

Interviewee: David L. George, Ph.D.

Interviewer and Interview Logger: Bradford James Morith

Interview Sessions:

1. **Session One (March 15, 2015)**
 - a. **Part One (1:05:39)**
 - b. Part Two (0:59:57)
2. Session Two (March 22, 2015)
(1:38:59)

Total Running Time: 3:44:35

Location: Conference Room 308, Student Union, La Salle University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Recording Equipment: Olympus Digital Voice Recorder and iPhone 5c

Abstract:

Dr. David L. George is currently professor emeritus of economics at La Salle University, having begun teaching at La Salle in 1979. Dr. George holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan, a M.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, and a M.A. and Ph.D. from Temple University. He has published approximately thirty scholarly articles, twenty book reviews, and two books during his career. His first book is *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desires We Dislike* (University of Michigan Press, 2004), and his second book is *Rhetoric of the Right: Language Change and the Spread of the Market* (Routledge Press, 2012). His primary foci of research include meta-preferences in the free market and economics rhetoric. Dr. George has been a longtime member of the Association for Social Economics (ASE), including being this association's president in 2005. Dr. George was also honored by this association in 2011 when he won the prestigious Thomas F. Divine Award, an annual award that recognizes ASE members who make significant contributions to social economics. Dr. George currently serves on the editorial board of *Review of Social Economy* and *Journal of Socio-Economics*. At La Salle University, Dr. George was an engaged member of the faculty senate, and he won the Distinguished Faculty Scholarship Award in 2012. Dr. George was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1947, where he was also raised. Today, he lives in Melrose Park, Pennsylvania, and has two adult children. His hobbies include classical music and Russian studies.

Interview Log: Session One/Part One from March 15, 2015 (1:05:39)

0:00:00 *My name is Brad Morith, and I am the interviewer. I am here with Dr. David George, emeritus economics professor here at La Salle University. Dr. George is the narrator, or interviewee. Today is Sunday, March 15, 2015, and we are in the La Salle Student Union to do this interview. Do I have your permission to record?*

Yes.

0:00:28 *To begin, could you tell me when and where you were born?*

He states he was born in Detroit, Michigan in December 1947.

0:00:40 *And what was the name of the hospital [of birth]?*

He states that he was born in Women's Hospital in Detroit, Michigan.¹ The hospital is for pregnant women. He felt surprised as a child that he was born in a women's hospital.

0:00:56 *Did you grow up in Detroit?*

Yes.

0:01:00 *Could you tell me more about that?*

He states Detroit was a prospering city in the 1950s. The city had peaked in population then. Both of his parents migrated to Detroit from different parts of Pennsylvania and met in Detroit. His father and his brothers had a grocery store. He grew up in Northwest Detroit where the houses were small and comfortable. The houses were similar to Northeast Philadelphia except that they were not connected houses. He received a great education in Detroit, and he explained that the public schools were first rate. He enjoyed his neighborhood, and he feels badly for kids who have to move constantly. He felt loyal to his neighborhood.

0:02:04 *Could you describe your mother?*

He explains that his mother died fourteen years ago. He describes his mother as a small, sweet woman who was self-effacing. She was of Ukrainian background. Her parents came to the United States from

¹ Hutzel Women's Hospital was founded in 1868 and is one of eight parts to the Detroit Medical Center (Wikipedia, 2015).

Ukraine around 1913. His mother was born in the United States in Frackville, Pennsylvania.² She was born in 1916. She was not so much of a doer than a dreamer or a thinker. They had very nice discussions over the years. Even though he may have had friction with his father, he did not have friction with his mother. There was nothing she could do that would have left a bad mark on him.

0:03:18

How would you describe her influence on you growing up?

She had much more respect for ideas. She had a good high school education. She read, and she valued the mind somewhat more than his father. His father was bright, but more of applied person. His father was very much engaged in the present—a doer. His mother was a nice force to lead him to a life in education.

0:04:07

You mentioned your father as a doer. Could you describe him a bit more?

His paternal grandparents immigrated to the United States from Lebanon around 1913. His father grew up in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.³ Dr. George's paternal grandmother's family was a very prominent family in Lebanon. Dr. George was unsure growing up why they came to the United States. The Lebanese were respected for their business talents, and the thing to do was to open up a small store. In Johnstown, they opened a soda shop. Because of the Johnstown flood of 1936 and the Great Depression, their business went under.⁴ They then moved to Detroit at this time. Dr. George's dad and his brothers opened a grocery store in Detroit. The store lasted until approximately 1966. The store was doing poorly, and his father got a job at Pepsi Cola. His father had no managerial skills without the education, but his father actually became the personnel manager, a vice president's title at Pepsi. He started working at Pepsi in his late forties. He had a financially secure later life. The earlier years were tense due to money. He was the choir director at the Antiochian Orthodox church.⁵ He was a strong musician. In his youth, he was a musician in high school and in the army during World War II. He became the choir director of this Antiochian Orthodox church in 1947. He then became the music director for all the churches of this

² Frackville, Pennsylvania is a small town of approximately 4,000 residents, located 55 miles northeast of Harrisburg in Schuylkill County. The town is located in the historic coal mining region of Pennsylvania (Wikipedia, 2015).

³ Johnstown, Pennsylvania is a small city of approximately 21,000 residents located in Cambria County in Western Pennsylvania. The city had devastating floods in 1889, 1936, and 1977 (Wikipedia, 2015).

⁴ The Johnstown flood of 1936 was not the famous 1889 Johnstown flood that killed 2,209 people. However, both of these floods occurred in the same Johnstown (Wikipedia, 2015).

⁵ This is the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch in the United States and Canada (Wikipedia, 2015).

faith in North America. He made a little extra money from this directorship, but it was “almost gratis.” He continued this directorship up to the time of his death in 2001. Dr. George states that this was a wonderful influence on him. Dr. George loves classical music and opera. He never told his father this influence, but Dr. George sees this in retrospect.

Dr. George states his father was a good, strong man. His father never struck Dr. George or his mother. His father could be tough on Dr. George and his mother with his griping and impatience. His father was a mover and shaker, but he could get on the nerves of Dr. George and his mother. Dr. George had to struggle more with getting along with his dad, than with his mom. Both of Dr. George’s parents did not play games with him. If they did not like something, Dr. George would know it. There was no cross signals or uncertainty. Dr. George felt they were devoted parents. He never felt unloved or unappreciated.

Dr. George’s father’s side of the family all moved to Detroit together from Johnstown. The family was quite close. In the Middle East, families are close very much so. Dr. George grew up close to two families with cousins.

0:08:58

You mentioned your father’s influence on your love of classical music. You also mentioned that he ran a business. Did he influence you to become an economist in some way?

No. Dr. George loved working at the family store. He worked there in his last two years of high school delivering groceries. But his father had already left the store by that time. The store had to be sold; this is a tragic story. The date for selling the store was October 1, 1966. It was a month after he started his first year of college at Ann Arbor, Michigan.⁶ He was worried about his uncle managing the store without him. Two weeks before the store was about to be sold, in mid ’66, Dr. George was told that the deal had fallen through. He said that this would kill Fred, and Fred died in the store on October 1st, the day it was supposed to be sold, of a heart attack or stroke.⁷ Dr. George’s critical sensibilities about free markets and capitalism he thinks were affected by that.

Dr. George did work at Pepsi for three summers. He was well paid on the trucks, and he got the job from his father. George was able to pay his way through college with that money. He liked working at Pepsi, but he

⁶ The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

⁷ Dr. George’s uncle Fred

got a bad sense of the corporate world. He soured a lot on large corporate business. He states that people have more affection for small business.

0:11:31

Where did you attend high school?

In Detroit, George went to Cooley High School, which recently closed.⁸ The school was built in the 20s, Detroit's boom period.⁹ It is a very beautiful building. George states that it is hard to believe that Detroit was affluent once. He liked the school and feels he got a good education there. He had the option, as a good student, to go to Detroit's equivalent of Central High School.¹⁰ It was called Cass Tech in Detroit.¹¹ He chose not to do this, and he thinks he made the right decision. He didn't want the pressure, and he states that he doesn't handle pressure well. It makes him less happy. His folks were very good about letting him make decisions.

When he went to Michigan in '66, that was a very challenging school.¹² He didn't think twice about going there. He states this was a wonderful school. This was an interesting time, the late 60s. He feels he went through a political transformation at that time. He didn't follow the hippie movement slavishly. He was into the opposition to the Vietnam War.

When he thinks back to Michigan and his two graduate schools, Penn and Temple, Michigan was the greatest.¹³ This is one reason why he has liked La Salle: undergraduate education and the liberal arts.¹⁴

0:14:00

I wanted to go back to high school for a second. Were there any specific teachers there that ignited a passion in you, whether that be economics, philosophy, English, history? Do you remember any teachers in specific where like wow, they really influenced my life?

⁸ Cooley High School in Detroit closed at the end of the 2010 academic year (Wikipedia, 2015).

⁹ Cooley High School opened in 1928 (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹⁰ Dr. George is referring here to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's Central High School, which is a four-year college preparatory magnet school (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹¹ Cass Technical High School is a four-year college preparatory school in Midtown Detroit. It opened in 1907 (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹² The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

¹³ Penn refers to the University of Pennsylvania, and Temple refers to Temple University. Both schools are located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

¹⁴ La Salle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

George states that he thinks Rhoda Stammell who was his English teacher. They had an honors English class, and she was first rate.¹⁵

In George's senior year, he took an economics course, and he did very well. His teacher, Mr. Rivers, called him aside and said, "Why don't you go major in economics?" George said "no" and that he was interested in psychology, which he majored in. George ended up becoming an economist, and he wanted to go back and let Mr. Rivers know this. He was obviously very influential with the way he taught economics to him. It was a good high school. Counter to what people think of public schools, the schools were doing very well in those days.

0:15:24

What was it about Mr. Rivers' teaching style that you liked?

George remembers his seriousness, not in a grim way, but because he respected the discipline and because he was connected with the subject being taught. This may not have been for everyone, but it was fine for George.

0:16:11

While in high school, did you belong to any clubs, associations, church groups, Scouting, anything that stands out? In any way that was important in your life?

Yes, George was in the school band and played clarinet. George didn't like music as a performer, but he felt the clarinet was not an instrument that got one far as a younger person. They had one ridiculous experience. They performed at what was then Briggs Stadium, which was now changed to Tiger Stadium.¹⁶ Too many of the band faked playing. So they marched into Tiger Stadium with a very weak sound coming out. It was not a very good band, but it was kind of fun.

0:17:09

Was this at a baseball game?

This was for the championship football game. In Detroit, they used to have what was called the Goodfellows Game where the public school champion would play the Catholic school champion.¹⁷ Cooley [High

¹⁵ Rhoda Stammell retired from Detroit Public Schools in 1997. She is an author, and her publications include *Detroit Stories* (Mayapple Press, 2006) and *The Art of Ruin* (Mayapple Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Formerly called Briggs Stadium, Tiger Stadium hosted the Detroit Tigers baseball team from 1912 to 1999 (Wikipedia, 2015).

¹⁷ The Goodfellows Game was played every November from 1938 to 1967 at Tiger Stadium. This was a charity event that raised nearly \$1 million (blog.detroitathletic.com, 2015).

School] played Saint Ambrose that year.¹⁸ That was '62. In '63, the Goodfellows Game was on November 22nd. That was the day of Kennedy's assassination.¹⁹ George was working at the family store, and a friend came by. They went to the Goodfellows Game; it was not cancelled. George's family was not happy about this, and George thinks the Goodfellows game committee took criticism for not cancelling this game.

George states he had a lot of freedom in high school. He was very grateful for that. It was not that his parents were very progressive, but he was really trusted. George had good times as a teenager going about the city. He was in a Hi-Y. These were the YMCA clubs. He didn't stay long with this, maybe one or two years.

There were illegal fraternities. They were cool. George and a few others formed one in his final year [of high school], but it was just a lark, interesting to do.

George was active, but in his latter two years, he was working at the family store, George Brothers Market.²⁰ So, he could not do as much. Looking back, he did not regret this in the least. He valued work. And they say today, kids sometimes benefit from this, which he thinks is true, as long as their work does not interfere too much with their studies. George loved being at the store and delivering groceries.

George had friends in the local Catholic school, and he used to go to dances there. George feels [his high school] was a good school in retrospect.

0:20:05

So, you grew up in Detroit. How did the economic decline in Detroit after World War II impact you? How did it affect you? How did you perceive it?

George thinks it may have begun, but it was a slow demise. George did not see people as being aware that the auto industry was in any trouble. His father's business, started during World War II, was doing badly. George's father was in the army, but his one brother was not drafted. He was sole support for his mother, so he stayed and ran the store. The store did well in its first fifteen years, going back to 1938 through the mid

¹⁸ Saint Ambrose High School was a Catholic high school in Detroit, Michigan. The building was razed in 1983 (stambrosechurch.net, 2015).

¹⁹ Dr. George is referring to President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963).

²⁰ Dr. George referred to this family store earlier, which closed in 1966.

50s. Then things began to collapse, but not because the auto industry was in trouble. This was because of the rise of the supermarket. And Detroit was very much a driver's town, so suburbanization was happening far earlier there than it did in Philadelphia. And that was the major cause. [George's father and uncles] really weren't that clever; that wasn't their thing to market. So, the store started to decline. Hence, his uncle finished his degree in accounting and became an accountant. His father got out [of the store] earlier, leaving the store in '63. He got the position at Pepsi. His uncle Fred was the last one there, supporting his family. There was a butcher who worked there and a couple of other folks. That's when it really started to collapse. [The store] did not collapse due to Detroit's collapse.

Regarding the collapse of Detroit, even if the auto industry had been doing well, Detroit was bound to decline. Because of the suburbanization, the city was abandoned, so to speak. The 1967 riots took place, and African Americans rioted following the closing down of an after-hours club.²¹ Racial injustice was festering before the riot. It is always there until anything is resolved.

George's father's store originally was on the street where the riots occurred in '67, 12th Street. And they left that site in 1957, partly because of racial reasons. Their constituents were moving out, and it was becoming an African-American neighborhood. George knew the neighborhood well. When this [riot] happened in 1967, that really started the decline of Detroit. Racial animosity was bad in Detroit, which is slightly strange, because the United Auto Workers—Walter Reuther—did very well. Reuther was the well-known leader of the United Auto Workers.²² Auto workers did well. A good percentage of auto workers emigrated from the South to Detroit, representing both races. Both of these races from the South were interacting. The union was not racist. They were pioneers in integration. But, George feels that Detroit had much more racial antagonism than Philadelphia, much more fear of African Americans by whites.

0:24:35

Did growing up in Detroit, and this economic history of Detroit, did it influence you to become a social economist? Has this influenced you?

²¹ The 1967 Detroit riot, also known as the 12th Street riot, took place in Detroit, Michigan. It began in the early morning of July 23, 1967. Dr. George is referring here to a speakeasy that the police raided to spark the riot. The riot lasted five days, and forty-three people died (Wikipedia, 2015).

²² Walter Reuther (1907-1970) is one of Time magazine's most influential people of the 20th century. He died in a plane crash in Detroit, Michigan (Wikipedia, 2015).

Oh, yes. As George got older, he saw that Detroit was dying. Right after he graduated college in December of 1969, he lived in Detroit for those first two years. He had to live in Detroit. He was doing alternate service; he was a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War.²³ He was drafted into peacetime service; he worked at Goodwill Industries in Detroit. He liked living in cities. He lived near downtown Detroit, but it was a dying region. The people remaining behind tended to be quite poor. The downtown was not getting the business it used to. It made George question how good capitalism can do. He lived in the city of Henry Ford and a very successful auto industry, but he saw the demise of the city. When he visited Philadelphia that same year, he fell in love with Philadelphia. It was a city that still was a city, and people wanted to live where they grew up, whereas Detroiters tended to go to the suburbs.

It was during that period, 1970 to '72, when George came up with the ideas that led him into economics. George thinks that having those three years between undergraduate and graduate school was a wonderful thing. He often wonders what if he had gone right onto grad school, having been accepted at Wayne State University. That's sort of the Temple University of Detroit. His interests were perceptual psychology and social psychology. In connection with that, he had a theory that he started in college, and it had to do with spatial orientation. He could be obsessed, he supposed, but he felt he had something really important there. He got out of that field, though. The first article he ever published was on that subject, and briefly, he was able to reverse orientation. There is something Gestalt psychology; where the visual Gestalt, you flip things—many optical illusions where you see it one way and then you see it another way. George did this with space in general, where he could make his house look altogether different by imagining it on the other side of the street and literally seeing it differently. He was very much into this, and it may have been partly due to having a brain tumor—a benign brain tumor. George explains this reverse orientation as follows: if you ever look at one of those cubes, and it reverses on you. George thinks that everyone has had these occasions where they see these optical illusions. “You see it one way or the other; you can't see it both ways at the same time.” It was the same thing for him with space. He really pursued that, and that is why he would have gone into psychology. But he saw that a lot of what was important then in psychology—introspection—wasn't very popular. Behaviorism was the thing, where what matters is what you do. This was very discouraging to him because

²³ The Alternative Service Program is within the United States' Selective Service System. This program is an alternative to military conscription. Examples of alternative service work include conservation, health care, and caring for the elderly (Wikipedia, 2015).

he was not interested in what it did to his behavior. “I’m interested in what I am.” He was going to go into that. He went out to California immediately after he completed his conscientious objector years.²⁴ That was April of ’72. He was in touch with a professor of architecture there who was very interested in spatial orientation. George moved to Los Angeles and lived near Santa Monica. George went to U.C.L.A. to work with this professor.²⁵ George did this one paper on spatial orientation that was in the tradition of behaviorism. This meant a lot to George, and he had a very interesting time in Los Angeles. While he was there, he started keeping a notebook. He came up with the meta-preference, the higher order preference, preference about your preferences. In other words, “I like coffee, but I would like to not like coffee.” George decided then and there to change over to economics. It was his 2nd light bulb, what really affected what he did afterwards.

Again, George was at U.C.L.A., working with David Stea in the architecture department on spatial orientation.²⁶ He went to the economics department at U.C.L.A. and just started knocking on doors. Some economist responded, and George asked him what economics says about “people may do what they prefer, but maybe they don’t like that preference.” The economist looked at George like he was absolutely crazy. In George’s book, he thanked this economist for this.²⁷ George thinks he may have known his name, but does not think it is important. Then and there, George said this is something he wanted to do, and he decided to pursue that idea in economics. That was a very transformative period for George. Nineteen seventy-two was a very special year in his life. For that reason, George tells graduating students, “If you can afford to take time, not time off, work for low bucks—get your footing. Don’t leap into career right away.” Of course, today many are in debt, and they have to leap into a career. Nineteen seventy-two and those years were the most interesting and creative years for George. He was very grateful for having that extra time. His parents thought he was crazy, but that was okay. That is what parents are supposed to do. George delivered pizzas in California, two years out of college. His parents didn’t think that made much sense.

²⁴ This is in reference to the Alternative Service Program mentioned earlier.

²⁵ University of California at Los Angeles

²⁶ David Stea, Ph.D., received a Ph.D. in psychology from Stanford University in 1964. From 1971 to 1988, Dr. Stea was professor of architecture and urban planning at the University of California-Los Angeles (<http://creativecrossroadsofamericas.org/>, 2015).

²⁷ David L. George, *Preference Pollution: How Markets Create the Desire We Dislike* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001), xi. This is the story of the “unknown economist” at U.C.L.A.

0:33:27

You are mentioning a lot about meta-preferences. Going back, you mentioned the influence of two professors going back to the University of Michigan in your book 'Preference Pollution.' Professors Richard Brandt and Richard Hare were significant philosophy professors to you.²⁸ Explain why.

Richard Brandt was a utilitarian moral philosopher.²⁹ He was quite a well-known figure. George found that course amazingly interesting, when George studied philosophy. "There was nothing quite like it." George, to this day, feels far closer to philosophy than to the sciences, even though he is an economist. George was not able to recall in particular what Brandt had to say. He was exchanged with a professor from either Cambridge or Oxford in 1968.³⁰ The professor from England, Richard Hare, was a renowned moral philosopher.³¹ George took a course in moral philosophy with him. George still has all his notes from this class, and this is where meta-preferences started. He didn't think he stole any ideas. He juggled around ideas until they became new ideas. That course with Hare inspired George to go into academia. That was what he wanted to do in life.

0:35:21

Was it a philosophy course in existentialism?

No, it was in the utilitarian British tradition—that really underlies economics to this day.

When George was a senior at Michigan, George took an economics course.³² He did outstanding in it, at least on the multiple choice part. (chuckles) That was inspiring for a different reason. It made George really see the problem with preferences and how the market didn't fulfill those preferences. It planted the seeds for George. Paul Samuelson's economics textbook was a very good book and was around for decades.³³ He was a famous economist. George defends the book to this day. He likes introductory economics because it was rich in so many things, but it was also simplistic. "People did what they wanted to do." That's what it said in that book. George didn't come up with preferences at that time. Two years later he did. That one course had a great influence on George.

²⁸ George, *Preference Pollution*, x.

²⁹ Richard Brandt passed away in 1997 (Wikipedia, 2015).

³⁰ Cambridge and Oxford are both prestigious universities in England.

³¹ Richard Hare was from Oxford University, where he taught from 1966 to 1983. He passed away in 2002 (Wikipedia, 2015).

³² Michigan refers here to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

³³ Paul Samuelson (1915-2009) won the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. The book George is referring to here is called *Economics: An Introductory Analysis*, first published in 1948 (Wikipedia, 2015).

0:37:04

Do you know Michael Moore?³⁴ How do you feel about his work?

The activist Michael Moore? George likes him very much. He likes Moore's politics, certainly. Moore shoots from the hip and does character assassination. George recently realized Moore was of Catholic background, and Moore was moved by a lot of social justice that he apparently gained through that. That was a surprise. Moore was from Flint, north of Detroit. Flint was an auto center. Detroit at that time was more of a politically active place than Philadelphia, certainly. It had the union traditions. It had quite an active labor movement, obviously. Michael Moore, coming out of Michigan, had very much a political interest—the theory and the activism.

0:38:41

In what year did you graduate from the University of Michigan? What was your degree in?

That was December of '69. The reason he graduated half year was because he started kindergarten in January of '53. In Detroit, because of such huge numbers of students, the classes were divided into two parts. Detroit's population was growing. Some began school in September, others in January. George was one of those half year people. George finished high school in January of '66. George then went one semester at Wayne State.³⁵ That was the time George was still working at the family store. He was accepted at Michigan for the fall. He only had to go to Michigan for three and a half years. So, it was three and half years after he started, that he graduated in December of '69. It was thirteen years, but literally calendar years.

0:40:19

So you describe your experience at U.C.L.A., and I believe you were talking about the "unknown economist" who inspired you to go on and do meta-preferences?³⁶ Were there any other stories from that time in Los Angeles that stand out for you, were influential?

George doesn't think so. At that time, George was kind of going into himself. His social life was not good. The times in George's life when he felt most lonely were often the most creative times. It is very strange how that works. At Michigan, George did not have a great social life. He was in a fraternity for one year and really didn't like it. In his last two

³⁴ Michael Moore (b. 1954) is an American documentarian, journalist, and liberal political activist. He is a native of Michigan, being born in Flint. He is well-known for *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which is a documentary taking a critical look at the G.W. Bush presidency (Wikipedia, 2015).

³⁵ Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan

³⁶ George, *Preference Pollution*, xi.

years at Michigan, he was pretty much adrift socially. Again, he had a great education, so maybe having a minimal social life was a good thing. George brings this up because during that small time in Los Angeles, he didn't have much of a social life. He had an interesting life, delivering pizzas to Hollywood. He didn't make friends. His cousin was in Los Angeles with George. George and the son of his uncle Fred went out there together. They had a nice and wacky time there together. He was there for about eight months, the end of 1972. He did not do much socially. He was thinking a lot and delivering pizzas a lot.

0:42:04

Describe your decision to come to Philadelphia and to study at the University of Pennsylvania for grad school.

That was really a fortunate series of events for George. He had come to Philadelphia in April of '72. George was only here three months, and he drove a Salvation Army truck in Philadelphia. He compares this to his time driving a Goodwill truck in Detroit. He made enough money to get by. He was thinking of trying to go to Penn.³⁷ He was not accepted in the psychology department. One needed to have a straight-A average to even think about Penn, unfortunately. That was the time he was coming up with the preferences. When he went out to California, he came up with the preferences, and he thought maybe he could pursue this at some school in Philadelphia. Penn had a program called regional science. It should have been called regional economics. It was about space, so it overlapped with his fascination about directions. George went there for a master's degree. Right into the fire, he went from his one undergraduate ECON course to a graduate program at Penn that was basically for ECON majors.³⁸ He had that disadvantage, but it was good because it allowed him to go into regular economics. That is what he did at Temple for his doctorate. Looking back on it, he either had a lot of luck or it really went well. These different interests linked up. And while at Penn, George presented in an architecture class that paper on spatial orientation.³⁹ He had a very dear friend from the architecture school whom he met when he gave that speech. He kept these two sides together, but he went off into economics. Looking back on it, George reflects was he proud of what he did? Was it the right thing or wrong thing to do? So when he advises students, he says, "If you can possibly pull it off, and you're not sure what you want to do next year, get by and meet the obligations, and see if you can slow down because that is a great way to find yourself and find where you ought to go." This worked

³⁷ Penn refers to the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

³⁸ ECON refers to the discipline of economics.

³⁹ George is referring here to his early 1970s experience at U.C.L.A. in the architecture department.

out just perfectly. He wanted to live in Philadelphia. “You should care about where you live. Don’t let your job dictate where you live. Where you live may dictate where your job’s gonna be, more or less.” Then, he came to La Salle in 1980 while he was still in the Temple program.⁴⁰ And he has been here ever since.

0:45:19

What was it about Philadelphia that you liked when living here?

This is because he loves history. In Detroit, he liked history, but he considered his high school, which was thirty-six years old at that time, very old.⁴¹ He always loved history. As a kid, he found old magazines his parents had from the time of their wedding, and he couldn’t believe it. It was like finding the ancient scroll. He saw a Lucky Strike ad in a different color.⁴² He thought it was incredible. So, he loved history from a fairly young age. So coming to Philadelphia and seeing houses from the 18th century was just incredible. He liked the scale of downtown, more than New York. He visited New York before he came here, and he likes New York. But, he loves the scale of our Center City.⁴³ That was the main reason.

0:46:28

Do you mean like a smaller city? Not as big as New York—not a small city, but not a huge city—

That’s right. In retrospect, he is proud of what he has done in life. He was not a famous, huge-producing economist. He has done all right with his scholarship. He never wanted to just knock himself out with work. He sees that as a “disease of our times.” The more high-pace places like New York—He almost went to the New School of Social Research there, instead of Temple in 1974.⁴⁴ After graduating from Penn, he thought about going to the New School for Social Research, but he felt he couldn’t take the speed and anonymity of New York. At that period, it was a rough time emotionally for George. Also, he didn’t have a grant, so it was tough times economically. He decided to stay here in Philadelphia.

⁴⁰ Dr. George was doctoral candidate at Temple University at this time. Temple is located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

⁴¹ Dr. George went to high school at Cooley High School in Detroit, Michigan. The high school opened in 1928 (Wikipedia, 2015).

⁴² Lucky Strike is a cigarette brand.

⁴³ Center City Philadelphia, which is the central business district of the city

⁴⁴ The New School for Social Research is located in Greenwich Village, Manhattan, New York. The school opened in 1919 and includes graduate and undergraduate programs in social sciences, architecture, finance, psychology, public policy, and fine arts (Wikipedia, 2015).

0:47:29

So you went on to Temple, and you did your Ph.D. there. What did you do your dissertation in?

Looking back on it, he feels he did the right thing. He was taking a lot of flak about his meta-preference stuff. A couple of professors said that it didn't make sense. So, George said that he couldn't let this go. So, he insisted in his dissertation, that he bring in meta-preferences. That made it tough. A member of the dissertation committee, George Rohrlich was a very nice man, a German Jew who came over to the U.S. in the 30's.⁴⁵ He was a very old-European kind of person. Rohrlich was receptive. He was heading up the so-called Social Economists, formerly the Catholic Economic Association.⁴⁶ In fact, he was the president of that organization. At that time, it was not Catholic anymore, but it still had the Catholic tradition. Many Catholic schools were highly represented in this organization. George Rohrlich got him into this organization. Rohrlich was at least receptive to George's ideas on preferences. George had a really traumatic experience during his first month at La Salle; that was 1979. He had been in grad school for six years and finished all his prelim exams. He had worked full-time at Social Security for a couple of years, but he decided he would do his dissertation on Social Security, which was Professor Rohrlich's specialty. George worked at Social Security, so he thought that would lead to his dissertation topic. The topic was on rationales for mandatory transfer schemes—Why Social Security? He thought it was a solid dissertation. He didn't want to publish it; he didn't think it was worthy of publication. But, he brought meta-preferences into that. It came into play in that dissertation. He had, though, a traumatic experience his first month at La Salle in the fall of '79. George called his [dissertation] advisor. His advisor was not George Rohrlich, mentioned earlier; the head of his dissertation committee was Lynn Holmes.⁴⁷ Another member of the committee was Roger McCain.⁴⁸ George still sees McCain to this day, at meetings. McCain is an interesting man and a good scholar. McCain was going to be the head of his committee. McCain told George: "I'm done. I quit. I'm not going to be your dissertation chairman! You're too stubborn!"

⁴⁵ George F. Rohrlich was a professor of economics and social policy at Temple University, where he formed the Institute for Social Economics and Policy Research in 1965. He passed away in 1995 of pneumonia (<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1007/BF02779042?journalCode=rfse20#.VSGWRvnF-So>, 2015).

⁴⁶ The Association for Social Economics began in 1941 as the Association of Catholic Economists. George refers to this association in the interview as the Catholic Economic Association (<http://economicscatholicsteaching.blogspot.com>, 2015).

⁴⁷ William Lynn Holmes is currently an associate economics professor at Temple University (<http://www.cla.temple.edu/economics/faculty/william-lynn-holmes/>, 2015).

⁴⁸ Roger McCain is currently an economics professor at Drexel University in Philadelphia (<http://www.lebow.drexel.edu/academics/disciplines/economics/faculty/rogermccain>, 2015).

McCain hung up the phone on George. George asked himself whether this was for real. McCain called right back, and he apologized. George then told McCain that he was going to restructure his [dissertation] committee. So, McCain was not on George's dissertation committee. That made McCain "not too happy" with George. They didn't talk for maybe six years after that. Then, they mended fences. He is a very eccentric man, but a very productive scholar. George respects Roger McCain. McCain has a good personality, but a Lasallian style is a little bit better than being truly eccentric. Lasallians are not an eccentric bunch in the same way that many academics are. It took George a long time to finish the dissertation, though. He was at La Salle five years as he worked on it. He got the Ph.D. in '84. He spent many years on this, which wasn't that uncommon in certain fields.

0:52:06

Did you start at La Salle as an adjunct professor or as an assistant—

Oh, actually, George talks about stumbling into a career. In the fall of 1978, George was (unidentified noise) full time working at Social Security for two years as a claims authorizer. He got a call from a fellow student at Temple who was teaching one year here at La Salle. She mentioned that there was someone they had to replace. This was in October, and the semester was already a month over. Apparently, the students revolted. The adjunct professor was just reading from the textbook. The students were going crazy, and they wanted to replace him. And George decided, okay, he would do this. That [class] was held out of George Washington High.⁴⁹ La Salle had some off-campus sites, including high schools. That was his first class taught at La Salle. He then taught at the main campus that next January of '79, while still working at Social Security. That was his first time in Olney Hall teaching a class. Then, they needed someone in the fall to replace his colleague Mark Ratkus, who died three years ago.⁵⁰ He was away in the Philippines doing some work. George took Ratkus' place for two years, but it was not a tenure track, just as a full-timer. Then, they were happy enough with George that he was put on the tenure track. He has been here ever since. He considers himself lucky, but he supposes there could be a downside of not shopping for a job—sifting offers and going with the best one. George feels he is one who just fell into some things, and he is very happy that he did. Joe Flubacher, the founder of the economics department, is one

⁴⁹ George Washington High School is located in Greater Northeast Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

⁵⁰ Mark Ratkus was an economics professor at La Salle University beginning in 1973. He passed away in 2010, to correct Dr. George's assessment of three years ago for his passing (www.lasalle.edu, 2015).

reason why he got the position.⁵¹ This is because Flubacher read George's first article about meta-preferences. The article was in this little newsletter of the Association for Social Economics.⁵² That was the one headed by George Rohulich, his dissertation committee member at Temple. Joe Flubacher got the newsletter called the *Forum for Social Economics*. It was just a stapled-together little thing. George had a three-page article in it. Flubacher happened to either read it or be aware of it. That was one reason why he got hired. It was to George's advantage; Flubacher liked this article. Flubacher had been in the association from the Catholic angle. Flubacher wasn't active in it, but he had been years prior. So, it was a nice coincidence. George's professor at Temple, who was head of this association, and Joe Flubacher here—were some connections in that association. George states that for a two-year appointment, one does not have to go through huge competitive struggles, but that was how he happened to get the job. It was a wonderful coincidence.

0:55:58

What were your impressions of Joe Flubacher when you started here?

George thinks everybody thought a lot of Joe Flubacher. He was a very gentle man—very nice man. The students always thought so well of him. They would talk about all sorts of things. They disagreed over politics now and then. As Flubacher got older, he became, not an outright conservative, but more conservative. George was the one bringing things up on the other ideological spectrum. George thought very well of Joe, and cannot think of anyone who did not. That was one reason why he had the reputation he had—the ideal kind of professor.

0:56:51

All right, so let's move on. You mentioned your wife in the first pre-interview session. I was wondering, how did you meet? And what's her name?

Patty Gerrity. She joined the faculty at La Salle in 1983 in the nursing department. There was a course being suggested on health economics. George went representing his department, thinking he might be the one to teach it. He met her there. They did go forward with health economics some years later. George and his future wife first went out later that year—'84. Then, they were married in 1985. They are

⁵¹ Joe Flubacher was an economics professor at La Salle University. He has a scholarship named after him. He passed away in 2003 at age 89 (http://articles.philly.com/2003-06-26/news/25446612_1_economics-students-honorary-doctorate, 2015).

⁵² The Association for Social Economics is a scholarly society founded in 1941 (<http://socialeconomics.org>, 2015).

currently separated, but they are still close. They have their two children—his step-daughter and his son.

Dr. George has requested a brief section here regarding his children to be restricted from public access.

0:58:14

Ms. Gerrity is quite a scholar. She is more a doer than George is, but George states that opposites do well together. George was the head-in-the-clouds kind of guy, and she was more “feet-on-the-ground.” She is currently an associate dean at Drexel University.⁵³ She plans to retire in a few years. She is extremely active, and George feels she pushes herself a little too hard. George feels everyone is given his or her relative positions. George was the laid-back guy relative to Patty—just because one is given roles to play. It is all relative sometimes.

0:59:00

And you have two children?

Yes, his step-daughter is Rebecca, and she is now in her mid thirties. They’ve had a very nice relationship. Being a step parent has its challenges, but they both have regard for each other. They talk a lot, and he sees her. She went to college at the New School for Social Research in 1997. She was not quite eighteen at the time.

Dr. George has requested a brief section here regarding his children to be restricted from public access.

1:04:48

The interviewer suggests taking a break and Dr. George agrees. The recording continued during the next forty-nine seconds because the interviewer was concerned about how pausing would affect the recording. This forty-nine seconds is conversation between the interviewer and Dr. George during the break. The interviewer then decided to pause the recording. The break lasted approximately ten minutes.

1:05:39

End of Part 1, Session 1

⁵³ Patricia Gerrity is currently the Associate Dean for Community Programs in Graduate Nursing at Drexel University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (<http://www.drexel.edu/cnhp/faculty/profiles/GerrityPatricia/>, 2015).