

DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES

Interviews with Presidents of the Population Association of America

Interview with John Casterline PAA President in 2019



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 present), Deborah McFarlane (2004 to present), Karen Hardee (2010 to present), Emily Merchant (2016 to present), and Win Brown (2018 to present)

JOHN CASTERLINE

PAA President in 2019 (No. 82). On May 8th, 2024, we were able to have a Zoom interview with Dr. Casterline. The members of the PAA History Committee participating in the interview included John Weeks, Dennis Hodgson, Karen Hardee, Emily Merchant, and Win Brown.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS: Dr. John Casterline is the Robert T. Lazarus Professor in Population Studies Emeritus in the Department of Sociology at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. He was born in Portland, Oregon in 1947, and then spent his childhood in southern Oregon. He received his B.A. from Yale in 1969 in Culture and Behavior, graduating *Phi Beta Kappa* and *Summa cum laude*. He then received an M.A. from the Graduate Theological Union in 1972, and subsequently earned his Ph.D. in Sociology/Demography at the University of Michigan in 1980. He spent five years as a Scientific Associate for the World Fertility Survey in London, UK and then in 1984 accepted his first academic appointment as an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Brown University. He was granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor and also became the Director of Brown's Population Studies and Training Center before leaving in 1994 to become a Senior Associate in the Policy Research Division of the Population Council in New York City. In 2005 he was named Professor of Sociology and Demography at Pennsylvania State University, and two years later, in 2007, he relocated to The Ohio State University to become the Robert T. Lazarus Professor in Population Studies. In addition, from 2009 until 2021, he was Director of the Institute for Population Research at Ohio State. During that time, he also became an Elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

In Dr. Casterline's university website, he describes his research over time: "During a four-decade research career, I have investigated the causes and consequences of fertility decline in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. The enormous decline – from six births to two births per woman on average – surely ranks among the most significant social changes of the past half century, transforming adult lives and childhood experience, and with major ramifications for the economic and social structure of societies. Relying primarily on survey data (some of it national, some localized), I directed multi-country multi-year projects on social diffusion models of fertility change, on unmet need for family planning, and on unwanted fertility (methods of estimation, consequences for parental and child well-being). In the course of pursuing these topics, with local collaborators I have engaged in fieldwork in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Ghana, and Nigeria. In the mid-1990s, I began collaborative research on demographic change in the Arab region that has continued to the present. More recently, I have turned most of my attention to reproductive change in sub-Saharan Africa, the last remaining high-fertility region on the globe. In analysis of hundreds of national surveys from the 1970s to the present, we are examining the nature of fertility decline to date in Africa, with an emphasis on childbearing desires. We are complementing this with ambitious qualitative data collection in Nigeria."

OUR INTERVIEW WITH DR. CASTERLINE:

John Weeks: We, the members of the PAA History Committee are here today to interview the 82nd president of the Population Association of America, Dr. John Casterline, who is the Robert Lazarus Professor Emeritus in Population Studies at the Ohio State University and was President of the PAA in 2019. John, welcome to our interview with you.

John Casterline: Thank you.

John Weeks: For purposes of posterity and understanding how demographers work, what we

typically do with these interviews is to get a little bit of your demographics to get things started. Now, I have in my notes that you were born in 1946. Am I right about that?

John Casterline: '47.

John Weeks: '47, okay.

John Casterline: You're making me one year older than I am!

John Weeks: Oh, I'm sorry about that. My notes will change with this interview. And tell us where you were born and where you grew up. Give us a feel for that.

John Casterline: Well, I was born in Portland, Oregon, and I grew up in southern Oregon in the Rogue River Valley, in the city of Medford. I spent my entire childhood there. And people who know me, I haven't really lived in Oregon for, well, 50 years or something like that, but I still consider myself an Oregonian.

John Weeks: Oh, is that right?

John Casterline: Yeah, I really do. My personal identity is as an Oregonian. And I've talked to Win about this. I absolutely have allegiance to the Pacific Northwest. There's still family there. And I even assembled a spreadsheet, Pacific Northwest demographers, people whose origin is the Pacific Northwest. So, I grew up in Oregon, but then I went to college at Yale and took some years off, worked and did this and that and then went to graduate school starting in my late 20s at University of Michigan. And that launched my career.

John Weeks: So, now, going from Oregon to Yale, one coast pretty much to the other, how did that come about?

John Casterline: In my high school, usually there were four or five or six of the academic achievers who ended up at one of the elite private schools, either the Ivy League or Stanford. So, I was kind of on that track. But I will say it was a bit of a shock to me -- a tough adjustment for a boy from southern Oregon going to the Ivy League. I will say--this probably will get edited out of the interview--but coincidentally, just last Friday I met up with a college classmate who I'd not seen for over 50 years (he's on the faculty at Washington University).

John Weeks: Okay, okay. Well, very good. Well, just --

John Casterline: So, that's part of my biography.

John Weeks: I feel the story about your southern Oregon stuff because, actually, my mother was born and raised in southern Oregon and eventually got her PhD in Stanford. So, you southern Oregon people...

John Casterline: Where was that in southern -- Well, that's another discussion.

John Weeks: Klamath Falls.

John Casterline: Oh, K Falls, we call it.

John Weeks: Okay. I never called it K Falls, but I guess you guys do.

John Casterline: They were our sports rival, yes.

Dennis Hodgson: Now, John, I have a quick question. At Yale, on your CV, it has your major as Culture and Behavior. Is that a major that you made up, or did they really have a major called Culture and behavior?

John Casterline: There were three or four or five such multidisciplinary majors. So, it was not one that I made up. It was a selective major, so there were like 10 or 12 students per cohort. You had to apply to get into it. It was a multidisciplinary social science major, anthropology, psychology, sociology. It was a great experience. The other students were just really excellent.

John Weeks: Well, and you graduated Phi Beta Kappa, so you obviously were an excellent student.

John Casterline: I really worked hard in my undergraduate years, at the cost of some other parts of my life. My academic experience at Yale was very rich. It was very rewarding. I mean I gained a lot. Now, one of the questions, how did I get in demography? And that came about at Yale. I ended up kind of by accident taking a one-semester course in demography. The teacher was a man named Lincoln Day. You may know him, John, because he was a student of Kingsley Davis.

John Weeks: Exactly, exactly.

John Casterline: Probably before you. You were a student of Kingsley, I think.

John Weeks: I was. But by that time Kingsley was at Berkeley.

John Casterline: Well, this is when Kingsley at Columbia.

John Weeks: Yeah, right.

John Casterline: So, Lincoln Day was the one who – and I took the course. It really was by accident. I needed to get another sociology course, I had a requirement. And over dinner one evening, someone said, “Hey, this instructor’s stimulating, and demography’s interesting.” I’d never heard of demography. So, I took this course with Lincoln Day, and we struck up kind of a friendship.

I found the course stimulating, and then I went on and did a senior thesis under his direction, on age at marriage in Australia. Lincoln Day -- his contributions to the field as a scholar one would have to say are not very large, but he made a big difference for me. He was quite a stimulating undergraduate instructor. He and I kept up. He passed away within the last two or three years, already in his 90s. But

he and his wife Alice Taylor kept up with me. They were very good to me over the years. I last saw him five or six years ago in D.C., where they were living. We kept tabs for like 50 years after he was my undergraduate professor. I'm guessing that's fairly unusual.

John Weeks: I would have to think so, yeah. That's very, very nice.

John Casterline: And then a few years after I graduated from Yale, before I started my PhD program in Michigan, I worked for Lincoln at the United Nations. He had a brief stint with the United Nations Statistics Office, the Demographic Branch. So, he hired me on for a one-year appointment, and that kind of solidified my interest in the field. Lincoln then went to Australia, spending a couple of decades at the ANU.

John Weeks: Right, right, right.

Dennis Hodgson: Now, when you were at the UN, '73 and '74, that was just the time for the Bucharest conference [the United Nations Third World Population Conference held in Bucharest, Romania in 1974]. Did you at all participate in the context of Bucharest.

John Casterline: No, and that's an interesting point, Dennis. No, to be honest it wasn't even on my radar screen. I suppose I was hearing about it, but I was in... There was a Demographic Branch of the Statistics Office. In those days, their main endeavor was producing the Demographic Yearbook, a hard-copy huge volume that was issued annually. It was a huge endeavor putting it together. So, I was in that office.

Now, I was asked to work on a separate publication, but that was the office. What I'm trying to say is that was a very nonpolitical part of the UN that would be least involved in something like the Bucharest conference.

John Weeks: So, you were there at the UN before Sam Preston showed up there?

John Casterline: Yeah, about five years before.

John Weeks: Okay, okay. That much time passed. Okay.

John Casterline: There was a man, John Grauman. Did you ever deal with him? He was actually a quite helpful person, kind of inspirational person for me – really excellent and knowledgeable demographer. Anyway. The UN often had extremely good people, but they're kind of anonymous, aren't they? They don't get to put their names on things. And great work is done. It's an institutional product, but of course it has authors. There are persons behind it.

John Weeks: Right, yeah. No, it's true. Very good work. I think we've all made a lot of use of UN data over the years. And, fortunately, when they come out with their new projections, I think the press picks up on that, and we do get a lot of stories.

John Casterline: If anything, I would say they're more influential now than they were in the past

because of the attention they receive every two years for their latest set of estimates and projections. And I think the work they're doing now if anything is the best they've ever done. The whole field can be proud, I think, of what the UN Population Division does for us.

John Weeks: Well, and of course, Joe Chamie [former Director of the UN Population Division] retired, but he's still out there doing stories and spreading the word.

John Casterline: That's right.

John Weeks: I don't know if you're on his mailing list. I am.

John Casterline: I am. He's doing it from Portland, Oregon, actually, of all places.

John Weeks: You're right. You're right. Another Oregonian, okay.

Dennis Hodgson: How about the stay at the Graduate Theological Union right after graduation?

John Casterline: You know, people always notice this on my CV. It is indeed the case that I have a master's degree in Old Testament Studies.

Dennis Hodgson: Right, that's so neat.

John Casterline: Must be quite rare in the demographic community. I left Yale not really sure what I wanted to do professionally or occupationally. I had at that point not yet decided to go into demography. I also felt some need, well, honestly, just to kind of grow up a bit, find myself. And I always had an interest in theology, biblical studies, that sort of thing.

So, this opportunity presented itself. I received a special fellowship to one year of theological seminary, which evolved into two years and a master's degree. I never had any thought that I would go into a church vocationally, but I was deeply interested in the topic, and still am. I wasn't enrolled in the program just to pass the time. So, it was a very rewarding couple years for me.

Dennis Hodgson: And that was out at Berkeley, right? Was that at Berkeley?

John Casterline: And do you know, John, I actually went and sat in Kingsley Davis's graduate seminar.

Dennis Hodgson: You're kidding.

John Weeks: Is that right?

John Casterline: Yeah. Well, I just did it. I just walked in. And then partway through, he took me aside one day and said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Well..."

John Weeks: When was that?

John Casterline: Fall 1972, just before I went to work at the UN. And I said, “You know it’s your former student, Lincoln Day has hired me, and I think I ought to learn some demography.”

Dennis Hodgson: That’s wonderful.

John Weeks: Very good. Just think about the Graduate Theological Union, though, and you were saying you were studying the Old Testament, because what that made me think about was the New Testament, of course, starting out with the Roman census and why Jesus was in Bethlehem. So, there’s some demography in the New Testament. I’m not sure about the Old Testament.

John Casterline: Well, actually, in Genesis whether you have children or not, that’s a major preoccupation, not to mention sibling relationships.

John Weeks: Good point. Good point.

John Casterline: This wasn’t –

Karen Hardee: And migration.

John Casterline: Absolutely.

John Weeks: All right, okay. There we go.

John Casterline: These matters were not foremost in my mind at the time, but it’s all there.

John Weeks: Well, just the point about, as we’re always saying to ourselves, demography is related to everything.

John Casterline: Yes, absolutely.

John Weeks: We’ve added another point to that. All right. And so, then you went off. How did you wind up going off to Michigan for graduate school? How did that –

John Casterline: So, I just want to say at each turn, there’s been a lot of serendipity. This is probably true of most people’s lives and careers. Maybe some people have it all plotted out. So, when I decided to do a PhD with a focus on demography, I applied five places. I took advice from Lincoln Day, actually, about where I should apply. And I think I was admitted to four or five places, I forget the particulars. But my choice of Michigan, it was kind of on personal grounds that I don’t know if I’d even want to explain. They’re, in hindsight, kind of trivial - nonconsequential considerations from the standpoint of a major career decision.

Doing student recruitment and graduate recruitment over the years now at various institutions, students make these choices on sometimes fairly strange and flimsy grounds. So, my choice of Michigan was not all that deeply informed, but it was a tremendously good choice, Michigan. Michigan in the late 1970s and the Population Studies Center was such a tremendous place. It’s like a lot of things -

- you don't appreciate what you have until it's passed or until you look back after some years. It was such a tremendous place to be.

And in those days, you couldn't get your work done except... Your work was done in the office in the research center. So, we all lived there. We were there all the time. It was really a community of faculty and students in the same premises a huge number of hours of the week. So, you developed a lot of personal bonds, personal fondness and friendship.

It was a wonderful place, in so many respects. Do you know there were in what I would call the resident community, the Population Studies Center at the University of Michigan in the late 1970s, there were, including students and faculty, nine persons who became PAA presidents, nine? There were four students. Going down the cohorts - Rob Mare [PAA President in 2010], Suzanne Bianchi [PAA President in 2000], myself [PAA President in 2019], and Judith Seltzer [PAA President in 2016]. We were all there together, hanging out all the time. At the faculty level, Ron Freedman had already been a PAA president [in 1964-65], and down the road were Ron Lee [PAA President in 1987], Reynolds Farley [PAA President in 1988], Al Hermalin [PAA President in 1993], and Karen Mason [PAA President in 1997]. I mean, it's just a spectacular set of folks.

And I said it was kind of a serendipity I ended up there, but in hindsight I'm enormously grateful. I feel privileged that I had the years as a member of that center. And intellectually, scientifically, it was so strong and so stimulating. But also, there was kind of a compassion, kind of a community, a family feeling about it that I think helped all of us. I think we all benefited from that as well. And for that I give a lot of credit to the leadership in the center.

The founding director was Ronald Freedman. And if you knew him or dealt with him, he was just a totally positive kind of person, who really nurtured positive relations both professionally and personally. And Al Hermalin absolutely continued this. So, you had a culture at that center that was scientifically competitive, hard-nosed, rigorous, but also had a warm, compassionate side as well. So, I think it was a very special place. It's rose-colored glasses, I suppose. Your PhD years, you can't look at it objectively. But I think I ended up in a very good place.

John Weeks: Yeah. And during that time, I remember Ron Freedman was particularly involved in research in Taiwan.

John Casterline: That's right.

John Weeks: And I think you were involved in some of the publications about Taiwan. Am I right about that?

John Casterline: That's right, yes. I was able to do one piece with Ron Freedman himself for an IUSSP seminar that came out in an IUSSP volume. And my dissertation was on Taiwan. It was on nuptiality transition, nuptiality change in Taiwan. Although Al Hermalin was the chair of my dissertation, he continued as a mentor, colleague,

and friend for decades afterward, up until his death a few years ago [2021]. I don't have words to express what Al meant to me.

Let me also mention, since I listed a bunch of names, another person who didn't become PA president -- John Knodel. He died not long ago--within the last year [January 10th, 2024]. John Knodel was a fabulous scholar, and I was fairly closely attached to him, at least I feel that. And he was there as well. Really, in the 1970s and 1980s, I don't know if anyone produced more great scholarship than John Knodel. He was a tremendous scholar.

John Weeks: For sure.

Dennis Hodgson: One quick question, John. Throughout your entire career, you have been focused on understanding fertility decline in developing countries. Now, did that come about at Michigan, or did you come to Michigan already with that sort of interest?

John Casterline: I didn't, Dennis. In fact, at some point -- it's a while back now -- I found my application to graduate school -- I had kept it -- and looked at the statement of my research interests. And it was just lightyears away from what I actually ended up doing, which is probably the usual. No. What made the difference there was, at Michigan, I did end up having a lot of attachment to Ron Freedman, Al Hermalin, John Knodel who were very much involved in research on what we now call low- and middle-income countries, focusing especially on fertility.

So, that was there, but my dissertation actually was on marriage change, I suppose close to reproductive issues. Anyways, the fact that my first position, my first job post-PhD, was with the World Fertility Survey in London, that's really what got me going on research on fertility in developing countries, as we called it then. And I've never strayed very far away from that. But Dennis, the answer would be it was my first job that did this.

John Weeks: So, how did that come about?

John Casterline: So, I finished my PhD. I applied to a bunch of positions. I actually had a few university opportunities in the U.S., but the World Fertility Survey in London was going gangbusters at the time. It was kind of high tide for that project. It was just a project, it wasn't an established institution -- a project funded by USAID and UNFPA. So, I don't know. I got that offer, and I thought, hey, you only live once. This sounds really interesting. London will be a great place to live, and this project seems like an interesting opportunity. And I wasn't sure I wanted to do U.S. academics. So, I took it. Again, I guess one could say a fair amount of serendipity about this opportunity, and again a great outcome. The folks at the World Fertility Survey were another great collection of scholars. So, again, I feel I'm privileged to have had that opportunity as well.

John Weeks: And did you get out into the field? What I'm thinking about here is: Is your ultimate interest particularly in sub-Saharan Africa? Did the World Fertility Survey push you in that direction, or did that come from a different route?

- John Casterline: That came a bit later, John, maybe during the last – well, I guess it would be twenty years now. In fact, in London and for the decade or so after, I did a bunch of projects in the Philippines, also Pakistan, Egypt. So, in my research career, sub-Saharan Africa came a bit later. I would say in London my focus was probably more Asia. Well, of course, we were producing multi-country analyses, usually. But also the WFS didn't conduct many surveys in sub-Saharan Africa, it's a bit thin in that respect. It's the DHS which has really strengthened our understanding of Africa.
- John Weeks: Good point, okay. And the DHS really was the follow on... Am I mistaken about that in terms of the World Fertility Survey got things going, and DHS is now taking that and has expanded it?
- John Casterline: Yeah. You could say it was a hand-off, although it was actually an RFP from USAID that was competitive. And the winner was what's become the DHS. But just to say -- in London, John Cleland was a colleague of mine, and that association has continued in one form or another over the decades. So too, Susheela Singh was there, who went on to have a wonderful career with Guttmacher. It was just another great collection of folks. Roderick Little was there. German Rodriguez, John Hobcraft.
- John Weeks: Then you went to Brown. How did that come about?
- John Casterline: The WFS was a project that had an expiration date. So, as that date approached, I thought, well, I'd better find something. And I decided to go on the U.S. academic market. And I forget whether I had any other offers. I certainly interviewed at a number of places, but Brown, anyway, was the offer that came that I took. So, I started at Brown in 1984, and I had 10 years there and, well, lots of good things there as well.
- John Weeks: Yeah. Because that was very active population center, has been for quite a while.
- John Casterline: Yes. Really one of the original strong centers in North America, I would say, going back to the 1960s. Sidney Goldstein [PAA President in 1975-76] had been the leader of the center for a long time and was still the lead person when I arrived. The demography program could be viewed an overachiever because the university is not a top-tier social science university, in contrast to most of the peer population centers, and the Department of Sociology was not highly ranked, although the faculty included some superb scholars. But the population center was a very successful enterprise, and there was a set of faculty who were energetic and committed to the center.
- It had a strong established legacy of training students from outside the U.S., especially from low- and middle-income countries. And most of my mentoring was of students from, well, mainly Asia and also Africa. In those days, there was funding -- from the Hewlett Foundation, from the Compton Foundation. These were grants designated for supporting the training of students from institutions in the Global South. So, that was a major commitment of the Brown population center, I would say. And certainly, Sidney Goldstein wanted that. Well, all of us

were on board.

John Weeks: Right. It seems to me that UNC and Penn also had those kinds of things. I'm not quite sure how many universities had that kind of money to bring in graduate students pretty much from developing countries to teach them demography, but it's been important.

John Casterline: Penn had launched -- I think it was mainly Rockefeller money, or at least there was a large amount of Rockefeller money -- a program training Africans in particular. This was in the 1980s. It was Etienne van de Walle [PAA President in 1992] who led the effort in making Penn a leading center for training Africans.

John Weeks: Right, right.

Dennis Hodgson: And the move to the Population Council, how did that come about?

John Casterline: Well, right. It came after I'd been at Brown for ten years. And I reached a point where I thought, is this where I'll be for the duration, or do I want to consider something else? And well, I'll be candid. A big factor was I didn't feel I was a very successful undergraduate teacher. And at Brown, this mattered a lot. I mean the institution would have said -- it would still say -- this matters a lot. But also, as I recounted, I was an undergraduate at Yale. I remember the great classroom experiences I had as an undergraduate and the teachers I had that really inspired me or stimulated me, and I felt I wasn't achieving that as a faculty member at Brown. And this bothered me. I thought, man, this is really a big part of the mission of this university, and I'm not really carrying my weight. So, this was kind of a push factor, I guess you'd say. Well, if you'd been around at the time, you probably would have said I was being too harsh on myself. I don't know. But I did feel that maybe it wasn't the right kind of academic institution for me.

And then there was a huge pull, which was the Population Council at the time was a wonderful collection of folks, especially for my interests. And when I joined them in 1994, I felt in some ways I had kind of reached paradise. The colleagues were John Bongaarts, Cynthia Lloyd, Mark Montgomery -- who else -- Sajeda Amin, Jim Phillips was there. For what I was interested in, it was kind of a stellar all-star cast. So, that was a big pull.

Now, in my career, I bounced between nonacademic and academic positions. People often observe this looking at my CV. And academics has the virtue that you're around people pursuing all sorts of interests, and this is enriching. But places like the World Fertility Survey and the Population Council, where all of your immediate colleagues have roughly the same interest as you, you're dealing with the same issues, working with the same people, have similar networks. There's a lot to be said for this.

I enjoyed that a lot, that I had a set of half a dozen or eight or ten colleagues, and we were very much on the same wavelength, the same kind of mission. So, that's what I got with the Population Council. The Council has, of course, changed now, but in those days the organization was devoted almost entirely to family planning,

fertility, and in low- and middle-income countries.

Win Brown: John, I'd like to zero in a little bit more on that comment that you just made that at the Pop Council you were all on the same wavelength. Can you talk about that a little bit more? You just alluded to it. But was it all about the supposed deleterious effects of rapid population growth on economic development, on societal change? Was it sort of Coale-Hoover and everything else that sort of created the family planning establishment? I'm looking at you, Emily, also, to follow up on this. Can you talk a little bit more about that mindset? I know it's changed in recent years. But can you take us back to that time, if you can, if that makes sense?

John Casterline: Well, that's an interesting observation, Win. I would say if you were on the inside in those days in the group I was with, there was kind of a critical... The viewpoint you've just articulated, I think there was a fairly critical and more nuanced, mixed view of that. Now, I think John Bongaarts was very much on board that high fertility rates, high population growth rates are not good for human wellbeing in various ways. But I would say among the collection of scientists in our division, there would be a more complicated view. But it's absolutely the case that the organization was, you could say, fueled by a belief that high fertility rates, high population growth rates are not helpful, that they work against various aspects of human wellbeing as far as economic growth, health considerations, the whole set of reasons that we all could list. So, that was a pretty big part of the culture of the organization at that time. I would say that's right, Win, yeah.

And also, the group I joined, we were called the Policy Research Division, and John Bongaarts was the head. Our funding streams were definitely heavily influenced by the view that reducing fertility rates in low- and middle-income countries was a high priority. So, you know there was USAID money. There was UNFPA. There was Rockefeller Foundation. There was Mellon Foundation, and so forth.

Emily Merchant: I have kind of a follow-up question about that. So, it looks like you would have been there right around the time of the Cairo conference [the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development—ICPD--held in Cairo, Egypt in 1994], or maybe just a little bit after.

John Casterline: Yes.

Emily Merchant: Yeah. And so, I'm wondering – So, as you said, the organization itself really had this focus on reducing fertility in the global south for all of the reasons that you just mentioned. And then with the Cairo conference, at least looking back as an historian, we see this shift toward a focus on women's empowerment and family planning for the purpose of reproductive health. And so, I'm wondering what those conversations might have looked like at the Population Council to try to make the council's objectives fit with this new emphasis in the field.

John Casterline: Yeah, that's a very smart observation, Emily. So, I arrived in summer 1994, and ICPD was during 1994. I forget what time of year.

Karen Hardee: September.

John Casterline: Of course, that was really a crossroads, a turning point in the field. So, I was right there in the Population Council when everyone was trying to deal with that change in the global agenda, the global priorities. And it absolutely affected the organization. Well, I don't know if I want to go into particular persons. The organization definitely had to grapple with that. I don't think it grappled with it with huge difficulty, but there was a recognition that the principles had shifted a bit in just the way you've described, toward more focus on considerations of women's wellbeing and women's autonomy. Although, I don't think "autonomy" was the word used.

We can call it a more feminist approach, too, and certainly, absolutely a backing away from demographic targets. And that was clear. Everyone understood this. In the past, the Population Council had probably been very much on board when it came to demographic targets. That is, the goal should be to achieve certain reductions in fertility rates, certain increases in contraceptive prevalence. But after Cairo, we might still hold onto those as goals, but they're not primary the way they used to be. They've become subsidiary.

Unusually influential, which I had a lot of research around, is this notion that there is a so-called unmet need for family planning. That is, there are a lot of women who would like to be curtailing childbearing but aren't doing so or are unable to do so. And if we satisfy that, if we simply meet individuals' aspirations, meet individuals' childbearing goals, we can achieve a lot of fertility reduction. So, it's a win-win -- you avoid demographic targets, but you achieve quite a bit of what you want in terms of demographic targets anyway. So, that view came to predominate.

One of the best spokespersons for that view was Steven Sinding, who I have one co-authorship with, to my pleasure. And our co-authorship was on this whole notion of unmet need and what to make of it. So, I would say my decade at the Population Council very much was a period of transition along the lines you've described. Away from a... let's call it a population bomb mentality towards a more nuanced view of what reproduction has to do with human wellbeing and the wellbeing of women, of children, of everyone.

John Weeks: Karen, you have your hand up.

Karen Hardee: Yeah. So, actually, I was just going to ask about ICPD, also knowing that John said he got to the Pop Council in 1994. And of course, Judith Bruce, who was also at the Population Council at that time, she and Anrudh Jain were the authors of the quality-of-care framework. And so, I'm curious. I don't know. Pop Council has restructured. So, I don't know exactly what division Judith would have been in at the time, or even Anrudh. But I'm curious about how much interaction there was within the council between that policy division and more of the programmatic work that Anrudh and Judith were doing.

John Casterline: You're right, Karen. They were in a different division. We were called the Policy Research Division. I think they were called the International Programs Division. But Anrudh and Judith both... they were located differently in the organizational chart, but we had a lot of interaction with them. And in particular, Cynthia Lloyd and Barbara Mensch co-authored a great deal with Judith Bruce, did projects with Judith Bruce, as did John Bongaarts. John Bongaarts had a couple of pieces that were quite influential at the time with Judith and Anrudh.

I would say there were no barriers of consequence between the divisions. Our offices were in a skyscraper in Manhattan. We were on the same floor. You just walk over, whatever, 75 meters, and there was Judith or Anrudh. So, yeah, that was... I mean I mentioned persons in the division that I joined being a huge draw, but the organization had folks sitting elsewhere that also were assets. Anrudh Jain – he is Michigan PhD, so for me, he was part of the family. Judith Bruce, who just retired a few years ago now, I believe, she was a major force in that organization for decades.

Karen Hardee: She was. And of course, John, now – and maybe this is diverting from your interview – but unmet need you know is in the spotlight now as an indicator for family planning and lots of work now to try and change that indicator. So, I'm curious if you're still involved in those discussions.

John Casterline: Well, I think, honestly, I'm not a central player. But I'm certainly aware of the ongoing discussion, I am aware there is a lot of ferment about what should be the proper... What are the right concepts, and what would be the indicators of those concepts? This established concept, unmet need for family planning -- absolutely now people have serious concerns about it, or they feel it's really not... Well, some people think it's totally wrong. Myself, I don't think it's totally wrong, but it's not exactly right, and we should be reframing, revising. So, I'm aware of all the discussion. I'll just say I have some concerns. Karen, you and I could have a long discussion.

Karen Hardee: I know.

John Casterline: I'll just say the fundamental logic underlying this concept, unmet need for family planning, is the comparison of fertility goals, fertility preferences, and fertility behavior. Unmet need identifies the discrepancy of people's behaviors not being entirely consistent with what they express as their childbearing goals. Some of the current discussion, as far as I can tell, would like to sideline fertility desires, fertility preferences. And I still think those remain fundamental.

This is what I think childbearing choice is all about. It's that you have childbearing goals.

And the question is: Are you achieving those? And I hope this basic assessment doesn't get lost. There's a lot of emphasis now on autonomy, women's autonomy as a goal, especially with respect to contraception. And some versions of that I think have the effect of marginalizing fertility desires, fertility goals, but I think these must remain fundamental.

What's really interesting about fertility, I think, about childbearing, is that it is a matter of choice. I mean it's very much a matter of choice. It's constrained in various ways, too, of course. It's constrained in all sorts of ways.

But on the face of it, you stand back, whether one has no children, one child, five or ten children are choices individuals can make. And we can recognize, and accept, that what people want varies tremendously. Now, when it comes to health and mortality, I think it's safe to assume everyone wants good health. Everyone wants long life, I think, or a fairly long life, at least. But with childbearing, it's kind of up for grabs, and that makes it... I suppose the same would be true of migration and other aspects of demography. But anyway, certainly, childbearing, what people want is the fundamental thing here. And I say it's up for grabs. It can and does vary.

So, I think this must be one of the starting points when we take stock of fertility. So, now it's low fertility, and there's a lot of talk about falling short, so-called unrealized fertility. And that concept is a comparison of what people want with what they're actually getting. And the notion, or the concern, they're now systematically falling short of what they'd like to have. We've worried a lot about excess fertility, but unrealized fertility is another concern. But once again, it's all about fertility goals versus fertility outcomes, and I hope we don't downgrade this comparison.

So, this is kind of a long, rambling answer to your question, Karen, but I am... I mean nobody likes the phrase unmet need for family planning. It's sort of an unfortunate label. And I suppose it has not always been employed in ways that we would approve of. The concern is: Are outcomes consistent with goals, desires? I hope we don't devalue this question.

Karen Hardee: Yeah, thanks. Thanks, yeah. Changing field, yep.

Emily Merchant: So, I have a question to follow up on the low fertility comments. So, as someone who, for most of your career, you've been tracking fertility decline, what are your thoughts about current claims that fertility is too low, not from the standpoint of unrealized goals in terms of childbearing, but just from the perspective of society's not having enough people? I'm just wondering what your perspective is or your thoughts are on those claims.

John Casterline: Emily, honestly, I don't think I have any special insight on that, because I've not tried to work on this problem, but I think it's real. I think it's healthier at all levels if fertility is in the range of one to two, maybe closer to two children per person on average. . . . I was going to say something further, but I'm sorry, I just lost my train of thought . . .

John Weeks: Thinking about Taiwan and low fertility in Taiwan, you were starting out there at Michigan working with Taiwan. How did you see their transition in fertility, which is very much like mainland China? How did you see that coming about, and is that a good thing or a bad thing? Kind of following up on Emily's question.

John Casterline: Now I remember what I was going to say further. So, East Asia, where we have extraordinarily low fertility rates, a TFR below one in South Korea. And what I was going to say was... There now seems to be a lot of pessimism bordering on kind of a fatalism about low fertility that we're now locked into smaller and smaller cohorts as far as the eye can see. I don't see this as necessary or inevitable, and I think we shouldn't be surprised if the fertility rates turn upward. I think it becomes a matter of values, really. East Asian societies are relatively wealthy societies.

The qualitative research I've seen, you ask people: Why aren't they having children? They always mention it's too expensive. Children are costly in various ways. But people actually have the resources to have more children. It's a question of what they value, what their priorities are. So, what I'm getting towards is -- I don't think it's so inconceivable that in low fertility societies, Western societies, East Asian societies, that having children kind becomes more in fashion. To be clear: I'm not predicting this, but I think this could easily happen.

I think we're not being imaginative enough about what the future might look like. I think having four, five, or six children is probably not going to occur on average. But having two children on average rather than one I think is entirely affordable. It's a matter of a cultural shift back towards more primacy or more valuing of parenting on a broader scale.

John Weeks: And perhaps less paternalistic attitudes in society, do you think?

John Casterline: Yes, that, too, yeah. I think there are a number of shifts that... I'll say I think all the research I see -- Again, I mainly conduct my own research and pay most attention to low- and middle-income countries. But the high-income countries where fertility is so low, why is it so low? It always comes around to economics. You can't afford children. You take an unacceptably large economic hit if you have children.

And I think this is subject to cultural shift. I think it's subject to value shift. Well, helped along by some institutional changes that make parenting and doing other things less incompatible. But fundamentally, I think it comes around to what people value, what they're aspiring to in their adult lives. And I don't see why having children couldn't become a bit more fashionable. Again, not a prediction. But I think we can be surprised by these things.

Dennis Hodgson: John, are you at all worried about coercive pronatalism? Now, we just have in Iran, they outlawed sterilization for individuals, and then they pretty much outlawed abortion. In China -- I think it was two years ago -- they said there should be only abortions for medical uses. They haven't implemented the policy yet, but you can definitely see in the context of their thinking that they will take away the right to abortion from Chinese women. And what you're trying to accomplish there is increasing unintended pregnancies and unintended births coercively through government policies.

And this significant decline in fertility, it's bringing up to the surface this whole

set of issues that can only increase in prevalence, the state now versus – And we haven't at all talked about women and the tremendous accomplishments in all these societies that are having significant problems with too low fertility. More women go to college in China than men. More women go to college in South Korea than men. And even in Iran, there's tremendous accomplishments.

So, it gives us the idea that low fertility is something that is volitional and purposive behavior on the part of many women and couples, and it's arising in a context where states are going to push back coercively. It's happening in Russia right now. It's happening in a significant number of eastern European countries. So, all those issues we had at the 20th century now are sort of turned upside down and are likely to become huge population policy questions for both countries and the international community.

John Casterline: Well, yes -- all you say, Dennis, is correct. But at end of the day, coercion that leads to significantly more births, a substantial number of births that occur kind of unintended because of inability to have birth control of one kind or another, contraception or abortion. I guess I see that as unlikely. I'm not so fearful of that.

Dennis Hodgson: Oh, I agree with you that it's going to be very difficult to pull off.

John Casterline: You know, look in the U.S. now. The abortion restrictions state by state are – I would never want to minimize developments – restricted access -- that affect a large number of individuals very directly. Other hand, all the data show that people are finding workarounds. They're getting pills through the mail.

Dennis Hodgson: Medication abortion, yeah.

John Casterline: Maybe they're more careful about their sexual activity. I don't know. I sort of think the train has left the station when it comes to a capacity to keep your childbearing to a very low level in these societies. And I don't know that government efforts can reverse that. I think people will find the workarounds now. But your fairly dire portrait of what could occur in certain places and times -- I wouldn't want to dismiss this altogether. Some of these kinds of government actions cause real harm to individuals, for sure.

John Weeks: Now, this discussion came about as we were talking about your time at the Pop Council. We haven't yet gotten to where you are now. You had a quick stop at Penn State and then onto Ohio State. How did that come about?

John Casterline: Right. So, I had the years at the Population Council, which were very satisfying in many ways. But at the end of the day, it was a soft money shop. We needed to be continually raising funds. And I realized as I got a bit older in age and a bit farther along in my career that it would be nice if I didn't always have to hustle for money. So, I thought returning to academics was something I would have to consider.

So, once again, I looked for positions. I found the position at Penn State, which I held for a couple of years. And then what I thought was an even better opportunity

came along at Ohio State, the Lazarus Professorship. Also, I thought at Ohio State I might have the opportunity to direct the population center, which was just recently underway, and I could see it was a moving-ahead enterprise with a lot of university support. So, then I moved from Penn State to Ohio State, and that was in 2007. Incidentally, I am now, as of one year ago, I'm formally retired, I'm now in emeritus status. But I'm still associated, of course, with the Ohio State population center.

Dennis Hodgson: Congratulations.

John Casterline: So, I can be called Robert T. Lazarus Professor Emeritus, I guess.

John Weeks: Well, I think I did introduce you as that, as a matter of fact.

John Casterline: Ohio State, for me it was 15 years. So, all told in my career there have been four institutions where I've invested substantial time and effort – the World Fertility Survey, Brown University, Population Council, and then Ohio State. This is not counting the two years I spent early in adulthood working for the U.S. Forest Service, which was probably my favorite job. Ohio State was 15 years, longer than the other three. And at Ohio State I did have the opportunity to assume a leadership position with the population research center, which has the title Institute for Population Research.

We had some very successful years. I think we genuinely – I don't at all take sole credit, but it was really a source of enjoyment and satisfaction that the center got bigger and stronger. We secured NIH core funding, and I was involved in three successful applications for renewal of the NIH funding. The university gave us lovely and spacious office space. We attracted a larger number of faculty affiliates. So, this was very much an upward trajectory. And I think during those years Ohio State came on the map as a place for demographic research where it hadn't been so much in the past.

Now, I'll say I did immediately succeed – My predecessor was Dan Lichter, also a past president of the PAA [in 2012]. So, it's not as if there was nothing there before I showed up -- Dan was the one who got the ball rolling.

John Weeks: I remember showing up to do a talk there in 2008. And so, you had just arrived, and it was still known as the Initiative on Population.

John Casterline: That's right. That's right.

John Weeks: And then after that, after you got there, it became the real center. So, Dan got the ball rolling, and then you really brought it to fruition.

John Casterline: We stepped it up, we stepped up a level. We did some wonderful recruitments – Sam Clark from the University of Washington; Sarah Hayford, who was just a superb colleague, superb scholar, joined us from Arizona State; Hui Zheng finished a PhD at Duke and joined the group. So, we had a lot of successful recruitment -- that makes a big difference.

One thing about my career is I've almost always had an ongoing collaboration with an institution outside the U.S., usually in a low- and middle-income country. And that's been a huge feature of my professional career. I think it's a distinguishing feature and something that I'm really proud of and I got a lot of satisfaction out of.

So, there's the Population Institute University of the Philippines, which I continue to have an association with. In Egypt, I've had great collaborations with American University in Cairo and Cairo University. My longstanding collaborator, Laila El-Zeini is at Cairo University. And Ghana, University of Ghana, I have a couple of persons. Samuel Agyei-Mensah is one whom I've worked with on and off for a long period of time.

I would say, when I think of myself against peers, I can point to fewer in the way of former students who I mentored and more to colleagues who I've had as collaborators in various institutions around the globe. And that's, well, just been the character of my career. I could go on. There are a lot of individuals here and there around the globe that I've worked with in one way or another.

John Weeks: Well, and on that score, one of the things we do want to talk to you about is about the organization itself, the Population Association, and your role in the association and how you – The thing we were discussing before we even started the interview about how important PAA is to demography and demographers. And obviously, as past president, board member, and a major player in the PAA, we'd like to get your feel for that.

John Casterline: Yes. I continue to be impressed with how successful the PAA is as compared to other similar academic organizations that I know of. And by successful, I mean two things, really. It's the conference and the journal. Those are the two main things that the organization does.

So, I'm just back from this year's conference in Columbus, what, three, four weeks ago at this point? Three weeks ago, I guess. And as always, it was an enormously enjoyable and satisfying experience. And year after year, one thing about the PAA conference is people bring their best work. People bring very good work to PAA. I think that's the culture. Everyone recognizes that the scientific standards are high for this conference. I think that's a huge accomplishment of the PAA. And I hope we keep that going. I don't know what you could point to, what explains this, but I think it is a fact that the conference on scientific grounds year after year is one of the best. Those who attend recognize this. That's why they keep coming back. That's why they bring their best work.

There's kind of a feedback here. And the journal *Demography*, if anything, as a journal has risen a bit. I have a close, fairly long attachment and involvement now with *Population and Development Review*. Well, Dennis and I were on the Editorial Committee together for many years. I'm about to leave, by the way, Dennis, about to retire from the *PDR* Editorial Committee. But *PDR* is also, of course, a very important journal in the field. But if you ask me, I would say, if

anything, *Demography* has risen a bit and *PDR* has slipped a bit maybe in their standing in the field. Okay -- this is a very subjective judgment. For sure it is the case that *Demography* as a journal remains an extremely strong journal, again, with very high standards, rigorous review. People send their best work there.

So, I think PAA is enormously successful. And I will say for myself it's been the one conference that I essentially never miss. Now, I missed a few because of COVID. I went on my first PAA conference in 1976, in Montreal, my first year as a graduate student. So, from then up to the present -- Well, let's go up until COVID. More than 40 years, and looking back I missed just four or five PAAs. So, over 45 years, I attended 40, something like this. So, for me, it was a mainstay in my professional schedule, and you geared your work production to the PAA.

So, I will say there's two things that I think are -- I'll call them institutional factors -- that have been hugely important for me. One is the PAA as an organization. I've also been active in IUSSP, and I don't want to dismiss the importance of that organization for my own career, also. But PAA really looms much larger. And it's not just people in North America who come to PAA. Around the globe, people recognize PAA as the best conference annually, I think. So, there's PAA.

The other thing I want to point to -- I guess this is woven into your interview guide -- are the demographic research centers at universities. I've been intimately involved in three -- the University of Michigan as a PhD student, and then the centers at Brown and Ohio State. And I think they've been tremendously important for me and made all the difference.

And some of it is a bit hard to explain, but I'll say this, which I've said to people many times. The center at Ohio State, where I served as director for twelve years, actually -- wait a minute. Yeah, twelve years -- I had three four-year appointments. We've had a weekly seminar, as I believe most every center does. And in our budget, it was one of the smallest items, doesn't cost much. We've had a large and fairly costly seed grant program. There are salaried employees, and many other expenses of one kind and another. But I think in a way the most important thing we do has been the weekly seminar because it puts -- well, before COVID -- it puts everyone in the same room once a week. You hear a speaker. You have exchange. You see people. And I look back at my graduate student days a long time ago at the University of Michigan. There was a weekly seminar, and everybody showed up, students and faculty. And it's a very low-cost thing.

In a way, it's so elementary, just holding a weekly research seminar. But I think it makes a decisive difference. I think in my life as a scholar, all of those seminars over time, year after year, have made a huge difference. And what a seminar series at a research center achieves and a PAA conference achieves are the same in many ways. PAA, of course, there's all the informal stuff in the hallways and the receptions and the breakfast and dinners and things.

But the sessions, just getting people in a room focusing on a set of papers and having the exchange, having a discussion, hearing the discussant -- it's hard to quantify exactly, but I think all this makes a tremendous difference. It motivates

all of us to do better work.

John Weeks: Could I come back a second? Because you were talking about *Demography*. And of course, one of the things about *Demography* over the years has been the publication of the PAA President's presidential address. And I was rewatching your presidential address, although I was there in person, but I watched it on YouTube a few days ago. Twice you mentioned the written version of that, and I personally have not seen the written version of that in *Demography*. Have I missed something?

John Casterline: No, you haven't. And John, you and I had an email exchange about this a year or so ago. It's not been published. It's a huge black mark on my professional career. I still aspire to write that essay. I had some notes. So, I don't know if this is going to get edited out of this interview, but that's weighed on me, actually. And as a PAA president, I'm probably the only one who hasn't published their address.

John Weeks: Oh, you're not the only one. No.

John Casterline: So, I'll just say that the title –

Win Brown: You're not the only one.

John Casterline: Well, the title of that address was "Childbearing as a Choice." And half an hour or so ago, I was sort of talking about what makes fertility so interesting is there's so much choice about it. But interestingly, in the five years that have transpired since that PAA, we've had so much going on in the U.S., a lot of it around abortion. And now in the field attention has shifted toward low fertility. So, I think the issue of what people want in terms of childbearing and the choices they're making, what they're getting, I think the big questions in that address I delivered at Austin remain as alive as ever, or even more so. But in a way, they've shifted a bit in what the concerns are.

But John, I'll just say, well, it's a huge delinquency on my part, but I do intend, I hope not too long from now, to put everything else aside and spend a couple of months getting that done. I sort of assume that *Demography* would publish a presidential address that's submitted five years late. I don't know. I hope they will.

John Weeks: If there's any question, we'll work with the editorial board on that because it's part of PAA.

Dennis Hodgson: I did think, John, that at the very end of your presentation, when you presented this possible potential in which fertility is something that the well-to-do can participate fully in, it becomes less and less able for the less well-to-do to sort of actualize their fertility goals. I thought that was extremely powerful and probably quite accurate in terms of what the future might hold. So, I would love to see the presentation of that picture because I haven't seen it any other place.

John Casterline: Well, thank you, Dennis, for making that point, because I will now take that to

heart. I have thought the inequality issues here were deserving of emphasis. I have to pull out the numbers, but I believe it is correct that educated and more affluent couples are having children more than the less affluent. So, I think this has become the case, yes.

Dennis Hodgson: And I think your two concepts, the unrealized and the unintended fertility, is a way of getting at that.

John Casterline: Yeah. And again, both of those concepts have to do with this elementary thing of goals versus outcomes. As I say it's not fertility alone. It's true of all sorts of facets of human experience, I suppose. But I will say for a lot of demography, an awful lot of what's researched in the field and what's published in the journal is either health or mortality.

And I'll assert again that on these matters the goals are not so up for grabs. I think people want health, and they want long life. But with fertility, what people want is very much up for grabs. But thank you for the encouragement. And John, thanks for bringing this up. Yeah. It's a black mark in my career at this point –

John Weeks: I didn't want to make a big deal about it, but like what Dennis was talking about with your graphics that were not available on the YouTube video. The YouTube video just had you and didn't show the graphics. And so, we were all waiting then for the published version. And so, we'll just keep hitting you over the head with that for a while.

John Casterline: Quickly, what I really want to wrestle with in this essay, it's tough. I forget how much I said about this in the address, but it's the issue of – call it the common good. I'm 100% pro-choice --. I think people should be empowered to do what they want to do reproductively. But a lot of the current discourse I find so libertarian, so individualistic. And I think what we've lost – which I think we did have 20 or 30 years ago with the “population bomb” discourse and demographic targeting. What we had was some focus on: What's the common good? What are the collective interests here? And I think we've lost that, or we don't have that to the extent we should. So, I'm trying to figure out how to address this. And I don't want to pit myself against those who are strongly advocating reproductive rights of various kinds and various forms. Again, I feel deeply and thoroughly pro-choice. I'm already probably getting myself in trouble here. We can edit things. *[Editor's note: this is too important a discussion to edit.]*

Sometimes, when I hear the discourse about reproductive rights, I think you substitute a few words, and it could be advocacy for the Second Amendment right to bear arms. It's all, “I get to do what I want, and it's me and my castle,” kind of. So, there's an individualism, kind of a libertarianism almost. So, I'm trying to sort this out, and that's what I want to try to do in this essay. So, the title of the address in Austin was “Childbearing as Choice.” And I think I'd probably stick with some title like that. That is the fundamental point -- that it is choice. We want it to be choice. Yet how do we do that and simultaneously understand that there are collective interests here; there's a common good here?

Actually, I said it. I said it in the address. I made some mention about childbearing having externalities. That's another way to put it, in a certain kind of economic speak. There are externalities to whether you have children or not, and I don't see how we can ignore this or deny this.

Dennis Hodgson: One possibility is coming up with a child-centered focus, that societies should focus on the welfare of all children. And that becomes something that I think we all can get behind. All children deserve education, nutrition, housing, et cetera. It is pronatalist in its consequences, but I think it's a way of getting around this issue of you don't want to be anti-choice.

John Casterline: That's another point I think about a lot, Dennis, actually, when I'm walking around reflecting on this and that. Fertility, in a very fundamental way, it's about the next generation.

Dennis Hodgson: Exactly.

John Casterline: Fertility is really the next generation, and we want that generation to be as healthy as possible in all respects. It's about the next generation. So, while it's about individual reproductive choices, but it's also about the next generation. So, somehow, we need to have a discussion that balances all these things.

John Weeks: Okay. Now, John, I really believe that we could go on talking with you all day long.

Karen Hardee: I know. This could be a whole other hour.

John Casterline: I'm grateful for this last five or 10 minutes because it really helps to get me to do this, actually.

John Weeks: Well, I wanted to kind of finish off a bit here by giving you the opportunity to be saying anything that we haven't asked or wasn't in the interview guide or something like that and to see if Emily, Karen, and Win had any other questions that they wanted to ask before we let you go. So, was there anything that you were thinking you were going to talk to us about that we haven't covered?

John Casterline: Well, I think I've touched on it, but I do want to... When I was looking forward to this interview, I saw it as an opportunity to express some kind of thanks and gratitude and acknowledgement to others that have made so much difference for me. So, I'm going to take your invitation right now as an opportunity to do that. I think the way I talked about my years at the University of Michigan made clear that I think teachers have been enormously important to me. My PhD dissertation mentor, Al Hermalin, but all the others I mentioned: Ron Freedman, John Knodel. And I think this is "it takes a village" kind of perspective.

And then my collaborators, I will just say that I've had many, many collaborators, and I have no doubt my work is a lot better because of them. John Bongaarts is one. Laila El-Zeini in Egypt is another. Back 30 years ago, Luis Rosero-Bixby, who was based in Costa Rica, was a great collaborator. Mark Montgomery for

some years, doing research on diffusion approaches. Those are the ones I think I wanted to most emphasize. Because of them, my work is far stronger than it would have been otherwise. Each one of the persons I mentioned I could go into anecdotes about how a particular page or paper or project got better because we were doing it together.

John Weeks: Very good. Any other questions from committee members?

Dennis Hodgson: Just thank you for a wonderful interview.

John Weeks: Yeah, thank you.

Dennis Hodgson: It was great.

John Weeks: Thank you so much, John.

Karen Hardee: Yeah, thanks a lot, John.

John Casterline: I've enjoyed this, and I think we've gone over. And I thank you for all your time. And again, I thank this committee for the work you do.

John Weeks: Well, we enjoy it, and we're glad that you got something out of it, too.

John Casterline: I'll just say I could be on your committee sometime if you end up with a vacancy. Win knows this from conversations he and I have had over the years, but I love the history of the field, and I'm very sentimental about the past of the field and intrigued by the past. So, what you folks do – Of course, now you're talking to a recent president, and I guess all your interviews now are recent.

John Weeks: They are, yes, true.

John Casterline: I love to think about the past and the great figures in the past, and I love to explore how the field came to be what it is now.

John Weeks: Well, and remember, all these interviews that we've done and that people before us, the historians before us did, they are on the PAA website. You can go pull them up.

John Casterline: That's great.

John Weeks: We have organized all of that.

John Casterline: You're doing a great thing. I thank you for it.

John Weeks: And thank you very much.

Karen Hardee: And I'll probably be in touch, John, about your essay because I'm really interested in that topic. So, I'll be in touch with you about it.

Win Brown: I think all of us are.

Karen Hardee: I know.

John Casterline: Yeah. You're making yourself a candidate to give me feedback on a draft.

Karen Hardee: Yeah, because I'm always interested in the idea that individuals and couples have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of children.

Win Brown: And responsibly. There's the rub.

Karen Hardee: And everybody just takes out the responsibly part, and I think that's what you're talking about.

John Casterline: Exactly, Karen. That's spot on, what you just said. That's precisely – yeah, exactly.

John Weeks: I should say, by the way, Emily just posted a chat note about a book. And I don't know. I just recently read it.

John Casterline: Oh, which book? I didn't see.

Emily Merchant: Oh, sorry. So, I posted two. So, the first one I posted is a book about reproductive justice. So, I was thinking the issues you were talking about with getting your essay into print, those seem like reproductive justice issues.

John Casterline: Yes.

Emily Merchant: So, that book might be helpful. And then you said that you really are interested in the history of demography. So, I posted a link to my book, *Building the Population Bomb*, which starts in 1920 and goes up to 1974 for the history of the field.

John Casterline: Well, I know very well you're the go-to person for the history.

John Weeks: And we should say that –

John Casterline: But could you send me – What's the first book you said? Can you just tell me right now what it is? I didn't –

Emily Merchant: Yeah. So, it's called *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction*. And I put the link to the – It's from the University of California Press. So, I put the link to that in the chat.

John Casterline: I think I know that book, yeah.

John Weeks: So, just so you know, when Emily was in graduate school at the University of Michigan, she would come and meet with me and Dennis at the PAA meetings –

Emily Merchant: And Karen.

John Weeks: And Karen. Yeah, that was before Win got on the committee. And figure out what was going on. And then she developed her dissertation and books from there. And I was just going to say a 2022 article in *Demography* talked about how the publications have changed over time in the field looking at *Demography*, *Population Development Review*, and *Population Studies*. And I think the most frequently referenced author in that paper was Emily, so a little credit to our committee member.

John Weeks: All right. And with that, thank you, again, John, so very much for all you've done for us, for all you've done for the world. And when I get the recording back with a transcription, I'll share it with everybody.

John Casterline: Yeah, I'll look forward to seeing it. But thanks, all of you, for your time.

Win Brown: Thanks so much, John.

John Weeks: Thank you.

Emily Merchant: Thanks, John.

Win Brown: Bye, everyone. Thanks, everyone.

John Weeks: Bye-bye now. Take care.

The meeting was recorded on Zoom, and transcribed by GMR Transcription Services
Edited by John R. Weeks and John Casterline

Dr. Casterline's PAA Presidential Address—"Childbearing as Choice"--is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F48y-1BTbfw&t=492s>