaction was--I'd just gotten out of a session, abortion was still illegal in those days, the Supreme Court decision [Roe v. Wade, 1973] had not occurred, and we were having these sessions in PAA about asking women about illegal abortion, how to improve reporting of abortions they'd had. And these same people, who were saying we couldn't ask the gender and ethnicity of our members because it was too sensitive, had no qualms about using interviewers disguised as nurses and other devious means to get women to confess to their illegal abortions. [Laughter] It just struck me as bizarre that demographers were saying it's too sensitive to ask the sex and ethnicity of our own members.

**VDT:** You wanted a questionnaire, which you did have a few years later [sent to all PAA members in May 1973].

**PRESSER:** Right, asking those kinds of questions.

**VDT:** You wrote a nice story about how the first Women's Caucus meeting was at the Atlanta meetings in 1970 and you drew up three resolutions, which were not [allowed to be] presented to the membership until the next year [following review by the Board]. The first had to do with

underrepresentation of women in graduate programs and in the profession [related to population studies]. The second resolution was no woman should be impelled to bear a child against her will; that came out in "free access of every women to contraception, sterilization, and abortion services." And the third resolution was that PAA resolved to support the development of non-familial roles for women, by encouraging research on and removal of "impediments to the full emancipation of women."

All three of these resolutions were shot down by the Board in 1971 [at the meetings in Washington, D.C.]. The first one was passed by the members at the business meeting [after rejection by the Board at its meeting the day before], by adding in discrimination on the basis of race as well as sex [and calling for a committee to study the extent of sex and race discrimination in the population field].

And in 1971, for the first time, you had a session on equality of women, "Equal Opportunity for Women: A Concern for Demographers," organized by Ruth Dixon, with one lone man on the panel.

**PRESSER:** That was Moni Nag, who agreed to be the discussant--reluctantly. He received a lot of negative feedback for participating in that session. You have to remember that when I went to my first PAA meeting and for many years subsequently, it was not common to see women on panels at all. And if they were on, the panels were never predominantly composed of women.

**VDT:** I wonder how that happened, because everyone stresses the fact that in the early history of PAA we had such outstanding women as presidents--Irene Taeuber, Margaret Hagood, Dorothy Thomas.

**PRESSER:** That was in the 1950s.

**VDT:** And then there was a gap, to Evelyn Kitagawa in 1977. Evelyn Kitagawa explains the fact of that gap--I haven't been able to interview her, but I've heard that she feels that the big gap from when those three were president [Taeuber, 1953-54; Hagood, 1954-55; Thomas, 1958-59] to herself in 1977 was because all the women had dropped out of higher education, graduate school; they were home raising the baby boom. What do you think it was?

**PRESSER:** Well, there still were women in PAA, if you look at the membership, and they were not prominent. So I don't think you can explain it that way. I think the old boy network operated and expectations of what women should be doing kept women down. I don't think it was conducive for women to be that visible, even if they'd wanted to.

Take Dorothy Nortman--that's a very interesting history at the Population Council; we don't have time for it--but I think there was a case of a woman who had done a lot in the field who never really got the recognition that she should have because she was a female during the times when it was her role to provide--and she will say that--support to all the others in the Council, to the other male members of the Council. She helped a lot of people write their papers, often not getting authorship on the paper. I asked her why she didn't insist and she said you didn't do that at the time and she thought that was how her job was defined. I think it was defined that way for me when I came, but I wouldn't have it that way.

**VDT:** And you think that was the case in PAA--during the 1960s and early 1970s, women were to be seen but not heard?

**PRESSER:** If you think about it, they weren't nominated--by an appointed committee--to office, so they're not going to get elected. Whoever organized sessions was not asking women to present papers. Think, why would there have been such a reaction to having this panel which were all women except one speaker? There had never been a panel with all women speakers [paper presenters].

**VDT:** This first one, in 1971?

**PRESSER:** Yes, it was considered really a radical thing. Moni Nag opened up his discussion by saying, "Despite what you might think, these are all very scholarly presentations." We got at him afterwards, why did he have to start off by saying that? And he said, "I think everyone thought it was going to be radical sloganeering or something and it wasn't going to be scholarly." Papers about women by women don't have to be non-scientific; they can be honest, academic research papers about women's issues. There were people who told him his career could be hurt by being a speaker.

**VDT:** Dudley Duncan in my interview with him talked about his and Beverly Duncan's positions at that time. She was very upset that women were rising up and saying PAA had discriminated against women; she didn't feel that--and the fact that PAA was taking what they considered political stands. They left PAA at that time, because of that.

**PRESSER:** I don't recall that in particular, but I remember some women speaking up at the time and saying this. If you look at the women who were speaking up and didn't identify with this, they were all associated with distinguished male demographers and had an asset that other women didn't have.

**VDT:** Had a what?

**PRESSER:** An asset. Do we all have to marry distinguished male demographers not to be discriminated against? And if you think about it, where was Irene Taeuber? [Associated with Princeton's Office of Population Research but working out of her home and the Library of Congress in Washington.] You look at Judith Blake, she's in a school of public health. You look at distinguished women and where they've been placed; they haven't had major traditional disciplinary appointments. They've been on the fringe in their employment pattern, in the past. It's not true now.

Now, they may not have minded and it may have been what they wanted. What makes me happy about myself professionally is that I've exceeded my expectations of what I had earlier thought possible. Even if I were discriminated against in the blatant old-fashioned way--I don't feel I am now--but if I were discriminated against, the fact remains that I exceeded my expectations and society's expectations for a woman, given my cohort. These women may have been comparing themselves to their expectations and they went so far beyond what society and everybody wanted that they felt good about their careers as women.

But that may not be the way other women feel about it. Some delayed their careers because of their families. Deborah Freedman had Ron Freedman; she came to the field late. It was undoubtedly a great advantage to have his support and she does wonderful work. She would have done wonderful work on her own anyway, but she very well may not have been given the opportunity. I don't say she's one of that group, because I think she's been very supportive of women's issues in PAA. Judith Blake had Kingsley Davis. Take all those women. Who were the women that didn't have a distinguished husband. Who were the presidents?

**VDT:** Evelyn Kitagawa [and Margaret Hagood]. They were rare.

**PRESSER:** Right. So that's my view. And the other thing is I think there's a socialization, a consciousness-raising about what discrimination is and how it plays a role. It's very subtle and people may not be aware of the subtlety unless they've felt they've experienced it themselves.

**VDT:** You pointed out in your vignette the discrimination that was perhaps unintended in the first

version of PAA's first "Careers in Demography" pamphlet [published in 1974]. The two examples were both male. When you did get a female in there after protesting, it turned out to be a consultant with a glamorous job that was rare for demographers, male or female.

Then there was the notorious case of women being kept out of the bar at the hotel in Toronto [1972 meeting]. That's my hometown and I've always been embarrassed about that; it was my first meeting. I wasn't aware that that happened, but I could well imagine it because Toronto was very backward [then].

**PRESSER:** Yes. Then we got the assurance that it wouldn't happen in New Orleans the next year, but it did. We called the press in on that. It was a men's grill. They had promised they would serve women before PAA agreed to meet at that hotel. We had heard that women did not get served in the grill when the sociology people [American Sociological Association] met there. So we anticipated we would not get served. We went to the grill as a group and sat at the table, we had a reservation, they did not serve us. The TV people came and we got media coverage on this. The hotel then changed its policy.

**VDT:** The policy of the Monteleone Hotel in New Orleans--great!

**PRESSER:** It was the media attention, not the principle, that led to that.

**VDT:** And you also changed policy on the "head of household." You were one of the feminist group--you called them feminists then--who formed the Social Scientists in Population Research.

**PRESSER:** Right. I came down here in the fall of 1976. I loved Washington because I knew a lot of people here, including several good friends, and I realized that most of these people that I liked a lot did not know each other. I formed this group initially just so a lot of us who were doing work in population could meet and talk informally. We created our name after we got together.

At our first meeting at my house, we decided since we were very task-oriented professional women--government and academic--that we would focus our meetings on specific issues. Barbara Bergmann, whom I had recently met as a colleague here at the University of Maryland in the economics department, was then on the Census Advisory Committee of the American Economic Association and had asked me how demographers use the "head of household" concept as designated by the Census Bureau. There were women's groups that were protesting its use, NOW and other feminist groups. I said, "Gee, I never use 'head of household.' I'll go look it up." I looked it up and it defined head of household as whoever designated him/herself as such--no precise definition. I don't remember the exact words, but it was very ambiguous and the respondent was expected to know what was meant by "the head." However, if you were a wife, no matter what you thought, the Census classified the husband automatically as the head.

This is problematic strictly from a technical side. Take, for example, a two-generational household: a father, mother, and adult daughter are living there. If the mother says she's the head, it will be the father who's coded as head. If the daughter says she's the head, she could be coded head because she's not married. Which is correct? Why should it be the daughter or the father? In other words, where you have multi-generations there's no clear answer to that. And for married couples, what does it mean when the federal government insists only the husband can be the household head?

So our group called a special meeting to discuss this. NICHD was having an advisory committee meeting which Jane Menken and some other women were attending and they joined our group. We invited Paul Glick and Arthur Norton from the Census Bureau to come and talk on this issue. Norton elected not to come; Glick came. His interpretation as I've heard him tell it--he must have talked to you about it [He did; see Glick's interview]--is a very different interpretation than we

would have. I think when he came to meet with us--at Mary Grace Kovar's house--he was shocked at how many people were there, and we were all women. We basically wanted to know why the Census needed to designate a household head. There was really resistance to changing it because of wanting to keep things the same [comparable data] over the years, etc.

Actually, initially I didn't care that much about that issue. I was always defined as head of household, being the only adult member of my household for many years. I wasn't sensitive to the issue, but I became concerned when I looked more closely at the ambiguous nature of the concept. Technically, I didn't know what it meant. So we had thought we would meet with people from the Census Bureau before we made a bigger issue of it, so that we'd make sure as demographers that we weren't getting rid of something that was really important.

Essentially, what it came down to when we met with Paul was that they wanted a measure of who was "top dog" and I recall that phrase was used. So it was valued as a measure of authority structure. This explicit justification by Paul then mobilized those at the meeting to feel that if the Census wanted to measure who had the most authority, let them ask an authority question. And if it's not authority, ask what it is that you want to know--who owns or rents the house, who's the primary wage-earner, whatever. Be clear about what you mean when you say "head" so that we can be clear about what you get as a response. And that was really it.

Some of the people attending the meeting, Sandra Tangri for example, worked for the Commission on Human Rights. Afterwards, the chair of the Commission on Human Rights, Arthur Fleming, wrote a very strong letter to the acting director of the Census Bureau, Robert Hagan, expressing concern about the concept as a human rights issue. The women in our group were members of different professional associations and mobilized a letter-writing campaign to the Census Bureau and Congresswoman Pat Schroeder. At the same time, Barbara Bergmann was on this Census Advisory Committee and she had raised the issue. She claims she was accused by Dan Levine at the Census Bureau of trying to destroy the 1980 census by pushing for this change. Several in our group met with Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, who was then chair of the congressional subcommittee that funded the Census Bureau. She got very interested in this issue.

At first the Census Bureau said they weren't going to change, but then they decided to drop the concept of head of household and to pretest alternative ways. Lots of other censuses in the world do not refer to a head of household--Canada, for example. We looked into this because we wanted to know did it make a difference, would it be wrong technically to change?

It's very interesting that the Census and BLS [Bureau of Labor Statistics] resisted dropping the concept, but having done so, nobody's yelling about how they can't do what they used to be able to do.

**VDT:** They were not clear on what they needed to know. That's great!

**PRESSER:** The other policy side of it, which I think is interesting, is that once we knew how to interact with Pat Schroeder's office, we were able to move on to other issues and get her support. She was very interested in family issues--still is--and interested in getting needed data. The major national data on child support that helped to make the case for the Child Support Enforcement Act was collected by the Census Bureau--for the first time--as a consequence of our group's efforts as well. Barbara Bergmann was the key person again. She was very much interested in child support and got our group to push for a supplement on the CPS on child support. We succeeded, although we didn't have a say over the specific questions. We lobbied Pat Schroeder to get this child support supplement, which she very much wanted also.

This was in 1979 [supplement to the April 1979 CPS]. It showed that a high percentage of unmarried women with children weren't even decreed child support, and of those who were decreed child support, a very low percentage were getting it. That's again an example of the significance of getting some basic parameters as a start, which, in turn, gets people interested in learning more. That's

what findings from the supplement did; it generated a whole lot of interest in the topic. Now you look at the PAA program, child support's there, which was never a demographic issue.

I think that our group really had an impact. We disbanded over the years, after we started to rotate organizers. It was a very time-consuming activity for otherwise busy professionals.

**VDT:** What about the Women's Caucus, is it going to disband? In 1981 you wrote, "We still cannot take for granted that women's issues are recognized by demographers as an integral part of the study of population. Nor is sexism in the profession dead. The need for an active Women's Caucus continues." What do you feel about it now? Is gender a non-issue in PAA now?

**PRESSER:** It may be less of an issue, but I don't think it's ever a non-issue. I felt good about the PAA program this year [1989 meeting, arranged by Presser as 1988 president-elect and 1989 president]. Almost 40 percent of session organizers were women. I was very keen to have at least the same percentage as of women in the association. I think we got close to 40 percent, which is more than we are in the Association. The current percentage of women is somewhere in the 30s; I don't recall exactly what it is.

Session organizers play a major role. This is why I think women had gotten left out in the past, because organizers select the papers and when they're almost all males, it makes a difference. It isn't just the topics selected that is relevant. In planning the program, you're constrained if you want to represent all of demography, but I think we had more papers on gender issues at the last [1989] meeting than we've had before. And when women present papers that do not focus on gender issues, gender nevertheless often enters into discussion of these issues. Every topic, even mortality, is gender relevant.

**VDT:** Even mortality? Especiallly mortality!

**PRESSER:** So I think one had to continue monitoring this. Knowing who's coming up as president, Larry Bumpass, I think that the representation of women won't be a controversial issue [at 1990 meeting]. Maybe, hopefully, it will never again be a controversial issue.

**VDT:** In Jay Siegel's interview for this series, we talked quite a bit about gender. I asked him how you get to be a PAA president. He said that in recent years it's helped to be a woman, that when you have a man and woman running against each other the woman wins, because all the women are going to vote for her outright. That's his claim.

**PRESSER:** But women are not the majority of PAA, so I don't understand.

**VDT:** You've just pointed out that they're only 30 some percent. Well, frankly, he used you running against Joe Stycos for an example; you were the two nominees for president in your year [1988 for 1989 president-elect]. He felt that Joe Stycos, who's older than you and been in the field longer, had lost out in his one chance to be PAA president, in a sense, because he ran against, well, a very popular demographer, but also you were a woman. He felt you were voted in, perhaps, because you were a woman. What do you think about that?

**PRESSER:** Well, it's hard to talk about my own election. Was Joe Stycos ever vice-president of PAA? If not, would Jay attribute this to Joe not being a woman? [Stycos has not been a PAA vice-president. He was a Board member for the term 1968-71.] I don't like the argument generally that women get elected because they're women, because you could say then that all men have gotten elected because they're men. And we don't say this, that the reason we had all these male presidents in



the past is because they were male. Is Jay Siegel making a big thing about that?

**VDT:** Well, that's not quite how they were picked. He suggested [regarding presidents in general] name recognition, reputation, all their students will vote for them.

**PRESSER:** You could argue also that I have not been in a population center; I don't have all these students. I really thought I was going to lose for exactly the reason that Jay said, that people would be saying that Joe Stycos might not have a chance to run again and I would. I have a high regard for Joe Stycos and I like him. So I didn't like running against him because you don't like to run against someone you like.

There are women who did not win in a recent election. And the other thing is--I don't mean this in my context but I would say this is how I used to think in the past, maybe less so now when things have opened up--when it is difficult for women to achieve, then the women who make it have to be better than average. If those same women are going to run against men, it isn't an asset to be a woman. They have to be distinctive in some way to have gotten where they were, more so than men on average have to be. It's actually a put-down to say women win primarily because they're women, that merit doesn't play an important part. I don't feel I won because I'm a woman. I feel I won despite the fact that I am a woman.

**VDT:** Great. That takes care of that.

[**Editorial note:** Suzanne Bianchi, PAA secretary-treasurer 1987-90, reported (November 28, 1989, personal communication) that the count in this case was: 656 votes for Presser; 309 for Stycos. This was a greater margin than in three other counts of votes for president monitored by Bianchi, so the result was "clearly not a question of sex."]

**VDT:** Now about your tenure as president. I did want to ask you if you made special efforts in the program for your meeting in Baltimore and you pointed out that you made an effort to have women as session organizers. You obviously had a strong program committee. Besides your colleagues here at Maryland, Joan Kahn, Jay Teachman and others, you had Eduardo Arriaga, Susan Cochran, Henry David, Jeff Evans, Gerry Hendershot, and Charles Keely. Did they all really contribute?

**PRESSER:** Yes, we met in this very room [sociology department conference room], twice; we met and took on assignments, then we came back. We wanted to make sure that we listed all the key areas that we thought PAA programs should always have, so we could pass it on to Larry and others. If they wanted to use it, as PAA program chairs, it was at their discretion, but we thought we should proceed very systematically. A student of mine entered into the computer all the last five years' programs and we went over them to be sure we weren't omitting in our program an area that maybe should be covered. Each person took on a few of those areas and came in with suggested names for session organizers. That's when I asked them to think of women. When they had several names and we needed more women, I selected those names to call first.

The committee was very active in forming the program. It was not that active in implementing it. I had all the responsibility of contacting the organizers, getting things done on time, and getting people to send things in. By the way, we told the sessions organizers that we had made the titles fairly generic and, depending on the response, they could focus the titles more along what the papers were. So all those titles that you see were not necessarily specified to the organizers that way. Like Gwen Johnson-Ascadi; she was assigned a general session on mortality. It ended up being on reproduction and mortality, because the papers that she accepted were all focused on that issue.

**VDT:** Is that different from what it's been in the past, in your experience?

**PRESSER:** I don't know. I told Larry what we had done. One of the things I'm doing now is examining the change in the program over time. Since we have entered in the past five years, I've decided to go back 20 years and take the five-year period 1965 to 1969 and compare that with what the PAA did from 1985 to 1989 and we're going to submit it to PAA Affairs [see issue of Spring 1991]. It occurred to me that there were not as many papers submitted on family planning as there used to be; I remember those meetings years ago. You take a much harder look at the content of the program when you're program chair than when you're just a participant. It's now very heavy on the family and household demography. We created a lot more sessions because of so many papers coming in, but we allowed for this possibility in the initial planning. Now, 20 years ago, we also had fewer sessions and that does affect the diversity of the program.

**VDT:** But there were more in the late 1960s on family planning?

**PRESSER:** I think so; I'll be able to tell you empirically soon.

**VDT:** You had 84 sessions, like the year before, 1988, which is a record; eight overlapping at times. Did you nevertheless find that a lot of good papers had to be turned down?

**PRESSER:** I left slots open for sessions to be added. We had a couple of time slots left on Saturday if we wanted to use them. I only scheduled four on Saturday afternoon, so if we wanted to add more sessions, we could [and did; six sessions were held]. The default would be having fewer on Saturday afternoon, which are bad time slots anyway, so it wasn't a bad default. I asked every session organizer who claimed that they had many more papers than they could handle whether they had enough for another good session. Nobody who said yes didn't get their additional session. One of the problems I learned as program chair is that people don't like to reject the papers of their colleagues. They will write their colleagues what a great paper it is and then tell me it wasn't worth putting in another session for.

**VDT:** They tell the colleague, I regret I have too many . . .

**PRESSER:** And Harriet Presser says we can't have another session.

**VDT:** It's good enough for another session, but alas, no. Did you, like Ren Farley [1988 president and program chair], make a conscious effort to have some sessions with more give-and-take? He inaugurated the "Author-meets-critics" sessions and you had two of those too.

**PRESSER:** I thought it was a very good idea too.

**VDT:** I think he felt it was a conscious effort to get back to the give-and-take from the floor that the oldtimers recall about early PAA meetings and keep regretting there isn't more of now.

**PRESSER:** I put time slots on the program for all papers and left at least 15 to 20 minutes for discussion, which each organizer was told to allow. I really discouraged five papers a session, for that reason. There were to be four papers and more time for discussion. Nobody complained and I don't know what the feedback is about having or not having enough time for discussion.

I followed what Ren had written to his organizers and asked that they consider alternatives to a regular paper session, think more of a panel. Ren said his experience was the same as mine: that

people want to give their papers. They don't really want to do panels. So that's a constraint.

**VDT:** Right. Some of the oldtimers, when commenting on panel sessions have said they've become paper sessions too. And people are not being encouraged to get up and make the talk that the early meetings encouraged. Do you think that's too bad?

**PRESSER:** Yes, I do; it would be nice to have. When I select what sessions to go to at a meeting, I try to go to sessions that I can't read the papers of later. In other words, sessions that are either going to have an interesting discussion or the design of the session is such that it's not just a series of papers you can read later. You're at the meeting, you have a lot of constraints on your time, you want to see people, so you try to attend sessions that produce a good exchange of ideas. I think that's important. It's very hard. And the other thing is it's hard [to get good discussion going]. I heard that in the two sessions I had on author-meets-critics, they were all just congratulating each other.

**VDT:** No, that's not true. I was at Frank Levy's "Dollars and Dreams" [The Changing American Income Distribution] and Easterlin made some constructive remarks. Of course, he was on the panel, but there were some from the floor.

**PRESSER:** Good, I'm glad to hear that.

**VDT:** It was a lively session, but unfortunately in too large a room. It was the one where you gave your presidential address. Population Today in its writeup criticized that particular room; it was too long. These give-and-take sessions still happen in the Psychosocial Workshop, which I attend each year, but it doesn't seem to happen in any sessions of PAA. People regret that. And, for the first time, you had workshops on Wednesday night. Do you think there are getting to be too many spinoffs?

**PRESSER:** I see these workshops as being in line with the kinds of things that meetings should be about. They produce exchanges that you can't read about after. Some [on Wednesday night] were on data sets, to educate the students as well as other people about existing data sets. There are only certain things you can do in the program. You don't want to give one region all the sessions; you have a limit on the number of sessions. The demographers studying China wanted to do more than what was on the program and I said if they wanted to take an odd slot like an evening, they could add a workshop to the program.

**VDT:** They had Thursday evening in addition [and a "Chinese Student Meeting" on Wednesday afternoon]. The last two years had Thursday evening workshops, but I was talking about those Wednesday ones, the ones that ran into the wine and beer party.

**PRESSER:** It seemed like the only other time to give. The alternative is not to have the workshops at all. So why not give them that. And it [Chinese demography workshop, Thursday evening] was very well attended, I understand.

**VDT:** Oh, packed--even before Tiananmen Square was on everyone's mind. You had a great alumni party dance. Everybody agreed that was the best ever. The year before was the first time they had put the alumni parties together.

Let's talk about current issues in PAA. A leading one, I understand from Suzanne Bianchi--and you've mentioned it--is who's going to do PAA's business, now that ASA will no longer be handling it.

**PRESSER:** I think for the record it has to be noted that the American Statistical Association has

decided that they cannot handle us, so we have been pushed into a decision. I think what's emerging is a short-term crisis and a long-term gain. Because, as I mentioned, at the Board meeting earlier, before this crisis emerged, we had been talking about changes and I had formed a committee to consider ways of increasing our Washington presence. We had already had a committee meeting.

That committee was chaired by Jeff Evans and had Charlie Keely, Ren Farley, and Signe Wetrogan. We like to bring in the state and local demographers [Evans and Wetrogan are with the federal government]. We made a special effort to do that, because they had felt they were left out on committees. I included them on several committees this year.

**VDT:** Business members too--business committee members?

**PRESSER:** I put Hallie Kintner on the census advisory committee. I've been very sensitive to their concerns; I hope they see it.

**VDT:** Good point; I had that question. You met before to discuss whether there should be a Washington presence, that committee?

**PRESSER:** I was not on the committee but I formed it and they had decided that although there were a lot of things we could do, our best bet was to stay with the American Statistical Association. Well, about a week after that committee report was completed, the American Statistical Association broke the news that they didn't want to have us anymore. They had management problems, I think, which reputedly were being exacerbated by handling us. It isn't strictly financial, because they're not asking us for more money. Actually, they are, but just in the short run until we get out.

Over the years, there have been vibes about leaving AStatA. I remember at various times when I was on the Board, there were discussions about whether to stay with them or not. But at the last Board meeting in Baltimore, it was a different issue--not just management. We're getting bigger, particularly as a science rather than membership size, where we're really ready for a change. We're using the Population Resource Center for educating politicians about our field; they want more money to spend on their support staff to continue what they're doing for us. The demand on our finances and activities is growing, and yet we don't really have any clear organization to handle it. We have people doing all kinds of things, but don't really have someone overseeing all of it.

**VDT:** An executive director, in other words?

**PRESSER:** Now, we met yesterday with Bill D'Antonio of the American Sociological Association. They're very interested in pursuing the possibility of their handling our affairs. They're going to prepare a budget. We visited their quarters. They can give us two rooms, which might be fixed into one big room; with two people it might be more comfortable as one room.

The way we're talking now, we would have a half-time person, equivalent to an executive director, and a full-time administrative assistant, and have a lot of other services that would be handled in collaboration with ASocA. Unlike what we've had at AStatA, we'd have two different people; clearly half of a person would be fully ours and one other person would be totally ours. I don't know how the rest of the ASocA--their budget committee and council--will vote on this when we get all the figures and make a decision, but in my mind it's the right decision to be moving toward. And ultimately we should have an executive director doing this full-time. [In spring 1990, the management of PAA business affairs did indeed move to the American Sociological Association, with Jen Suter, working somewhat less than full-time, as PAA Administrator and Jenifer Kilroy--as of late 1990--working full-time as her assistant. They occupy an official PAA office--a first for PAA--on the fourth and top floor of the ASA headquarters on N Street N.W. in Washington, announced by a PAA plaque

at the entrance to the building.]

**VDT:** Well, this is an important time in PAA history. It ranks along with the decision to move toward getting any paid help at all, which happened in the late 1960s.

**PRESSER:** We were getting away on the cheap. The reason everyone always went along with staying with the American Statistical Association was that they were able to do it for very little. We were paying \$45 a year, until we just made an increase.

**VDT:** You mean everything that Jean Smith and Lee Decker and everyone else did cost \$45 a year?

**PRESSER:** Per person--of our dues.

**VDT:** How much are our dues? Not much more than that.

**PRESSER:** We were paying dues of \$45.

**VDT:** And all that work was being performed within the \$45?

**PRESSER:** That's right, and we could never do it any other way. No matter what the costs were in terms of our professional development or whatever, there was resistance to increasing our dues. Now the American Statistical Association has upped the costs of doing this for us and they're only doing it on a monthly basis until we find somewhere else. So we had to increase our dues recently to \$70.

**VDT:** Seventy dollars! I haven't had a notice of that.

**PRESSER:** I guess you haven't had a renewal yet. The renewals occur continually over the year, so yours may not yet be due. [My renewal notice, for \$70, had arrived when I got home from this interview. At least I'd been warned! JvdT.] And that's just the minimum. If we want to expand our activities substantially, we'd have to raise our dues much more. There's always been a resistance to go that way and we've sort of taken the route of going on the cheap. But, you know, we pay \$90 for IUSSP [\$100 in 1990; \$115 in 1991]. I pay, I think, \$130 for the American Sociological Association.

So PAA has always been relatively inexpensive, but we haven't been demanding much from the home office, other than printing and mailings. Everything we do is managed by officers and committees, and I think there's been a cost to the profession.

**VDT:** You said the flip side of that is to get more members and there should be an effort to recruit more PAA members from the much larger group of people who teach or work in demography.

**PRESSER:** But then you need someone who's going to be concerned about membership. We have Hewlett money which we never seem to be able to spend because we don't have anyone who can stay on top of it for a long time. We have concerns about getting minorities into the Association, yet we don't have anyone that can manage developing and implementing an outreach program to get minorities into the Association. It takes time and money. That's what an executive director who has some staff in Washington could do. There must be lots of other things that no one's had time to think about that we should be doing. Publicity, you mentioned earlier, is one thing.

**VDT:** A regular media outlet, right.

**PRESSER:** We're no longer a marginal association that's second to other disciplines. I think we have to think of ourselves differently today.

**VDT:** I think you're going to be a historic president in many ways, because if you make this shift it is a gain--a landmark.

**PRESSER:** In the long run, I think.

**VDT:** In PAA history. What will be your recommendations to the incoming president, Larry Bumpass? Obviously, of course, to move further along these lines you've just spoken about. And you've mentioned suggestions on the meetings. Do you still enjoy the meetings? Obviously, you do.

**PRESSER:** More now than ever before; I won't have to plan it again! I saw these great smiles on ex-presidents at the last meeting and I said, "I know why you're smiling; it's over."

**VDT:** It is a very hard year. Since 1976 presidents have been responsible for the program; before then it was the first vice-president--plus your presidential address, plus all your own work.

**PRESSER:** And a very important additional activity now is having to be concerned about where to go from the American Statistical Association.

**VDT:** How do you get time to do all these things? You really have many irons in the fire. Of course, no longer child care.

**PRESSER:** Now I only study child care. [Laughter]

**VDT:** Let me quote Dan Price's remark on you, on being goal-oriented; it's appropriate. He said [in introduction to Presser's 1989 presidential address]: "If I had to choose one concept to characterize Harriet Presser, it would be 'goal-oriented'--determination. Her education did not come smoothly for her. Her college education was interrupted by periods of work as well as her graduate education, but she never lost sight of her goals." I think that's been true of you all the way through. This has been great. Thank you very much.

**PRESSER:** I've enjoyed it.

## **ADDENDA**

**VDT:** Harriet has brought me to lunch in a lovely dining room, with a pretty inner-courtyard garden, where we're the last people, at the Adult Education Center. You say you have NCHS committee meetings here?

**PRESSER:** Not committee meetings. We just meet informally with NCHS people here often for lunch.

**VDT:** Harriet has been talking about some interesting things she's been doing in research and her contacts with people in other organizations.

**PRESSER:** In September, I went to an international symposium on night work and shift work, in Italy. It's a group formed by the International Commission on Occupational Health and Safety, I

believe, that's been meeting every two years in different countries, for many years. I was invited to go to their meetings after the Science article appeared [1983, on shift work]. Don Tepas, the U.S. representative, indicated that they were not trying to expand their attendance but were interested in my perspective, the demographic perspective, which was not there. There is biomedical as well as social science, but the latter are mostly psychologists. They are mostly non-Americans. A lot of the interest in night work and shift work is outside the U.S.

My first meeting was in Poland, two years ago. They alternate between Eastern and Western Europe, although they've met in Japan and Australia. They are a group that does mostly experimental work looking at the consequences for individuals of night work and shift work. They're interested in issues like the effect of light on vital rhythms, all these issues relating to the circadian rhythm. They have no sense in general of what the prevalence of shiftworkers is in their countries. They have samples of 5, 20; they talk about rural-urban differences. However, on the biomedical side it's really fascinating.

I love being in such meetings where nobody really knows you. They think of you as a token sociologist as well as demographer, because there's no sociologist there either. They're really dealing with important issues and they're receptive when you talk about how the context is broader than the laboratory. It's interesting. It's nice to be able to expand beyond the demographic and sociological audience. This has happened with the child care issue as well.

**VDT:** One thing about the Women's Caucus we didn't mention--it's in your vignette--is how a couple of times there were no women candidates for the Board and the Caucus proposed them. Suzanne Bianchi mentioned that she had been one of those proposed [and elected] in one of those years.

**PRESSER:** Wendy Baldwin was elected, as a nominee from the Women's Caucus.

**VDT:** I remember that. And you say that Evelyn Kitagawa . . .

**PRESSER:** You mentioned Evelyn Kitagawa as a person who didn't have a distinguished husband in demography and yet made president and I questioned whether or not she would have been nominated had there not been concerns directed by the Women's Caucus about the fact that women weren't getting nominated. She rightly deserved it, but a woman might not have come back into the presidency at that time had there not been the women's movement--and the PAA Women's Caucus.

**VDT:** How do you account for the earlier ones who got by without the women's movement--Irene Taeuber? Well, she had a husband, but not Dorothy Thomas; she picked him up but I don't think he helped her.

**PRESSER:** Dorothy Thomas goes way back and I think things probably were better then. In the 1950s and 1960s, women had a real setback in terms of higher education.

**VDT:** Not in the 1950s; that's when these three women were president.

**PRESSER:** But their careers began much earlier. The percent of women in higher education dropped after World War II.

**VDT:** They were not there, prepared to take leading roles, because they hadn't gone on for doctorates, is that what you're saying?

**PRESSER:** I'm saying that before World War II, I think things were better. Then there was a setback, in the 1950s and 1960s, that prevailed through all the associations, in the attitudes about women and where women should be.

**VDT:** That was part of the togetherness after World War II, everybody seemed to go back to home, hearth, and family.

**PRESSER:** I read something about Margaret Sanger--you probably know the details better--that she was actively involved in setting up the first world conference on population; she was told specifically to remove her name or people wouldn't come.

**VDT:** The conference in 1927 in Geneva. It was never hidden that she was the one who called that. But Raymond Pearl was brought in to give her [scientific] support and the IUSSP grew out of that and he became the first executive director.

But, of course, there's the famous story about the beginning of PAA. She was instrumental in getting a first meeting to organize it [May 7, 1931].

**PRESSER:** Yet I saw the notes of the meeting and there's hardly anything on her input at the meeting.

**VDT:** Not only that, but her name was put up for vice-president and she was told to remove it. But in this case it was not because she was a woman; it was because she was an activist. They didn't want to get into birth control.

**PRESSER:** You don't think the others were concerned about birth control?

**VDT:** They felt that would muddy the pure scientific waters. Frank Notestein wrote about that several times. We ran it as one of the history vignettes ["Keeping PAA Professionally Pure," PAA Affairs, Summer 1983]. Margaret Sanger's birth control activism, like the idea that PAA should come out in favor of legalizing abortion, was considered a political stand that PAA should stay out of. I think that was in part what people felt about the resolution on women in the profession, that it was PAA taking a political stand which traditionally they had not done. And from the very first meeting, when they asked Margaret Sanger--Henry Pratt Fairchild became the president and it was he or somebody [Frederick Osborn] who got up and suggested that she not run for vice-president.

**PRESSER:** That's interesting; I don't know enough about that.

**VDT:** What are you going to do about the new [1989] directory?

**PRESSER:** We have already moved on this. When we sent out the announcement of sessions for the next [1990] PAA meeting, we put in a flyer that announced that the [first 1989] PAA directory had numerous errors in it and that we were either going to have an addendum or issue a new one. If people had any changes to make, to send them to the PAA office immediately. This would include new addresses, not just errors, which were mostly errors of telephone numbers, due to a computer mistake in the printing of the directory.

**VDT:** What I regret very much in this latest directory is that it didn't have what people's degrees were in. That was very important for me. Only the degree years were given.

**PRESSER:** Why is it important to have the field?



**VDT:** In my case, it was important to know what your three degrees were in. Of course, I found you out in Who's Who. Petersen [Biographies of Demographers] doesn't list degrees at all.

**PRESSER:** I've never seen my listing in Petersen. I've never looked up Who's Who either.

**VDT:** Well, you're there.

**PRESSER:** That I know, because I sent them some requested details.

**VDT:** Eventually, I think, the archives of PAA will have to go into PAA's business office. Maybe not. Of course, they should be in the controlled climate that they have at a library. They're in the archive section of Georgetown's library. At the moment, they're squashed in behind the papers of Harry Hopkins. Also, I've got all these materials now in my home, boxes and boxes of tapes, transcripts, etc., which need eventually to go into the PAA archives. I'm not sure Georgetown will have more space. Originally, there was somebody specifically to look after our archives; there's nobody now. So I have not sent things there in the past few years. They regularly get PAA Affairs and Demography, but they throw them in the last box.

**PRESSER:** I mentioned that the committee formed to consider increasing our organizational presence in Washington decided to stay with the American Statistical Association. But in that report, they listed many options. One was to get someone at a university to be secretary-treasurer, but to do more than our secretary-treasurer currently does, to offer to subsidize them by giving them half or part of their salary for release time, and making the secretary-treasurer's role stronger, so it would be more equivalent to someone who would take care of all the materials of the PAA and would play the role of almost an executive director. Which was an interesting idea.

**VDT:** Almost the executive director's role.

**PRESSER:** Except there would be some things that you'd have to be in Washington for; it facilitates things to have someone in Washington. Like our work with the Population Resource Center.

**VDT:** They were thinking this could be someone not in Washington?

**PRESSER:** Right. Apparently other associations do that. The secretary-treasurers are at various academic institutions and they are subsidized and play a much greater role than ours. There's just so much that Suzanne Bianchi or any secretary can do with the minimal release time they're given and a lot of other responsibilities.

**VDT:** Some of our earlier secretary-treasurers were at academic institutions, not in Washington, like Dan Price [1956-59]. But Andy Lunde [secretary-treasurer 1965-68] explained that they realized they had to be in Washington, in part because they then made the association with the American Statistical Association [in 1967] and had to be here, because of the business attachment. And the government offices at that stage [1960s] were the only ones that would allow them to do PAA work on office time and they had the backup secretaries. No academic institution could afford to do that.

**PRESSER:** As I just said, PAA would pay them to do that--one of the alternatives. Another alternative discussed by the Board recently--and this might be interesting, because we don't know where we're going yet--is to go with a management association and polish our image a bit; hire

someone who really knows how to build up membership, how to generate money for our mailing list, whatever.

**VDT:** You mean a management association that would give us advice and we would go in that direction or that would manage us?

**PRESSER:** That would manage us. But these management places don't offer executive directors; they just take care of the different things that we need, sub-contract it or do it themselves. They don't require us to rent physical space, so we could avoid having to pay rent that way. They're not cheap.

**VDT:** We're talking about Harriet being on the Council of the Population Section of the American Public Health Association [1978-83; chair in 1983]. This came up when we said that in APHA if you belong to the Population Section, you have to belong to the whole of APHA, whereas in the Population and Environment Division of the American Psychological Association it still costs just five dollars and you don't have to join the mother entity.

**PRESSER:** And this was said in the context of PAA dues going up from \$45 to \$70, that may affect membership.

**VDT:** A lot of people may drop out when they're suddenly faced with this near doubling. [But PAA membership actually increased following the dues increase and transfer of business management from the American Statistical Association to the American Sociological Association, from 2,679 at the end of 1989 to 2,752 at the end of 1990.]

**PRESSER:** Going back to the APHA, when I did the program for that section, we had one session, again organized by Ruth Dixon, on what it was like for women in establishment population organizations. It was a very good session. It was women in Pathfinder, the Population Council, etc. This was in the mid-1970s, I believe.

Essentially what women were saying was that the feminists thought they were not taking enough action on women's issues and the women in these associations felt they were making a lot of waves given the nature of the organizations and they were caught in between. This theme was repeated consistently. Women's self-help health groups were very active in their efforts to empower women, which was not the goal of the population organizations. So the women were in a double-bind, because as members of the population organizations they felt they were banging their heads against the wall in their efforts for change. Yet there were complaints from feminists outside these organizations that they weren't doing enough.

It was a very interesting session at APHA and Ruth ran it beautifully. It was very informal, like we discussed earlier--what meetings should be like, what panels should be like. There was a lot of interchange; people were being very honest about their problems, not worrying about how it might sound to those not sympathetic to women's issues. I thought up the session, but Ruth did a marvelous job.

**VDT:** Ruth Dixon has been in the forefront. She chaired the Women's Caucus session at your meeting this year ["The Women's Movement and Reproductive Rights"].

**PRESSER:** Yes. Although we were students together [in the sociology department at Berkeley], Ruth attributes her going into demography to me. We were together in a class on factor analysis and she was contemplating her dissertation topic. I said, "Go talk to Kingsley Davis," and that did it for her. She went to talk to Kingsley and decided to be a demographer.

**VDT:** She just talked to him, didn't take a course? A number of people have said taking a course with him was what did it for them.

# PAA Honored Members

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## Harriet B. Presser

### Past Honored Member

Distinguished University Professor  
Department of Sociology  
University of Maryland College Park

Professor Presser's significant impact on the field of sociology and the subfield of social demography is reflected in her efforts throughout her career to mainstream a feminist perspective—that is, being sure that gender issues are included in research on social inequality. She founded the first population center in the world dedicated to such concerns, naming it the "University of Maryland Center on Population, Gender and Social Inequality," and directing it from 1987 to 2002. Throughout this period, she generated external funding that sustained a program of graduate training focused on gender and population in developing countries. In the Department of Sociology, she also developed a novel curriculum on gender, work and family back in the late 1970s that was then unique among sociology programs in the country. As President of the Population Association of America, and through her involvement in the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), Harriet Presser consistently encouraged the demographic community to become more inclusive, not only of women as individuals, but also of issues important to women.

Harriet Presser spent most of her career working on gender issues, in particular the intersection of gender, work, and family, both nationally and internationally. Her early work on female sterilization in Puerto Rico, which uncovered its widespread practice, was followed by novel and path breaking research on teenage childbearing, parental work schedules and child care. Later, she focused on the worldwide trend toward work at nonstandard hours (with the emergence of 24/7 economies) and its consequences for families in the U.S. and other countries.

Her early work in Puerto Rico and subsequent research in the United States alerted the demographic research and policy community to the pervasive use of sterilization among mainland U.S. couples with emphasis on the social and demographic implications. While at Columbia in the early 1970s, her NIH-funded project on the significance of first birth timing on the well-being of American mothers, with a focus on teenage childbearing, again generated findings of great interest to policy makers and was a forerunner of research on this topic over the subsequent decade. After moving to Maryland in 1976, she began to focus on the then understudied areas of child care and parental work schedules and included successful advocacy for including data on this topic by the Census Bureau and other national surveys in the U.S. and elsewhere. This work culminated in her book, published in 2003, entitled *Working in a 24/7 Economy*. Virtually every article written on work-life balance cites her work and this book in particular.

Harriet Presser received training in Sociology and Demography from University of North Carolina and University of California, Berkeley and worked at The Population Council and Columbia University before coming to Maryland in 1976. Professor Presser served as the President of The Population Association of America in 1989 and has received numerous awards including Founders Distinguished Senior Scholar Award, American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation and was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

Nowhere is her impact on the field more lasting than on the students and colleagues she mentored, many of whom have become not only scholars but institution builders in their own right. Her students and colleagues knew her as a tough critic whose approval was a seal of quality they continually sought, a cheerleader who was always there to support them through critical hurdles and a role model with rare ability to combine work with family and devotion to high quality research with feminist activism.

Harriet's students and colleagues feel proud to be a part of her family that includes her daughter Sheryl Presser and partner Phillip Corfman, the first director of NICHD's Center for Population Research and a long-time women's health activist.

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**HARRIET B. PRESSER AWARD**



Obituaries

## Harriet B. Presser, U.Md. sociology professor

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Harriet B. Presser, 75, a University of Maryland sociology professor and founder of the university's Center on Population, Gender and Social Inequality, died of ovarian cancer May 1 at her home in Bethesda.

The death was confirmed by her daughter, Sheryl Presser.

Dr. Presser had been on the U-Md. faculty since 1976 and specialized in gender issues. In 1988, she founded the Center on Population, Gender and Social Inequality (now the Maryland Population Research Center).

Over the years, her research included fertility and family planning, birth control and sterilization. In the 1970s, she collaborated in a behind-the-scenes effort to get the U.S. Census Bureau to stop the practice of using the term "head of household" and automatically conferring family leadership on husbands.

In 2002, Dr. Presser was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science "for innovative research on issues of population, labor force, gender, and social inequality; for exceptional institution building; and for outstanding service to demographic and sociological societies."

In 2010, the American Sociological Association honored Dr. Presser for work that "helped transform the field of demography by bringing a gender perspective to bear on the study of fertility and family processes."

Harriet Betty Rubinoff was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. She graduated from George Washington University in 1959 and received a master's degree in sociology in 1962 from the University of North Carolina.

She received a doctorate in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley in 1969 and then served seven years on the faculty of Columbia University's school of public health. In 1999, she was named a Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland.

She was a past president of the Population Association of America.

Her marriage to Neil Presser ended in divorce.

Survivors include her partner of 32 years, Philip Corfman of Bethesda; and daughter from her marriage, Sheryl Presser of New York.

— **Bart Barnes**

## Can We Make Time for Children? The Economy, Work Schedules, and Child Care

*Population Association of America,  
1989 Presidential Address*

**Harriet B. Presser**

Department of Sociology and Center on  
Population, Gender, and Social Inequality,  
University of Maryland, College Park,  
Maryland 20742

Not only are Americans having fewer children than ever before, they are spending less time with the children they have. This is due in large part to the growth in the labor force participation of women, which is most evident among mothers of young children, and to the decline in the proportion of families with fathers present.<sup>1</sup> Although we often acknowledge that because of these trends, more and more parents—particularly mothers—must “juggle” their time between work and family responsibilities, we devote little attention to changes at the societal level that influence their options. The dynamics are far more complicated than we generally recognize.

The overall objective of this address is to elaborate on the changing temporal organization of the workplace—its growing diversity and flexibility—and how these temporal dimensions affect the management of child care, including parental care, when mothers with young children are employed. Such an elaboration will present a more complex—and realistic—view than currently exists of the context in which employed parents are making both workplace and child care decisions. This, in turn, should demonstrate the need for broader research and policy agendas on how we care for children—agendas that give more attention to the problems that parents face in managing their time as well as economic resources to provide adequate care and more attention to the consequences for parents and children of the arrangements that are made.

Today, more than half of American mothers with children under the age of 6 are employed; about one-fifth of these employed mothers are single parents (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1989). The problem of limited time that employed mothers have for their children gets translated into two distinct policy concerns: how best to arrange for affordable, quality child care when mothers are employed and whether there are feasible workplace adaptations that allow parents more time to be home with their children when they are very young. (Although reference is often made to parents in this latter regard, it is typically mothers' time with children that people are thinking of when they discuss this issue.)

These two policy concerns are in the forefront today—perhaps because employed mothers are no longer mostly low-income mothers but women of all social classes. This broader constituency may be why there is now bipartisan political support for a federally funded child care program, although there is considerable debate about what such a program should entail and the amount of public funds to be allocated. Legislation requiring employers to grant unpaid parental leave is also being debated seriously. There are currently two National Academy of Science panels, one on child care policy and the other on employer policies and working families. Child care and related workplace issues are being given

extensive media coverage. All of this activity reflects the public's acknowledgment of the widespread problem of combining paid work and parenthood and the need to address many of its ramifications.

Missing in the discussion of this problem—by researchers, policymakers, and the media alike—is a consideration of how structural changes at the societal level are changing our time at the workplace and, relatedly, our child care options. Specifically, the growing service sector of our economy is diversifying the work schedules of Americans, providing some with more work-time choices and others with more work-time constraints. These economic changes affect the way children are cared for when mothers are employed and the way parents—both fathers and mothers—manage their time with their children and with each other.

It is of key importance that with the growing diversity of work schedules, employment is extending more into the evenings, nights, and weekends—particularly for women. Yet organized child care continues to be directed toward a restricted range of daytime and weekday hours. It is telling that we call family day care “*day care*” and that nurseries and child care centers are usually referred to as *day care centers*. Such care typically occurs Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., and many providers do not even offer the entire range of these hours.

This lack of fit between work schedules and the hours and days in which formal child care is provided affects the lives of millions of American parents. It encourages the participation of married fathers in child care, which can be regarded as a positive effect, since it increases parental time with children. This arrangement is specific to married couples, however, and is possible only when dual-earner spouses work different hours or days. We have little knowledge of the consequences that staggered work shifts have on family life, some of which may be negative.

The lack of fit between work schedules and the time formal child care is available is also increasing the demand for female relatives to provide child care. So, too, is the growing proportion of mothers returning to the labor force when their children are infants and toddlers. The pool of nonemployed female relatives, however, is declining with the overall increase in women's labor force participation. Consequently, employed female relatives who work different hours from mothers are participating in child care. Here, too, we know virtually nothing about the implications of child care provided under such conditions.

An alternative to reliance on relatives for child care when mothers work a nonstandard schedule is the expansion of child care facilities outside the home that provide service during the evenings, nights, and weekends. Yet we hear very little about efforts in this direction. We are currently struggling with the difficult problem of providing affordable quality child care to parents who work standard *daytime* hours. This, of course, is a serious issue; but we need to take a broader view—one that acknowledges the complex temporal realities of parents' work schedules and thus the complexity of their child care needs. I shall devote the first part of my presentation to an elaboration of this issue.

We also need to take a closer look at the temporal flexibility of the workplace. Such flexibility, by enabling employed parents to have more time with their children, is often portrayed as the “great hope” in resolving some of our child care problems. The time we spend on the job is, in fact, becoming more flexible; individuals have more discretion in arranging their work hours, work days, and time off. This could facilitate more parental time with young children and thus reduce some of the problems of access to affordable, quality child care—regardless of which hours or days parents are employed. As we shall see, however, the impact of job flexibility on parental time with children is minimal. Moreover, most parents do not seem willing to choose more time with children if it means less family income, even with job security. And unlike the growing diversity of work schedules, greater job flexibility seems to reinforce rather than mitigate gender differences among



dual-earner couples in assigning responsibility for child rearing. A discussion of these job flexibility issues is the focus of the second part of my presentation.

I shall conclude with some discussion about needed research that should enable us to assess more realistically the effects of the temporal organization of the workplace on the care of children. Such an assessment should, in turn, broaden the current policy debate on child care and workplace issues in ways that will be more responsive to the needs of employed parents and their children. I shall raise some policy questions in this context.

Since I am offering a structural perspective to these issues, I shall begin by discussing the diversity of work schedules in the United States in the context of a changing economy.

### The Diversity of Work Schedules in a Changing Economy

An important change in the economy is the growth of the service sector. This growth is considered to be a major factor that is increasing the demand for women's labor force participation, because there is a disproportionately high percentage of female occupations in the service sector (Levy, 1987; Oppenheimer, 1970).<sup>2</sup> But the influence goes in the other direction as well: women's increasing labor force participation contributes to the growth of the service economy. For example, the decline in full-time homemaking has generated an increase in the extent to which family members eat out and purchase other homemaking services. Moreover, women's increasing daytime labor force participation has generated a demand for services during nondaytime hours and weekends. Women are less able to shop during the day or be home for daytime service workers—at least not on weekdays. The increased real income of families due to the growth of dual-earner couples has also raised the demand for recreation and entertainment during evenings, nights, and weekends. Thus it is a reinforcing phenomenon: the demand for service workers increases women's labor force participation, and women's greater labor force participation increases the demand for service workers. Since many of the services occur after 5 p.m. and on weekends, the outcome in terms of the work schedules of Americans, both men and women, is a greater diversity in the hours and days they work.<sup>3</sup> Although trend data by industry are limited, findings from the May 1985 Current Population Survey (CPS) show that service industries have the highest percentage of employed persons working nonday schedules (Mellor, 1986) and the highest percentage working weekends (Smith, 1986).

What are the work schedules of Americans today? Despite our preconception that most Americans work 35–40 hours a week, 5 days a week, as of 1985 this work pattern characterized only 46 percent of women and 42 percent of men in nonagricultural occupations.<sup>4</sup> This is the *modal* work schedule, but there are substantial proportions working more as well as fewer hours and days. There is also substantial variation in *which* hours and days Americans work.

Are parents, particularly mothers, more likely than nonparents to work during the daytime and weekdays, since this is when almost all formal child care is available? To answer this question and others I shall raise, I have performed some tabulations of the May 1985 CPS data; this survey has the most recent supplement on the work schedules of Americans.

When comparing parents and nonparents, one must bear in mind that they may differ as groups in their demographic and economic composition, particularly with regard to the types of jobs they have, their age, and their marital status. Whatever these compositional differences, though, we find less difference in work schedule behavior between the two groups than might be expected.

The top panel of Table 1 shows that mothers with children under the age of 14 living at home are working fewer hours and fewer days than other women. Fathers with children present under the age of 14 are working more hours but only slightly more days than other men. With regard to the number of hours and days worked, then, there is some difference

Table 1. Work Schedules of Employed Females and Males in Nonagricultural Occupations Aged 18 and Over, by Presence of Own Children Less Than 14 Years Old in Household:  
United States, May 1985 (in percentages)

Schedule	Females			Males		
	Total (n = 25,601)	No children <14 (n = 8,581)	Children <14 (n = 17,020)	Total (n = 30,731)	No children <14 (n = 19,467)	Children <14 (n = 11,264)
<i>No. of hours and days worked</i>						
<35 hours						
last week <sup>a</sup>	31.4	28.5	37.1	13.5	15.6	10.0
49+ hours						
last week <sup>a</sup>	8.9	9.8	6.9	25.6	23.7	28.9
Usually <5						
days a week <sup>b</sup>	18.0	16.3	21.7	9.3	9.9	8.2
Usually >5 days						
a week <sup>b</sup>	9.0	9.5	8.2	18.7	18.4	19.3
35+ hours,						
<5 days a week <sup>c</sup>	3.8	3.6	3.9	4.8	4.5	5.5
35-40 hours,						
5 days a week <sup>b</sup>	46.2	47.8	43.0	42.2	42.7	41.3
<i>Which hours and days worked</i>						
Fixed nonday shift <sup>d</sup>	13.0	12.4	13.9	15.5	16.0	14.6
Rotating shift <sup>b</sup>	4.2	4.3	4.0	4.8	4.7	5.1
Usually Saturday						
and/or Sunday <sup>b</sup>	24.1	24.3	23.6	29.7	29.8	29.7
<i>Flexibility of work hours and days</i>						
Flexible hours <sup>b,e</sup>	13.2	13.0	13.6	13.8	14.4	12.8
Regularly work some						
or all at home <sup>b</sup>	17.1	16.6	18.2	17.3	16.7	18.3

<sup>a</sup> Refers to all jobs last week.

<sup>b</sup> Refers only to principal job.

<sup>c</sup> Work hours for all jobs; days of week on principal job.

<sup>d</sup> Refers to most days last week on principal job; includes evening, night, and shifts of 12+ hours.

<sup>e</sup> Excludes self-employed.

in the direction predicted by traditional gender role behavior: parenthood seems to reduce the extent of maternal employment and increase the extent of paternal employment. This difference, however, should not obscure the fact that both mothers and fathers are putting in many weekly hours and days in the paid work force.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as shown in the middle panel of Table 1, these hours and days are often evenings, nights, and weekends, some with shift rotation. More than one in six mothers and about one in five fathers work either fixed nondays (evenings or nights) or rotating shifts.<sup>6</sup> Employment on one or both days of the weekend is characteristic of 24 percent of mothers and 30 percent of fathers. Parents are remarkably similar to nonparents in terms of which hours and days they work, suggesting that they are not responding to the unavailability of formal child care arrangements during nonstandard hours by altering this aspect of their work schedules (they may not have the option). Rather, as we shall see, they are relying on informal child care arrangements that are often highly complex.

Except for the total number of hours worked, the estimates in Table 1 refer to the principal job only and thus underestimate the prevalence of nonstandard work schedules,

since 5 percent of mothers and 6 percent of fathers are multiple-job holders. Moreover, these work schedules are not mutually exclusive; for example, some parents are working both long hours and rotating shifts or fixed nonday shifts that include Saturday or Sunday or both.

Despite a narrowing of the gender gap in the number of hours and days worked (Smith, 1986), mothers and fathers still differ considerably in this regard. They differ little, however, in the extent to which they work nondays or weekends. This is because part-time employment, which is much more characteristic of mothers than fathers, is more likely to be during nonstandard hours than is full-time employment (data not shown).

These data, then, tell us how much and when American parents engage in paid work. I shall shortly relate these work schedule dimensions of parents to how children are cared for when mothers are employed. Before doing so, it is important to consider some demographic changes that affect child care needs.

### The Changing Demographic Context of Motherhood and Child Care Needs

Specifically, we need to consider two demographic trends that are changing the context in which mothers are rearing children: the increasing proportion of single-mother households and the postponement in the timing of first births.<sup>7</sup>

Single-mother households are on the rise both because more births are occurring out of wedlock [one-fourth in 1986; National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), 1988] and because marriages are becoming more unstable and the interval between divorce and remarriage is increasing (NCHS, 1989). The greater proportion of mothers rearing their children alone means that women increasingly have to rely primarily—if not solely—on their own income for the overall care of children, including the costs of child care while employed. (Child support to separated or unmarried mothers, if received, generally is minimal; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987c.) Such mothers often must limit their child care options to unpaid or low-paid relatives and neighbors or subsidized formal arrangements. For children of school age, there is the “latchkey children” problem: children caring for themselves (cf. Cain and Hofferth, 1989). The growing absence of fathers in households also means, as we shall see, the loss of an important likely participant in child care.

Another more recent demographic change that influences child care options is the postponement in the timing of first births (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988). Insofar as delayed childbearing increases commitment to the labor force *before* the first birth—with the additional education and labor force experience this delay permits—it increases commitment to the labor force *after* the first birth (Presser, 1986a). Not only has there been a 19 percent increase over the past decade (between 1971–1975 and 1981–1984) in the percentage of women employed at the time they are pregnant with their first child, but the percentage employed within 6 months *following* the birth of their first child more than doubled in just 10 years (O’Connell, 1989). Close to half of all mothers are now in the labor force when their first child is less than 6 months old. The older the mother is at first birth, the more likely it is that she will be in the labor force when her child is this young.<sup>8</sup>

This increase in mothers’ age at first birth is significant for child care because not only are more women with young children participating in the labor force, thus increasing child care demand, but the age of the children in need of care is becoming younger, changing the nature of the demand. In other words, mothers’ returning to the labor force sooner means that proportionately more infants and toddlers are in need of care. In 1985, 57 percent of the 8.2 million children under the age of 5 with employed mothers were under the age of 3; 17 percent, or about 1.4 million, were under the age of 1 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987a:table D). Infants and toddlers are most likely to be cared for by fathers and female relatives; but the pool of fathers for child care is declining because of the growing proportion

of mothers who are unmarried, and the pool of nonemployed female relatives is declining because of the overall increase in female employment.

Unmarried mothers, given their limited incomes and the declining pool of relatives, are in a particularly difficult position for arranging child care. As shown in the top and middle panels of Table 2, they are more likely than married mothers to work long hours, more than 5 days a week, nonday fixed or rotating shifts, and on weekends. In other words, unmarried mothers rely more on the types of informal care that are becoming less available. It is interesting that marital status for employed mothers more strongly differentiates their work schedule behavior than does the age of the youngest child, even though child care arrangements may be more difficult when children are of preschool age. A substantial proportion of both married and unmarried employed mothers, though, are working non-standard hours and days. How do they arrange for the care of their children? To a large extent, the answer is relatives.

Table 2. Work Schedules of Employed Females in Nonagricultural Occupations Aged 18 and Over With Own Children Less Than 14 Years in Household, According to Marital Status and Age of Youngest Child: United States, May 1985 (in percentages)

Schedule	Married			Not married <sup>f</sup>		
	Total (n = 6,476)	Youngest child <6 (n = 3,304)	Youngest child 6-13 (n = 3,172)	Total (n = 2,105)	Youngest child <6 (n = 700)	Youngest child 6-13 (n = 1,405)
<i>No. of hours and days worked</i>						
<35 hours						
last week <sup>a</sup>	39.4	40.7	38.1	30.3	30.0	30.4
49+ hours						
last week <sup>a</sup>	6.3	5.5	7.1	8.7	7.4	9.3
Usually <5						
days a week <sup>b</sup>	23.4	26.1	20.7	17.1	14.8	18.2
Usually >5 days						
a week <sup>b</sup>	7.4	6.8	7.9	9.5	10.4	9.0
35+ hours, <5						
days a week <sup>c</sup>	3.7	4.1	3.4	4.2	3.4	4.4
35-40 hours,						
5 days a week <sup>b</sup>	42.1	40.8	43.4	45.8	47.8	44.8
<i>Which hours and days worked</i>						
Fixed nonday shift <sup>d</sup>	12.6	15.3	9.8	17.8	16.6	18.4
Rotating shift <sup>b</sup>	3.3	3.9	2.7	6.0	6.9	5.5
Usually Saturday						
and/or Sunday <sup>b</sup>	21.4	23.0	19.7	30.1	31.7	29.3
<i>Flexibility of work hours and place</i>						
Flexible hours <sup>b,e</sup>	14.3	13.4	15.2	12.0	10.2	12.8
Regularly work some						
or all at home <sup>b</sup>	20.6	21.4	19.9	11.2	10.7	11.4

<sup>a</sup> Refers to all jobs last week.

<sup>b</sup> Refers only to principal job.

<sup>c</sup> Work hours for all jobs; days of week on principal job.

<sup>d</sup> Refers to most days last week on principal jobs; including evening, night, and shifts of 12+ hours.

<sup>e</sup> Excludes self-employed.

<sup>f</sup> Includes separated.

### The Reliance on Relatives for Child Care and Their Declining Availability

In 1985, relatives provided about half of *all* child care to preschool-aged children with employed mothers (O'Connell, 1988).<sup>9</sup> The breakdown is as follows: Eight percent of the children were cared for by the mothers themselves while working, 16 percent by fathers, and 24 percent by other relatives. Even though care by relatives is a major mode of child care when mothers are employed, there has been very little analysis of relatives as care givers. Researchers and policymakers generally assume that child care by relatives has few if any problems. This assumption ignores some important complexities that suggest otherwise.

For example, in an article entitled "What Day Care Crisis?" Haskins (1988), on noting that more than 4 million preschool-aged children with employed mothers are cared for by relatives, concluded, "Thus, millions of parents can vote with their feet in the day care market" (p. 13). This conclusion does not acknowledge the possibility that in this "vote," the "list of candidates" may consist of few, if any, affordable alternatives. Nor does it allow for the possibility that although care by relatives may facilitate women's employment—because it is generally free or of low cost (Leibowitz, Waite, and Witsberger, 1988)—it may also constrain the number of hours women work and thus their total earnings.<sup>10</sup> Women who rely on care by relatives are more likely to report that they would work more hours if not for child care constraints than are women who rely on care by nonrelatives (Presser, 1986b). In addition, data on the extent of care by relatives typically include care by the mothers themselves while employed; combining both tasks simultaneously is not an easy feat for most mothers when children are very young. Further, many of the other relatives who provide care—most of whom are fathers and grandmothers—are often themselves otherwise employed, but at different hours than the mother. This relates to the fact that child care by relatives is often *not* day care—many mothers, as we have seen, work evenings, nights, or rotating shifts. Data from the June 1982 CPS suggest that about 30 percent of care by relatives for children under the age of 5 is nonday care, as compared with only 9 percent of care given by nonrelatives. For relatives and nonrelatives combined, about 17 percent of all child care is nonday care (Presser, 1986b, derived from table 2; these estimates are specific to mothers aged 18–44 and relate to principal care).

We do not know the extent to which child care by relatives reflects a lack of alternatives or the preference of mothers. The implicit assumption that relatives are more emotionally committed to the child and provide more loving care than nonrelatives may be true in most cases, but there are costs as well as benefits.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, whether preferred or not, care by relatives is on the decline while work schedules are becoming more diverse and the average age of children with employed mothers is becoming younger: In 1965, relatives provided three-fourths of all care to preschool-aged children, compared with one-half in 1985 (O'Connell, 1988).<sup>12</sup> This decline is specific to *female* relatives, however; care giving by fathers has remained stable over the past two decades, at about 14–15 percent of all primary care (the principal or sole care giver) when mothers are employed. This stability prevailed even though there has been a decrease in families with fathers present, which means there probably was an increase in father care among those married, although we do not have trend data on this.<sup>13</sup>

As of 1985, fathers provided about one-fifth (19 percent) of all primary care for children under the age of 5 when *married* mothers were employed. For those children who had two or more care-giving arrangements, many more fathers provided secondary care. Thus close to 1 million married fathers in the United States provide care to their preschool-aged children when mothers are employed (O'Connell, 1988).

We have, then, two countervailing forces: an increase in the employment of women of all ages that reduces the availability of nonemployed female relatives for child care when

there is an increasing demand, and a growing diversity of work schedules that increases the opportunities for relatives—not only fathers but female relatives—to care for children while mothers are otherwise employed. What do we know about the child care arrangements that result under these conditions? We know very little.

### The Diversity of Work Schedules and Alternative Child Care Arrangements

The existing data offer limited insights for particular types of care givers. With regard to care giving by fathers, we can examine how the diversity of work schedules allows many dual-earner spouses to work different hours and share child care, even though it need not be the primary reason one of the spouses works nonstandard hours. For grandmothers who are care givers, we have some data on the extent to which they are otherwise employed, showing that this is particularly common when employed mothers are not married. For nonrelatives who provide child care during nonstandard hours, the little we know about the problems of providing such care is mostly anecdotal. Although our knowledge is fragmented, an assessment of what is known supports the contention that the temporal complexities of child care are linked to the work schedules of parents and that these complexities should not be minimized.

### Work Schedules of Dual-Earner Couples and Child Care by Fathers

I turn first to the issue of how the work schedules of dual-earner couples facilitate care giving by fathers in dual-earner households. As we have seen, fathers generally work more hours and days than mothers. Because there is considerable variability in the *specific* hours fathers and mothers are employed, however, there are many fathers who are not employed during some or all of the time when their wives are employed.

The 1985 CPS data reveal that about one in six dual-earner couples with children under the age of 6 (18.3 percent) has no overlap whatsoever in the hours in which the spouses work.<sup>14</sup> These fathers are theoretically available for child care during the *entire* time the mothers are employed.<sup>15</sup> In addition, many more fathers are available for some but not all of the hours mothers are employed. This nonoverlap in spouse employment reflects the fact that one-third (33.8 percent) of dual-earner couples with children under the age of 6 include at least one spouse who works a nonday shift. Rarely do both spouses work the same nonday shift.

Not only are there many fathers whose *specific hours* of employment do not overlap with those of their wives, but there are many whose *days* of employment are not the same as those of their wives. Among dual-earner couples, about one-fourth of employed fathers are *not* working one or more days when their wives are working (26.4 percent).<sup>16</sup>

Do “available” fathers in fact care for their children while their wives are employed? A study of young American couples with children revealed that almost all fathers who are theoretically available in fact *do* provide child care, either solely or in conjunction with another care giver, when their spouses are employed (Presser, 1988).<sup>17</sup> Thus the diversity of work schedules, along with the rise in dual-earner couples, is facilitating more paternal involvement in child care.

Although greater paternal involvement is often the *outcome* when spouses work very different hours or days, it need not be the primary *reason* for such work schedule behavior—at least not for fathers. Limited job opportunities may be more relevant. The May 1985 CPS asked respondents working a nonday shift why they were working these hours. Among dual-earner couples with children under the age of 6, less than 8 percent of the fathers who worked fixed nondays—evenings or nights—gave child care as their primary reason for working these hours; almost three-fourths said it was a job requirement or the only job they could get or had some other involuntary reason (Table 3).<sup>18</sup> This does not mean, however,

Table 3. Percentage Distribution of Dual-Earner Spouses and Unmarried Mothers With Children Under the Age of 6 Employed in Nonagricultural Occupations on Fixed Nonday Shifts, by Main Reason for Working Fixed Nondays: United States, May 1985

Main reason works specific shift	Dual-earner spouses <sup>a</sup>		Unmarried mothers
	Fathers	Mothers	
Voluntary Reasons			
Better child care arrangements	7.6	41.9	22.4
Better arrangements for care of other family members	1.8	11.4	4.3
Allows time for school	1.2	0.7	10.1
Better pay	6.6	1.8	2.1
Other voluntary reason	8.6	5.9	5.1
Involuntary Reasons			
Could not get any other job	4.2	7.0	9.3
Requirement of the job	68.7	29.6	46.7
Other involuntary reason	1.3	1.7	0.2
N	279	364	100

Note: Percentages may not add to 100.0 in each column because of rounding.

<sup>a</sup> These are dual-earner spouses working nondays, but the mothers and fathers reported here are not necessarily married to one another. In addition, the nonresponse rate was higher for fathers than mothers.

that less than 8 percent of these fathers were providing child care—only that child care was not the primary motivating factor for their work schedule. (The May 1985 CPS did not include data on child care.)

For mothers, however, the situation is quite different: they were five times more likely than fathers to give child care as their primary reason for working evenings and nights—42 percent. An additional 11 percent gave care of other family members as a primary reason, indicating that care giving in general—which would include care of the elderly—is the primary reason for evening and night work for more than half of all married mothers with preschool-aged children.

These findings reinforce other evidence of an important gender difference in the work schedule behavior of dual-earner couples: women generally are the adapters who arrange their work hours around those of their husbands rather than vice versa (Presser, 1984). Significantly, however, men are accepters; they are willing to care for their children when mothers are employed.

Parental sharing of child care is one way married dual-earner couples with nonstandard work schedules manage their child care needs. It is generally not, however, a viable option when a spouse works a rotating shift or when the hours of nonoverlap are few. And it is clearly not an option for most unmarried mothers.<sup>19</sup> There is some new evidence, however,

that both married and unmarried mothers are able to tap the pool of *employed* relatives, other than fathers, who work different hours as well as the shrinking nonemployed pool.

### Mothers' Work Schedules and Child Care by Nonparental Relatives

The only data on this issue relate specifically to grandmothers, who are the principal nonparental relatives providing child care. Overall, one-third of the grandmothers in 1984 who provided child care for employed mothers with young children were themselves employed (Presser, 1989). When mothers were unmarried, the grandmothers who provided child care were twice as likely to be employed than when mothers were married. Yet it is unmarried mothers who are more likely to rely on grandmothers for child care than married mothers. Thus one should be cautious in interpreting the higher prevalence of grandmothers' care for the children of unmarried than married employed mothers in terms of greater availability. It may be more an issue of greater sacrifice of personal time on the part of grandmothers with unmarried daughters, responding to their daughters' more diverse work hours and more limited financial resources.<sup>20</sup>

I do not mean to suggest that the basic reason many more unmarried than married mothers work nondays is because of child care needs. The more limited daytime job opportunities for unmarried mothers, who tend to have less education and work experience, may be highly relevant. This is supported by data from the 1985 CPS. As shown in Table 3, only 22 percent of unmarried mothers with children under the age of 6 gave child care as their primary reason for working nondays—about half of the proportion for married mothers working nondays. Most of the responses unmarried mothers gave were not “voluntary,” but it is noteworthy that 10 percent said their primary reason was that it allows time for school.

### Mothers' Work Schedules and Child Care by Nonrelatives

About half of all care for preschool-aged children is provided by nonrelatives, namely nannies and babysitters, family day care providers, nursery schools, and child care centers. Although many mothers who work nondays rely on nonrelatives for child care (about one-fifth; Presser, 1986b, derived from table 2), we know very little about the extent to which they encounter problems in arranging for satisfactory care because of their work schedules.

We know that the greatest increase in nonrelative care over the past two decades was for nursery schools and child care centers: this type of group care quadrupled from 6 percent of all care in 1965 to 23 percent in 1985 (O'Connell, 1988). Yet as I noted earlier, this type of care is almost always *day* care and the hours of availability are often based (at most) on an 8-hour 5-day work week.

There is an important exception that demonstrates the responsiveness of employers in a major service industry: health care. Hospitals have been in the forefront in providing on-site child care during nonstandard hours. This is attributed to the national shortage of nurses and the need to create an incentive for young mothers to remain employed in this occupation (Children's Defense Fund, 1983). Other instances of employers' responsiveness to demand in this regard are scarce but interesting, such as the recent planning of near-site 24-hour child care centers at a few airports for airline personnel.<sup>21</sup>

Meeting the demand for formal group care during evenings and nights has special problems, such as community resistance to centers' operating late hours because of traffic noise at that time. Such problems are compounded with those more general to the provision of formal child care, regardless of the hours offered, especially when children are very young. Infants and toddlers require more intensive care than older children, yet to minimize costs the ratio of young children to adults in group settings often exceeds acceptable standards (Ruopp et al., 1979). Moreover, because of low staff salaries, the annual staff turnover rate



is exceptionally high (estimates range from 36 percent to 62 percent; Clifford and Russell, 1988). Both factors affect the quality of care (Phillips, 1988).

There is also the problem of formal *daytime* child care being offered too few hours. For example, Head Start serves millions of low-income children aged 3–5. Although it is not strictly a child care program, given its educational and developmental objectives, it is primarily a part-time program (Brush, 1988). Thus many low-income full-time employed mothers may not find it feasible to enroll their young children in this program because of difficulties in making additional part-time child care arrangements.<sup>22</sup>

We can conclude that because of structural changes in our society—the growing diversity of work schedules, the increasing proportion of single mothers, the decreasing pool of care by nonemployed relatives, and the early return of mothers to the labor force after childbirth—the problems of arranging for the care of young children are becoming more complex. One option to minimize this complexity is to devote more financial resources, public and private, to the expansion of formal child care facilities during nonstandard hours and weekends. This would particularly benefit unmarried mothers. As I noted earlier, though, we are far from mobilizing in this direction. Another option, not specific to mothers working nonstandard hours but often viewed as a partial solution to the child care problem, is to offer more flexibility for parents at the workplace (e.g., see Bergmann, 1986). I turn now to this issue.

### Workplace Flexibility and Parental Care

Not only are work schedules becoming more diverse, they are also becoming more flexible. This greater flexibility has been attributed to employer concerns about improving worker morale and productivity at a time when the rate of growth in the U.S. labor force is slowing (because of smaller-sized cohorts entering the labor force) and the proportion of the labor force that is female is rising (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1987). Policies permitting greater flexibility in taking time off from the job, specifically maternity and parental leave options, have been initiated more by state legislation than by employer concerns.

To what extent do American parents have job flexibility; and for those that do, does it significantly help them deal with the child care problem? The answer depends in part on the type of job flexibility. The types I shall be discussing here are the employee's ability to vary the hours that work begins and ends for a given job, often referred to as "flexitime";<sup>23</sup> the ability to take time off from a job temporarily, either with full-time parental leave or by working fewer hours; and the ability to do paid work at home.

### Flexible Work Hours

Flexible work hours have become increasingly popular in the United States over the past few decades.<sup>24</sup> In 1985, one out of eight wage and salary earners had jobs in which they could vary the hours in which their work began and ended. Such flexibility was more common in service-producing industries (14.5 percent) than in goods-producing industries (9.8 percent; Mellor, 1986), suggesting that the growth in the service economy is producing not only more nonstandard hours and days of employment but more job flexibility.

An analysis of the May 1985 CPS data (shown in the bottom panels of Tables 1 and 2) reveals that the prevalence of flexibility in work hours does not differ markedly between mothers and fathers or between parents and nonparents. Nevertheless, there may be differences in how this flexibility is used: parents may be using it to spend more time with their children. It should be noted that flexitime is not specifically a child care policy, but employers that offer it—including the U.S. government—generally cite family considerations along with easier commuting, improved attendance and punctuality, and better morale and productivity as reasons for instituting its practice (e.g., see Bureau of National Affairs, 1986).

There are remarkably few studies that evaluate the effect of flexible work hours on the time parents spend with children or on other family outcomes. These studies looked specifically at the effect of introducing a formal flexitime program and found little or no difference in the amount of time spent with children and few if any differences on other family measures (Bohen and Viveros-Long, 1981; Lee, 1983; Winett and Neale, 1980). As the authors of one study concluded, we may be expecting too much from minor changes in daily work schedules, given "the magnitude of the logistical, energy, and time demands on families with two employed persons, or a single parent" (Bohen and Viveros-Long, 1981:147). Moreover, they noted that the fixed and limited hours of child care availability actually prevent some parents from using flexitime.

Flexible work hours may be of special advantage for parents with school-aged children, enabling them to be home when children leave for school and/or when they return, although this has not been specifically studied. The 1985 CPS data, reported in the bottom panel of Table 2, show that mothers with school-aged children are somewhat more likely than those with preschool-aged children to have flexible work hours, and married mothers somewhat more than unmarried mothers.

In sum, an employer policy of flexible work hours may be of value to parents and nonparents alike for reasons other than child care. It may be good for child-related emergencies and may help parents who work days care for their school-aged children before and after school, but for both married and unmarried mothers, it appears to be at best only a supplemental strategy for the care of preschool-aged children.

### Temporary Reduction in Work Time

What about a temporary reduction in the work time of parents to allow for child care? Parental leave is an example that usually involves taking full time off from a job during the early months of a child's life while maintaining fringe benefits (for those who are covered) and the right to return to the same job.<sup>25</sup> Parental leave is viewed as an important way for employed parents who wish to continue on the job to minimize the stress that often occurs soon after a child is born; it may also be an important time for emotional bonding and attachment between parent and child (Kamerman, Kahn, and Kingston, 1983).

Parental leave, as currently practiced in the United States as well as in other industrialized countries, is essentially maternal leave, even though it may be available to fathers. As noted earlier, mothers are increasingly likely to be employed when they have a child. They are also increasingly likely to take leave, paid or unpaid, rather than quit or be fired because of pregnancy and childbirth. A recent study reveals that the percentage who took leave with pay almost tripled over the past two decades, so by the early 1980s, close to half (47 percent) of all employed mothers took paid leave during the first 6 weeks after childbirth; this included annual leave, sick leave, and parental leave; an additional 20 percent took unpaid leave, and 3 percent of the mothers said they never stopped working (O'Connell, 1989).

We do not have national data on the duration of parental leave for mothers—paid or unpaid, formal or informal. Although its practice may be increasing, most is undoubtedly short term. Moreover, we have no national data on parental leave for fathers; but case studies of employers indicate that even when parental leave is technically available for fathers, they rarely take it and employers do not encourage it (Bureau of National Affairs, 1986). For women as well as men, unpaid parental leave may not be a feasible option when family incomes are low. Many women, particularly those who are unmarried, may have the unhappy choice of losing much-needed pay or facing the difficulty of finding satisfactory child care for their infants. Indeed, because of its short duration, most parents who are able to take parental leave, paid or unpaid, soon have to face this potentially difficult problem.

Alternative strategies for extending the time that parents can be home with very young children include alternating parental leave between spouses (if married) or reducing the number of hours at work. Putting aside the important issue of employers' resistance to these alternatives, would most parents opt for less income to be home with their children for more than a few months if they had assurances of job security?

The May 1985 CPS data suggest that the large majority would not. All employed persons were asked: "If you had a choice, would you prefer to work: the same number of hours and earn the same money? fewer hours at the same rate of pay and earn less money? more hours at the same rate of pay and earn more money?"<sup>26</sup> About two-thirds of *full-time* employed married mothers with children under the age of 6 said they would prefer to work the same hours (66 percent), and only 17 percent would work fewer. This leaves 17 percent who would prefer to work *more* hours! As for *unmarried* mothers who were employed full time, only 4 percent preferred to work fewer hours, and 35 percent wanted more hours. There is surprisingly little difference by the age of the youngest child for either married or unmarried mothers; virtually the same proportions obtain specifically for children under the age of 1 (data not shown). Family income is clearly relevant, however; only 6 percent of employed women (full and part time) with children under the age of 6 and family incomes of less than \$20,000 would choose to work fewer hours, whereas 20 percent of such women with family incomes of \$50,000 or more would choose this option. This is not a direct question about parental leave, but it does suggest that reducing work time or taking extended unpaid leave is an option feasible mostly for married women with relatively high family incomes.

The responses of full-time employed married fathers with employed wives and children under the age of 6 suggest even less receptivity to reducing work time to care for children if it means less income. Only 7 percent of these fathers would prefer to work fewer hours, whereas 28 percent would prefer to work more. Again, the percentages are similar for full-time employed fathers with infants and are highly correlated with family income.

It is important to emphasize the distinction between reducing one's hours *on the same job* from full to part time when children are young and *changing jobs* at this time from one that is full time to one that is part time. Jobs that are characteristically part time are different from those that are full time; they are more likely to be dead-end and low paying jobs. Moreover, those who advocate this shift to part-time jobs for women (cf. Ricardo-Campbell, 1986) do not acknowledge that part-time jobs are much more likely than full-time jobs to involve evening or night work and weekends. Thus many mothers who work part time may be doing so because their nonday or weekend employment allows a relative or neighbor to care for their children (cheaply or at no cost) and not because they can be home themselves with their children during nonschool hours.

### Paid Work at Home

Another way that employed parents can spend more time with their young children is to do paid work at home, by either taking it home from the job ("flexiplace") or doing entirely home-based work. The May 1985 CPS data show that one in six Americans do all or part of the work of their principal job at home.<sup>27</sup> The bottom panel of Table 1 reveals that there is little difference by gender or presence of children; and Table 2 reveals that there is little difference among women by the age of the youngest child. Consistent with the earlier data on work schedules, however, there is considerable difference by marital status: unmarried mothers are substantially less likely than married mothers to work at home. This is because they are both less likely than married mothers to have white-collar jobs that allow work to be taken home *and* less likely to work solely at home.<sup>28</sup> Is either mode—flexiplace or home-based work—a feasible way for parents to spend more time with their children?

To my knowledge, there has been no research on whether flexiplace actually has this result. There is a limited literature on home-based work as a way for mothers to care for their own children while doing paid work, although the sample designs leave much to be desired. (For a review of this literature, see Heck, 1988.) These studies suggest that this is often a very difficult arrangement. Many women report that they work late into the night when their children are asleep, which means cutting back on time with spouses and/or their own sleep. Other women report that they must rely on paid or unpaid care givers, even though they are working at home. Although one study (Christensen, 1988) shows that some mothers feel that it is the best of the alternatives, given their commitment to being at home with their young children, mothers are also likely to report such problems as isolation and the lack of credibility as a career woman. Christensen concluded that to regard home-based work as *the* solution to complex work and family problems was a "cruel illusion" (p. 6).

There is one important group of mothers who have minimized the incompatibility problem (although their incomes generally are very low): mothers who provide family day care for other children. The May 1985 CPS data reveal that these women constitute about two-fifths of all women who work solely at home. The next largest occupation is "street and door to door sales workers" (7 percent)—for example, the Avon and Tupperware women—who are not truly working at home, although based at home.

We do not have comparable data over time on parents doing home-based work; but overall, the percentage of the nonfarm labor force whose primary place of employment is at home is small and has declined over the past 20 years, from 4 percent in 1960 to 2 percent in 1980 (Kraut and Grambsch, 1987). Whether this trend has reversed itself in the 1980s, with the reduced cost of computer equipment and services and the growth of the labor force doing information work, remains to be seen.<sup>29</sup> Even if it has, though, most paid work at home does not seem very compatible with child care. Indeed, the percentage of mothers who report that they themselves are the primary care givers for their preschool-aged children while employed—either inside or outside the home—has declined steadily, from 16 percent of all care in 1965 to 8 percent in 1985 (O'Connell, 1988).

What can we conclude about workplace flexibility as a means of providing parents more time with children? Flexible work hours seem to have a minimal effect for both parents; parental leave, taken mostly by women, clearly increases parental time with children, but it reinforces gender differences in child-rearing responsibilities among married couples, is not a viable option—if unpaid—for low-income families (and thus most unmarried mothers), and is a short-term adaptation to the child care problem. In addition, work at home—unless as a child care provider—is not very compatible with caring for young children.

### Research and Policy Implications

I turn now to a discussion of the implications for both research and policy of my elaboration of the relationship between time at the workplace and child care options. In considering these implications, it is important to recognize that time is the central organizing feature of family activities. The growing diversity of work schedules, by changing the amount of time that family members have together, may be radically changing family life. Not only are mothers spending less time with their children than in the past because of their employment, and children less time with fathers because of separation and divorce, but mothers, fathers, and children in *intact* families are spending less time together as a family unit because parents are working different hours or days. This change in the "home-time" structure of family life may be happening in other industrialized countries as well, but there is a lack of comparable national-level data to assess this. Moreover, there are few studies of a focused nature, in the United States or elsewhere, that permit an evaluation of the consequences of these temporal changes for parents or children in dual-earner and single-parent households.<sup>30</sup>

With regard to research on the consequences for children when the parents work nonstandard hours, I am aware of only two studies: a Belgian study of elementary-school children that showed higher academic achievement when fathers work day rather than nonday hours (but this was attributed to differences in the children's intelligence; Maasen, 1978) and a U.S. study that considered the impact of work schedules on the amount of time with children (up to the age of 20) and found little effect (but this study did not consider fathers' participation in child care specifically when mothers are employed; Nock and Kingston, 1988).

Clearly, further investigation of the consequences for children when parents work nonstandard hours is needed, particularly from a longitudinal perspective. For example, for dual-earner couples with different work schedules who have young children, we may ask the following questions: How are these children being cared for by fathers when mothers are employed? Do children actually benefit from sequential parenting? What do fathers gain or lose, personally and professionally, from caring for young children when their wives are employed? Do staggered work schedules affect subsequent childbearing decisions? What about the care of children when dual-earner couples do not have different work schedules but both spouses are employed long hours and/or weekends? For those without available relatives for child care, how do they make alternative arrangements during nonstandard hours, and what is the quality of these arrangements?

We have seen that unmarried mothers are more likely than married mothers to work long hours and nondays. What is the quality of their time with their children when they come home from their jobs late and tired and the fathers are absent? Is their nonday employment associated with higher unemployment, and what does this mean for the welfare of their children? What about child care by relatives, particularly employed relatives, during nonstandard hours: how stable are these arrangements over time and what are the non-economic costs? (For a specification of some unaddressed issues relating to the consequences of nonstandard work hours for the mothers and fathers themselves and for the marriage, see Presser, 1988.)

Issues such as these will become increasingly important because of greater work schedule diversity in the future. Projections of job growth for the period 1986–2000 calculate that the largest absolute increases will be not only for service-sector occupations but for those that are especially likely to require employment during nonstandard hours (Presser, 1987). The top five (in order) are waiters and waitresses, registered nurses, janitors and cleaners, managers and top executives, and cashiers (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1987).<sup>31</sup> (Although many general managers and top executives are in the goods-producing as well as service-producing sectors, in both cases those who hold these jobs generally work long hours.) It remains to be seen whether the predominant response to the growth of such employment will be proportionately more fathers and other employed relatives caring for children when mothers are employed or a significant expansion of child care facilities during nonstandard hours in response to an increased demand. Which is preferable in terms of outcomes for children, and is this consistent with what is preferable for mothers or fathers?

The fact that the average age of young children with employed mothers is getting younger means that the current problems of child care quality and affordability for preschool-aged children will intensify. Some researchers have argued that child care by nonmothers in the infant's first months of life may have some detrimental effects when the mother works full time. This is a highly controversial issue, however, and does not address the possibility of paternal care (cf. Belsky, 1986; Phillips et al., 1987).

I have argued that because of changing economic and demographic factors, the extent to which employees have flexibility in the temporal aspects of their jobs is increasing and thus the extent to which employed parents can manipulate their work schedules for child care needs—while maintaining a long-term commitment to the labor force—is also in-

creasing. Whereas the expansion of paid work into the late hours and weekends encourages the participation of married fathers in child care, the greater flexibility of work schedules does not seem to have much effect in this regard. Flexitime is not specifically a child-oriented policy, but parental leave is—and few fathers are participating. Perhaps this is only a temporary phenomenon, and as women's earnings more closely approximate those of men and their relative power in the family increases (which seems to be the way we are headed; Presser, 1986a), substantially more fathers will take parental leave in the future and will choose to reduce their work hours or alternate full time off with mothers when children are young. I doubt, however, that this will occur in the near future, certainly not without *paid* leave. Even then, it may take some time for fathers to participate. Many European countries have had, over a long period of time, national family policies that provide paid parental leave; the participation of fathers has been minimal, although in some countries it is increasing.<sup>32</sup>

Putting aside value judgments regarding whether fathers *should* participate more in child care when mothers are employed, we as demographers need to study men as care givers. As experts in the areas of labor force and childbearing, we can make a special contribution by studying the workplace and child rearing and by bringing men as well as women into the picture.<sup>33</sup> We have the beginnings of an interesting dialogue by non-demographers concerning why most men resist a greater role in child rearing (e.g., see Goode, 1982; Hunt and Hunt, 1987; Polatnick, 1973–1974; Rossi, 1984), but we also need to ask why some men are receptive. Is it economic pressure for dual incomes or ideology? Although both are undoubtedly relevant, I suspect it is more the former. The diversity of work schedules, by facilitating the dual employment of married couples with children, may be doing more to increase male participation in child care than ideological changes concerning children's needs for more fathering or women's needs for more role sharing. If this is the case, it may explain why there is so little effect of workplace flexibility on the father's involvement in child care; the father's use of workplace flexibility for child care seems to rely more on ideology than economics.

I conclude with the question raised in the title of my address: Can we make time for children? By "we" I mean fathers as well as mothers, society as well as individuals. The answer, from all perspectives, is clearly yes, if we *want* to and if we are willing to pay the price. The price is high, if we want to improve significantly the availability and quality of child care for all parents, not just those who work standard hours, and if we are willing to subsidize employers' policies that permit more parental time for children. The price is also high, socially as well as economically, if we do not do this, for our children are at risk, and our children are the future: the future labor force, the future parents, and the future care givers of the old.

We can no longer consider the return of women to the home full time as a feasible option for most mothers. Not only will the demand for women workers continue to increase, but there are no indications of a reversal in such motivating factors as the rise in marital instability, women's increased education and rise in real earnings, and the desire for a higher standard of living among married couples (Bergmann, 1986). The labor force represents a strong competing interest and need for both women and men, and the trade-off is having few if any children. Over the past few decades, voluntary childlessness has been increasing and fertility expectations as well as actual fertility have been declining, although they have been fairly stable in recent years (Heuser, 1976; NCHS, 1988; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988). Whether the growing temporal complexities of work life are contributing to these changes is an issue we must explore.<sup>34</sup>

Is it not in the public interest to help employed parents arrange for quality care while they are employed? If so, are we prepared to support the expansion of child care facilities into the evening and night? Do we want parents to spend more time with children—fathers

as well as mothers—when they are infants and toddlers? If so, are we prepared to offer paid parental leave to both fathers and mothers for long durations of time, and how should this be financed? Can we implement such a policy to encourage gender parity in the taking of parental leave so that discrimination by employers against women will not be reinforced? Are paid sabbatical leaves to parents and nonparents alike the more appropriate strategy?

These questions may seem extreme in the current context of policy discussion, but they are not extreme in terms of contemporary realities. Do we have to wait until the next century, when the “birth dearth” will truly arrive, before we are motivated to address adequately, in our research as well as policies, the temporal complexities of managing the care of children? I hope not.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The decline in mothers' time with children has not been compensated fully by a rise in fathers' time. Indeed, it appears that the time fathers spend with their children has changed little, if at all, over the past few decades. Trend data for fathers are contradictory, but there is some evidence of a substantial increase among married fathers with preschool-aged children. Coverman and Sheley (1986) compared time budget data for 1965 with interview data in 1975 and found no overall increase in men's child care time but did find that married men with one child less than 4 years old almost doubled their child care time over the decade (wife's employment status was not specified). Gershuny and Robinson (1988), comparing three time budget studies, found that child care by men in the U.S. decreased slightly between 1965 and 1985 (marital status and whether the wife was employed were not specified). Juster (1985), reporting on panel data based on time-use diaries, found a small increase in married men's child care time between 1975 and 1981, but this analysis apparently included some men without children in 1975 who may have had children in 1981.

<sup>2</sup> Definitions of the industries constituting the service sector vary. Comparable trend data for 1940–1982 show an increase in the service-producing sector from 48.6 to 69.2 percent, respectively. The goods-producing sector declined during this period from 33.1 to 27.2 percent, and agriculture, from 18.3 to 3.6 percent (Urquhart, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> For documentation of the greater diversity in the number of hours and days of work over time by gender, see Smith (1986).

<sup>4</sup> These estimates are based on my tabulation of the 1985 CPS. They refer to the hours worked on all jobs but the days worked on the principal job only, and thus they overstate the standard work pattern. Unfortunately, data on the number of days worked on all jobs for multiple-job holders are not available.

<sup>5</sup> The top panel of Table 1 shows that the “compressed” work week—a full-time schedule of 35 or more hours performed in less than 5 days—is uncommon for men and women regardless of the presence of children, despite expectations in the 1970s that it would provide a “revolution in work and leisure” (Poor, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> The definition of a shift is adapted for both full- and part-time workers, based on one used by the Bureau of Labor Statistics only for full-time workers (Hedges and Sekscenski, 1979). A fixed day shift is a work schedule for a reference week in which at least half of the hours worked usually fall between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., excluding rotators. A fixed nonday shift is all other full-time schedules, including usual workdays of more than 12 hours and excluding rotators. A rotating shift is one in which the work schedule changes periodically from days to evenings or nights. Published shift work data from the May 1985 CPS are based on self-definition, not actual beginning and ending times (Mellor, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> There was a 90 percent increase between 1970 and 1985 in families maintained solely by women (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1986). The percentage childless at the ages of 30–34 increased from 15.6 percent in 1976 to 23.6 percent in 1987 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1988:table F).

<sup>8</sup> If one considers only those with labor force experience prior to the first birth, it is younger mothers who return sooner to the labor force; however, younger mothers are less likely than older mothers to have prior labor force experience (O'Connell, 1989).

<sup>9</sup> I focus my discussion here on children of preschool age because they generally need full-time, intensive care when mothers are employed, but relatives are also important for the care of school-

aged children with employed mothers. The existing national data on the care of school-aged children before and after school do not include information on the work schedules of parents (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987b).

<sup>10</sup> Child care by relatives is not "free" insofar as the care givers are foregoing opportunities for paid employment. Moreover, about two-fifths of relatives receive cash payments for child care (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1987a); the ratio is higher when considering either cash or noncash payments (Presser, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Mason and Kuhithau (1988) found, for a sample of mothers in Detroit, that fathers were considered the "ideal" relative to provide child care for preschool-aged children when mothers were employed but were second to formal care for 4-year-olds.

<sup>12</sup> The trend in type of arrangement when mothers were employed for preschool-aged children between 1965 and 1985, respectively, is as follows (source: O'Connell, 1988): care by father, 14.4 and 15.7; care by mother, 15.8 and 8.1; care by other relative, 32.4 and 24.1; care by all others, 37.4 and 52.1; number of children (in 1,000s), 3,794 and 8,168. (The 1965 data refer to children under the age of 6 of ever-married women; the 1985 data refer to children under the age of 5 of all women.)

<sup>13</sup> What is lacking are trend data on child care by married fathers *when mothers are employed*. Such data could be derived from data collected in time budget surveys, but this has not been done. See note 1 for a discussion of the trend data on the total amount of time that fathers spend with their children.

<sup>14</sup> This considers the work hours of both single- and dual-job holders and refers to the hours usually worked most days of the last week.

<sup>15</sup> In the absence of data, we cannot discount for travel time and other necessary commitments on nonemployed time to be more precise.

<sup>16</sup> For dual-job holders, the days of the week employed refer only to the principal job.

<sup>17</sup> For this 1984 sample of young dual-earner American couples aged 19–26 and with young children, one-half of such couples had at least one spouse working nondays. This exceeds the overall prevalence of one-third for dual-earner couples with children because nonday employment is more likely the younger the spouse (Presser, 1987).

<sup>18</sup> These reasons need not be mutually exclusive options, except for the emphasis on "primary" reasons. For example, nurses may be employed when they have young children because they often work nonstandard hours and days and can share child care with their spouses if married. For many nurses, however, working nonstandard hours is a requirement of the job. It should be noted that the respondent who provided the reason for the mother's or father's working a particular nonday shift was not always the mother or father herself or himself.

<sup>19</sup> An analysis of the 1982 CPS data revealed that for a sample of employed unmarried mothers aged 18–44 with children under the age of 5, about 3 percent of all child care was by the child's father (Presser, 1986b).

<sup>20</sup> Some of these grandmothers (or other relatives) may be child care providers, but this would mean they are working the same—not different—hours as the mothers. There are relatively few such cases (Presser, 1989).

<sup>21</sup> I have heard informally that the airport in Miami has opened a 24-hour child care center for their employees because of the nonstandard hours they work and that the San Francisco airport is planning to do so. When there is a high concentration of nonday workers in a community, this apparently helps. For example, I have been told that in Reno, Nevada—where the major industry is nonday entertainment 7 days a week—there are a number of child care centers that accommodate late work schedules.

<sup>22</sup> The special child care problems of low-income women who work late hours is reported in a study of mothers receiving Aid to Families With Dependent Children (Sonenstein and Wolf, 1988). One-third of the employed mothers with children under the age of 6 needed child care after 5:30 p.m. In such cases, 70 percent of the children were cared for by relatives—a much higher percentage than at other times.

<sup>23</sup> Formal flexitime programs take many forms, depending on how much latitude is given to employees for varying their hours and days of employment. For a specification of five different types, see Bureau of National Affairs (1986).

<sup>24</sup> The idea of flexitime is attributed to a German economist, Christel Kamerer, who saw this as a way to increase female labor force participation in Germany in the early 1960s, when there was a labor shortage. It was originally termed "gliding time," and the explicit intent was to enable women



to work when they also had family responsibilities. It was put into practice for the first time, however, in an aerospace company in Munich in 1967 to alleviate automobile traffic congestion (Bohen and Viveros-Long, 1981). Flexitime was introduced in the United States in the 1970s and was adopted by the federal government in 1974. From the middle to late 1970s, its practice is said to have doubled (Nollen, 1982); the 1980s witnessed a slower but continued rise in persons with flexible work hours, either as formal or informal arrangements with employers (Mellor, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> Parental leave, as I am using the term here, refers to child care after the baby is born, as distinct from maternity leave, which is associated with pregnancy and childbirth. For an elaboration of different types of parental and maternal leave and an analysis of their wage and employment effects, see Trzcinski (1988).

<sup>26</sup> Responses were solicited directly from each employed person in the household, rather than indirectly from another household member. Thus the response rate to this question was only 80 percent of all wage and salary earners aged 25 and over (Shank, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> Secondary jobs for multiple-job holders may be more likely to involve work at home.

<sup>28</sup> The May 1985 CPS data show that 7 percent of employed married mothers and 2 percent of employed unmarried mothers with children under the age of 6 work solely at home.

<sup>29</sup> The percentage of workers who either bring work home or do primarily home-based work (combined) appears to have increased substantially between 1985 and 1988 (Ambry, 1988).

<sup>30</sup> A major U.S. study found greater work/family conflict among spouses because of shift work (Staines and Pleck, 1983). A Swedish study showed greater fatigue among mothers than fathers on shift work (Moen, 1989). For further discussion of the shift work literature on family life, most of which focuses on male shift workers and ignores the employment status of wives, see Presser (1986b).

<sup>31</sup> These top five occupations also exceed the *percentage* change projected for all occupations combined (19 percent), particularly registered nurses and waiters and waitresses (both with projected relative growth of over 40 percent; U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1987).

<sup>32</sup> Pleck (1988) argued that we have underestimated the percentage of fathers who participate in parental leave in Sweden by not considering all four provisions available. About 28 percent of Swedish fathers in 1980 used at least one of these four parental leave provisions.

<sup>33</sup> Although workplace issues typically have been ignored by demographers, child care issues gained the attention of many demographers in the 1980s (e.g., see Lehrer and Kawasaki, 1985; Liebowitz, Waite, and Witsberger, 1988; Mason, 1987; Powers and Salvo, 1982; Presser and Baldwin, 1980).

<sup>34</sup> Demographers have studied extensively the negative relationship between women's employment and fertility. However, the extent to which work schedules and child care problems affect fertility—as distinct from the effects of women's employment more generally—is difficult to assess and beyond the scope of this presentation. A recent study, however, showed that when children are cared for by relatives, the mother's subsequent fertility intentions are higher than when they are cared for by nonrelatives, even when controlling for such factors as the number of children, the age of the youngest child, and the income and education of both spouses (Lehrer and Kawasaki, 1985). It has also been shown that when mothers feel constrained in the number of hours they work because of the lack of satisfactory affordable child care, their fertility expectations are lower than when they are not so constrained (Presser and Baldwin, 1980).

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