

Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History  
101A Margaret I. King Building  
Lexington, Kentucky 40506-0039  
Office: (859) 257-9672  
Fax: (859) 257-6311  
[www.uky.edu/Libraries/Nunncenter](http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/Nunncenter)

## **Society for Applied Anthropology Society Oral History Project**

**Interview with Stephen L. Schensul, March 30, 2005**

**Interview conducted by Martha J. Bojko**

**2005OH054 SFAA 051**



## University of Kentucky Libraries

### USE AND QUOTATION POLICY

Authorization must be granted by the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries to publish by any means any archival material to which the University holds copyright. To obtain authorization, users must request permission from the Louie B. Nunn Center.

**Users may not alter, distort, or change in any way the text, video, or the audio to be used, unless otherwise authorized by the Nunn Center.** Researchers are also responsible for obtaining permission to publish by any means any material held by the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History but to which the Nunn Center does not hold copyright. The University of Kentucky is not responsible for any copyright infringement.

Users will not quote or otherwise reproduce in part or in whole any archival material, without citing the "Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries," and without giving explicit written acknowledgement of the collection from which it was obtained, as designated by the Center.

Users will present to the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History or will provide any other proof of appropriate acknowledgment and citation as the Center will designate.

The Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History at the University of Kentucky reserves the right to withhold permission for the reproduction of any material involving unusual difficulty or great risk to the original recording.

For use and quotation inquiries:

Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History  
101A Margaret I. King Building  
Lexington, Kentucky 40506-0039  
Office: (859) 257-9672  
Fax: (859) 257-6311  
[www.uky.edu/Libraries/Nunncenter](http://www.uky.edu/Libraries/Nunncenter)

Quotation of materials from this transcript should be corroborated with the original audio recording if possible.

**BOJKO:** March 30<sup>th</sup> 2005 my name is Martha Bojko I am a PhD student at the University of Connecticut in the anthropology program. And I will be interviewing Stephen Schensul associate professor at the University of Connecticut health center and director of the Center of International Community Health Studies on his entry to applied anthropology and the work he has conducted over the last several decades. So--uh--Steve could you tell us how you--how you got to the field of anthropology?

**SCHENSUL:** Well I was--(cough)--uh--it was actually the next--uh--discipline after accounting. And so I had failed at accounting and had actually searched for many different--uh--majors. And I was particularly--I came into my first anthropology class and it was taught by--uh--a wonderful woman named Dorothy Keur--K-E-U-R. And Dr. Keur was, had taught for four decades in the City University of New York system. Mostly in Hunter College downtown as we called it in those days. And I was at Hunter College uptown which had just after the war become a co-ed institution. Hunter College downtown was just for women when I was going. I shifted over there and--uh—in the very early sixties and she was a fabulous teacher and she stimulated all her students and me. I think she was teaching evolutionary anthropology but it didn't matter what she was teaching. It kept us on the edge of our seats. She was a wonderful person. One of the few faculty whose--uh--apartments on the West Side Drive that I visited. Um--she really got me turned on to anthropology. And once I got into anthropology my grades started improving and I did much better. Had a--a real focus and decided to go in for graduate work in anthropology. Um--the range of--I hadn't done that well in my undergraduate career. The range of anthropology departments--I was then thinking of physical anthropologies--that had been her focus. And so I was looking for programs that were reasonably strong in physical anthropology

and found among other locations the University of Minnesota. Who accepted me on probation. And so I went to the University of Minnesota with a thousand dollar loan from--interest free loan from New York State. Throughout my undergraduate career I never paid more than forty eight dollars a year for student fees. And even for the first three years they gave us texts that we used but none the less we never had to pay for books either. It was a wonderful system actually. Um--and--uh--so I got out to the University of Minnesota and found lots of graduate students who were--had some assistantships and had a lot of support who had done very well in their undergraduate careers. But I happened to be the only one available when somebody failed to complete their requirement at the undergraduate level. So I had to leave their fellowship. And so somebody told me about it. I went upstairs. We were all stuck in the sub-basement and around pipes that were wrapped in asbestos. And--uh--there found out that--that I could qualify--not only could I qualify but they didn't want to lose the fellowship to the government. And so I got it and it was worth in 1960's dollars in total about forty-five thousand dollars.

**BOJKO:** For the total time that?

**SCHENSUL:** For the--for the whole time I was there. And provided me fieldwork money for my work in Uganda. Uh--several years later so whereas all these people had done very well in graduate school and were working very hard including Jean Schensul my wife. I just jumped into a fellowship.

**BOJKO:** So you were at the right place at the right time?

**SCHENSUL:** Oh it was great.

**BOJKO:** So you finished your undergraduate--what year did you complete it?

**SCHENSUL:** Finished in sixty three. And then in--in the spring of sixty three and the fall of sixty three I entered University of Minnesota's department of anthropology. And then the second most figure in my anthropology life came into the picture when--when--uh--when I sat in on and--and began my first course in research methodology with Pertti J. Pelto in September 1963. And in fact since it is now 2005 that makes us associated with each other throughout--for the last forty two years--uh--and very much turned on to the ways of thinking and conceptualization and methods that Bert was teaching at that time. And left a physical anthropology to go onto focus on what was then cultural anthropology or social anthropology or--uh--since it was pre-medical anthropology times. And then--uh--there was a variety of opportunities. Bert was very--felt very strongly about field research and learning and field research. And so he had made links to the upper Mississippi research--Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center. Which had gotten funds from a private foundation to--uh--to look broadly at the health and mental health of both Indians and both Native Americans now. And northern Minnesotans--uh--in the area of Bemidji Minnesota. And so project coordinator was hired--J. Anthony Paredes who later became one of the--was a former president of SfAA. And was a long term professor at Florida State University and now is with the U.S. Parks Department. Then there was a bunch of us who included Gretel Pelto--Jean Schensul--uh--and others who went up to northern Minnesota to begin our field work and I remember Bert and Tony Paredes dropping me off at Laporte Minnesota. A town slightly smaller than my apartment block in the Bronx and that was where I started field work. I remember--you know--rigorously doing my field notes for about three days and as I began to interview various people--the principal of the high school I lived above the hardware store which was also the--the exchange--the telephonic exchange for the whole--the whole village. You

couldn't dial directly--you had to dial the exchange. Then that person would plug you into different lines.

**BOJKO:** Green Acres.

**SCHENSUL:** So--uh--and I had done three days of interviews and had finally caught up and I didn't want to go out on the street and do anymore because I didn't want to be behind again.

**BOJKO:** So where you there full time doing your field work or what part of this was your graduate work--

**SCHENSUL:** This was the first summer after the first year of graduate school. And I returned--um--a number of times including it was Laporte Minnesota that was the focus of my master's thesis. So I probably finished that in 1965. This is about two years later and--uh--did the thesis that focused on an ethnography of--of the village. And also about that time had my first opportunity at an American Anthropological Association meeting in which I was fortunate to--since there was no such thing as symposia. Everybody submitted an individual paper and you got on whatever panel and if they accepted you. So there I was with Anthony F. C. Wallace the leading culture and personality person at that time. And--uh--God I suddenly forget his name I had it in my mind just a moment ago. Um--it will come to me in a minute. But it was a very distinguished panel and I--I even--this was a person who based in Northwestern--Bohannon--Jim Bohannon and did very innovative work. Focused on things like American--divorce and other kinds of things. Was a leading anthropologist and offered me a job a number of years later.

**BOJKO:** Oh where?

**SCHENSUL:** At Northwestern.

**BOJKO:** So this is from your first presentation at a Triple A meeting?

**SCHENSUL:** Yeah with my knees knocking together.

**BOJKO:** And how did you--do you know how you got on this panel where your paper?

**SCHENSUL:** No I was doing a paper on what we then called since the twilight zone was a big program then. We called it the twilight zone of poverty. That Northern Minnesota were very good at non cash income. They could supply themselves food. They produced a number of their own services. There was a lot of sharing and exchange and barter. But they were also plugged into the media and feeling deprived--relatively deprived by their lack of cash income and material goods. And so that produced a constant move back to the Twin Cities to make money in a place--for the most part didn't like at all. But they couldn't get their lives together. They could make money at one place but it wasn't socially a place they wanted to be. They could be in the social environment that they want to be but couldn't make any money. Ultimately that formed the basis for my PhD thesis.

**BOJKO:** Which were did you--where did you decide to do your PhD work and--this was an influence again where did you?

**SCHENSUL:** Well throughout this and by the way I should say that this was the early phases of what later became medical anthropology. Because we were in and around the Upper Mississippi Mental Health Center and this was health--mental health. And--uh--under the leadership of both Bert and Tony Paredes--um--the--what I had decided was that I would just continue my work in Northern Minnesota. And so I wrote for and got an NSF fellowship to--to do--uh--a dissertation research fellowship. To work in northern Minnesota. But then I was called in by the chairman of department of anthropology--E. Adamson Hoebel. Very well known for his work in the

Cheyenne and a very tall and imposing figure. And he said well you've had the fellowship all this time I finally secured field work funds. So you've got to go somewhere.

**BOJKO:** Okay so he had to secure funding for?

**SCHENSUL:** For all the fellowship holders.

**BOJKO:** I see.

**SCHENSUL:** And I was the only fellowship holder at that moment again. Who was in a position to go somewhere. So I said an NSF grant for Northern Minnesota. And he said you still have to go somewhere. So I went home and I had taught--I had a colleague who ended up at the University of Missouri--Mike Robins and we talked a lot about East Africa. But none the less I opened up a big atlas and was thumbing through the pages and I said you know what maybe I will go to East Africa. And that's--so I got another--I think the fellowship in the order of Northern Minnesota--something in the order of six or seven thousand dollars. And I got another fourteen or fifteen thousand dollars to go to--uh--Uganda but actually I was going to go to Dar . . . to an area in Tanzania. And--uh--this was again a remarkable find because I was able to buy sleeping bags and movie camera and--and a new Toyota Land cruiser to be picked up in Dar es Salaam.

**BOJKO:** So this is going on in what--mid 1960's?

**SCHENSUL:** No this is now 1968.

**BOJKO:** 1968.

**SCHENSUL:** So I had entered in sixty-three--September--this was let's say January. This in fact was January 1968. So about three and a half years later.

**BOJKO:** So your—NSF dissertation funds instead of going for field work in northern Minnesota?

**SCHENSUL:** No I was going to do a comparative analysis.

**BOJKO:** I see.

**SCHENSUL:** I'll describe that. That--um--so here I am on my way to an area that I have never studied. I knew a little about and when I stopped off in New York to see my folks. Went to the American Museum of National History and met with a number of people who did know something about East Africa. I suddenly forget the name of the person. But there was one particular person said you really ought to work in Uganda. It will be much easier than either Tanzania or Kenya.

**BOJKO:** And why would be?

**SCHENSUL:** Because with government clearance and things were much more settled in Uganda and he was actually quite right. So when I actually came to Tanzania I--well when I came to East Africa having flown through Europe and a number--since I had an around the world ticket on top of everything else. I stopped--uh--in Kampala first and met with a person. This--Turnbull--Colin [M.] Turnbull from the American Museum of National History--did a number of studies of groups like the Ik and Pygmies and Forest People is his--he was a great guy actually. Referred me to a man named Raymond Apthorpe--the head of sociology in Makerere Institute for Social Research in Kampala. So he said--you know--come it won't take long to get government clearance. It will take about two weeks and I said no I'm really am on my way to Tanzania but thank you very much. And I went onto fly to Nairobi and learned that people were waiting eight

months for clearance--a number of anthropologists there were waiting around. Then I went--Dar es Salaam--it sounded like it was a year in Dar es Salaam.

**BOJKO:** And the clearance was?

**SCHENSUL:** To get official permission from the government.

**BOJKO:** Okay so these anthropologists that were waiting eight months and a year were just living there they weren't able to conduct any research?

**SCHENSUL:** That's right. They were just sitting around and going nuts.

**BOJKO:** Okay.

**SCHENSUL:** So--uh--I hit Dar es Salaam--went to get the vehicle which I picked--you know--he said white or green. Pulled this new Toyota Land Cruiser out which was the unbelievable price at that point of four thousand dollars. I just thought --I had never heard of a car that cost four thousand dollars.

**BOJKO:** Expensive?

**SCHENSUL:** So much--so much money. I mean I bought a new Volvo when I finally got my first job two years later and it was twenty six hundred dollars. So this was the premium of being in Africa but--and it was a wonderful car. Because when there was pavement--it was smooth unlike a Land Cruiser--Land Rover. And it could really go through all kinds of--so terrain. So I started on the drive which was nine hundred miles alone--across East Africa to get to Uganda. And with all kinds of adventures along the way. Including running out of gas and in Ngorongoro Crater--in the middle of--we had seen many prides of lions. I was helping some of the Peace Corps workers transport vaccines to the Maasai and never used the ratio four wheel drive. And when I used it drops the consumption about three miles a gallon and we were out. So we had to

spend the night listening to lions. All kinds of rhinos and all kinds of big game and we couldn't move.

**BOJKO:** Did you have any episodes during the nine hundred mile ride over questioning your decision to be there?

**SCHENSUL:** Oh sure I'm wondering why I didn't go into accountancy in the first place. You know--a couple of times I remember the road suddenly disappearing. And I buried the car--I buried the car into--into mud and it must have taken fifteen to twenty local villagers to pull me out of there. But then I finally got to the Kenya Uganda border. And they--they asked me if--uh--I had my log book. What's a log book? It turns out I should have been given at the car dealers to show register in the fact. And I have to leave the car go to Kampala--call get the log book sent--go back by bus--uh--get the car and then come finally in. But then--for--uh--I got settled relatively quickly and found an area in southwest Uganda that fit. And was essentially learning that--uh--how to match up the northern Minnesota structure with the Uganda structure. And I was essentially looking at the dynamics of people who both of whom had to leave their rural villages to go to work in Kampala. Uh--who had a market town nearby--in this case Bemidji or in Mbarara, Uganda. And how they adjusted to this life in which there was no place to maximize both the economic wellbeing and social wellbeing. So that's what I did--I did a comparative analysis of Northern Minnesotans and the group I was with was called the Banyankole and but it was--it was at towards the end of that process in which my vehicle was used very frequently for getting complicated deliveries into the market town and I felt that my personal relationships weren't enough. And I wanted to do the kind of anthropology that would contribute more to people. And to the groups that I was working with. So I came back from

Uganda. I came back from Uganda via India--uh--Bangkok--Hong Kong--Japan and then into the states. I had--I had circumnavigated the world. But I came back with the definitive view that I wanted to get this dissertation done and find a job outside of academia that could be applied.

**BOJKO:** So--so this came to you when you said during your work in Uganda?

**SCHENSUL:** Right.

**BOJKO:** And how long where you in Uganda?

**SCHENSUL:** Uh--about--um--fourteen months in Uganda. I lived in--in a small--well it was--it was kind of like somewhat larger than a village but not as big as the market area. An area called Bushenyi and--uh--there I was. I had a research assistant who was also helping me with the language. I got only semi-competent in the language. I had studied Swahili before I went but this wasn't in the area that Swahili was used.

**BOJKO:** And your research assistant was?

**SCHENSUL:** Was a--uh--a young man who was--knew a lot about the community and was very smart. Helpful in making contacts--getting to the chiefs. Getting permission all the way down the line to the local chiefs. And knowing when to invite them to their house--when we should go to their houses and--uh--I had somebody who cooked and--um--then developed lots of relationships in the local area. So it was a great experience for me. And it was an area where--uh--for the most part very few white people had been there. Very few Europeans. So it was no pre-set negative reactions as there was for example in a place like Kenya where they had been a high degree of white settlement and so--you know--my dancing--you know--at one of the festivals was a big thrill for everybody and it was easy to develop rapport and I stayed over in people's homes. And it was a great opportunity.

**BOJKO:** And did you hear anything from the people--from the village that you were in Uganda after you left in terms of did they state--did you help them with? Did you help them--um--or how--how did you--how did you help them in terms of your presence in the village?

**SCHENSUL:** Well it was--uh--you know--I--it was the opportunity for them to see a European as somebody who they could develop a personal relationship with. It was my throwing in my--uh--labor if there was something that needed to be done. It was my transport that helped in times of crisis and difficulty. Uh--but--and they were very accepting of me. But it wasn't enough for me. I--I just felt that it was nothing about the work that I was doing that was going to be particularly helpful to them. So when I got back to the states unfortunately this was now 1969 and--uh--I finished and in the process of finishing my dissertation and looking around for positions. It was by the late sixties that most anthropology departments--uh--had split off from sociology. And it was a great demand to fill faculty positions. So sight unseen I had my choice of about twelve faculty positions. Uh--because again I was at the right time and the right place. But I didn't want--and there were very few non outside of academia jobs. Um--there was one opportunity to be in logging communities in Washington. Uh--Washington State--similar to Northern Minnesota which was also a big logging area. And--but ultimately the only job that was available was to be the head of the community research unit of the community mental health program on the west side of Chicago. I consulted a few times. Made in 1969 a hundred dollars a day--it was just unbelievable. I didn't know what to do with a hundred dollars a day. I was making two hundred forty one dollars a month in my fellowship and banking that money. So you can imagine what a hundred dollars a day was.

**BOJKO:** So this was after you had finished your?

**SCHENSUL:** No.

**BOJKO:** This was during?

**SCHENSUL:** I actually finished in--in June of 1969. This was--I joined that--that program in December of sixty-eight. And--uh--what I did was work extra time Monday through Thursday and then started Thursday night and finished Sunday night of every weekend between December and June to finish my dissertation.

**BOJKO:** And can you remember in terms of how did you find out about this head of community research and what were they looking for? Where they?

**SCHENSUL:** Well I think they clearly--there had been enough now role--this was in the general community health--community mental health movement. Which had been initiated with legislation in 1964--uh--sixty-four--sixty-five--uh--that tended to democratize and make available community mental health services. Uh--to underserved groups. For the most part mental health was seen as something for the privileged. Mental health services. Consistent with--uh--Medicare--Medicaid--the--uh--through the Office of Economic Opportunity--the establishment of urban and rural community health centers. So this was all that wave of--uh--of Johnson War on Poverty kinds of programs. And I don't remember exactly how I identified this position but certainly there were a fair number of anthropologists in mental health. This--there was a tradition of [Alexander] Leighton who was a psychiatrist--the Nova Scotia project. And anthropologist playing a role in identifying culture and adapting culture. Not adapting culture but adapting mental health services to the local cultural environments. And--uh--so anthropology was reasonably well placed. I'm not sure they were exactly looking for an anthropologist but--uh--they--and I'm not sure my--I guess there was--they hired two of us. One

was a sociologist who was supposed to look at the complexity of the institutions that were collaborated on this and the other was me. Looking on the outside at the community.

**BOJKO:** So that was your kind of entry into what you would considered an applied--applying anthropology to the community setting?

**SCHENSUL:** Well--right. And--um--so here I am I just come back from--uh--from Uganda. I am faced with a large Mexican American, middle European, African American communities. And--uh--I can't even get from my place where I was living to--I kept getting lost and getting so--I didn't know Chicago at all. Um--I hadn't done--I had done mostly rural work at that point. So here was this large urban area and how to begin to make it into something that I could grasp was--was very difficult. Also the program was in some kind of considerable degree of difficulty. They had hired--they had hired psychiatric social workers and clinicians and others and placed them in these store fronts. In the African American community and in the Mexican community and in the Middle European community. So the Middle European was Little Village it was called. The--the Mexican American was Pilsen or Eighteenth Street and the--uh--African American was the west side. By that time the west side community had rebelled at the idea that this white institution perceived white institution was going to set up a mental health clinic. So one community organization just took it over. And locked people out and said they wanted to be the subcontractor for. So there was that and in the Mexican Community which was really the relatively new migrant community and I don't think they know what do make of this store front of mental health. Uh--and in the little village community there mostly was after care patients. Who are now being--the other thing that went along with this was dumping out long term patients from state mental health facilities into the community. So they were busy but not with

the populations they really wanted to reach. So each new person was added to the program was going to save the program. Well I didn't have a clue about saving the program and--and the staff recognized and they were very difficult staff to work with. Um--so I came and went pretty fast as far as being able to be the savior. And so there I was--I was--it was now winter time in Chicago. Pretty miserable and cold. Uh--and I figured if I'm not going to play some significant role. In fact they didn't know quite what to do with me anyway. I would get out into the community. So--uh--I started making contacts like anthropologists do. And--uh--in June of that year--sixty nine--just finishing my dissertation and defending I moved into the community. Into the Pilsen and Eighteenth Street community--in the Mexican American community. That was far the most receptive of the communities. I had been building contacts through them and that winter spring period. With people like Phil Ayala and Juan Velasquez and Umberto Martinez and a number of people involved in gang work. Uh--injection drug users or and linking up with people who were involved in action but were amenable to--to research and the idea that research could play a role for them and their aspect of community development. So then--uh--it was at that point that--that we began to--I began to try to figure out how to approach this community and I learned that both John and Phil--uh--Juan Velasquez and Phil Ayala were working for a settlement house and that--this was a long standing New York and Chicago tradition of settlement houses. Meaning that they helped immigrant community settle in to the community--the area. And it was a center of social work and Jane Adams--the well-known turn of the century social worker. Uh--was from Chicago and well these settlement houses were developed and it too was going through its adaptation from Middle European to Mexican. And they had decided to do--uh--summer camps for kids in the Eighteenth Street Community. That involved facing

sides of a city street which they would block off. And--you know--that could involve opening the pump--running--having films on the street--you know--getting kids involved in--in--various kinds of games and other things. But it gave access to the street. So I took one look at that and I said this is exactly the village approach that I needed. That we could take these facing sides of the city street. That were about seven and I began to identify students and including Burt [Pertti J.] Pelto--who was working for me at that time--in that summer. And placing them in different block areas and what we did was we began to collect data from the residents. Uh--and learn that--the demographic characteristics through the sample of seven communities. Began to figure out what the residence were upset about or what problems they were facing so that we could take that on--on a collective basis in collaboration with the--the settlement house. They might want a stop sign or a--you know--a park area or whatever they were particularly interested in. And it created a considerable outreach and a capacity to generate data that made it easier for me to be in my community mental health program back at the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute which was the located maybe a mile and a half away from the communities. Uh--but most importantly began to create a collaboration with the young workers who were then to be the leadership for activism in the Mexican American community. For a number of years after that.

**BOJKO:** So this was--so this all still based with the community--head of community--your--your--the head of community research at the Illinois?

**SCHENSUL:** Yea--well community mental health program of the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute.

**BOJKO:** So now you have--where you're originally in charge of all three communities? The European--Mexican and African American?

**SCHENSUL:** In truth there was only one--there was Mary Bakszysz who was the--my only other staff member. It was just the two of us.

**BOJKO:** Okay.

**SCHENSUL:** And--uh--so it was just the two of us roaming around all three of the communities. But the emphasis in particular on the Eighteen Street community. First of all they were the most receptive. That was there the activism was really located. Eventually it extended because not so many years later. The Mexican, the large immigrant Mexican community was expanding and right through the whole corridor that was defined by a shipping canal on one side and the railroad that divided it from the African American west side community on the other. And there is a whole corridor on the all the way to Cicero and Berwyn and the suburbs which have not changed from European to almost completely Mexican.

**BOJKO:** Interesting. And what would you say how long were you working in the program in Chicago and what were you--what would you considered your success stories and where there any disappointments?

**SCHENSUL:** Well I was--I was there for about six and a half years and --uh--continued to be contact--linked to the communities even now. Gwen Stern I don't know if you remember that name.

**BOJKO:** I do but.

**SCHENSUL:** Gwen Stern and Neal Skippers there was a variety of anthropologists for almost twenty five years. When you had anthropologist in that community since that time. But it was really my initial experience and it's a broad and diverse story. But its start--once we had--once we had developed--you know--almost all--almost all the activist were my age then. I mean I

essentially entered there at--uh--let's see--five and a half years after--maybe I was twenty seven when I got into the community. And they were mostly twenty-five to thirty. There was some older leadership.

**BOJKO:** And what were they activists for?

**SCHENSUL:** Well--uh--there was a major issue of gangs and adolescent difficulties and shootings and other kinds of things. There weren't large city wide gangs. They were small-small gangs like the Latin Counts or the Via Lobos or--and there was a lot of shootings and went to a lot of funerals. So they needed to be something for adolescents. Um--there was lots of heroin coming up from Mexico so there was a lot of intravenous drug use. There was the recognition that there were no health services or mental health services for--despite Pilsen--was need for outreach. But there certainly were no health services available. It needed to be translation services. All this was the kinds of things that were faced by many people. In Hartford much later as the Hispanic sector of Hartford grew. So--uh--and these--uh--the people who were--were activists were either--were mostly in existing organizations which couldn't fully express their activism. So they were looking for found new organizations. Education was another major area. The need for bilingual education. Um--so between 1970 and seventy-two or so there was not only the founding of these large omnibus organizations like Pilsen Neighbors or—I am blocking on a few other names of-- which were generally be focused on neighborhoods. But there began to be the Latin American youth center. Special programs for education--  
**BASTA--**Brotherhood Against Slavery To Addiction. One of the great acronyms of all time. Because it means enough in Spanish. Um--and so that gave a platform for and the recognition that well first of all these new fledgling organizations needed resources. And there were grants

available and so we--and there was a need for data to base the grants on. Or there was a need for advocacy to generate data so that we could demonstrate the need--John and Phil and I and a few others were regularly sneaking into the--uh--to a Catholic school which had been shut down. Which had a great gym and playing basketball in this abandoned gym. And that ultimately in negotiations with the Archdiocese became—El Centro del La Causa --Latin American Youth Center. And was the real base for a lot of the activism in the community. So in addition to sneaking in we were negotiating with them and again that needed data. And there was the development of a research unit Philip Ayala developed a kind of mental health training program. Because there was a major paraprofessional movement at that time of recognizing that you couldn't get up to speed sufficiently if you wouldn't address the needs of African Americans and Hispanics by suddenly having physicians and psychiatrists. But you could train paraprofessionals and eventually that linked that up with the National Institutes of Health. And so we received a grant for the Chicano mental health training program. That trained paraprofessionals from the community and many of those went on to significant roles again in the next generation of their work.

**BOJKO:** And the type of paraprofessionals? They were training?

**SCHENSUL:** They were training mental health workers.

**BOJKO:** Okay. So do these--do these organizations and agencies still exist today in Chicago?

**SCHENSUL:** Yeah a number of them do. The Settlement House is now become Casa Aztlan and that still continues. There was a El Hogar del Nino--a day care program that continues on. Um—El Centro de la Causa--the Latin American Youth Center is still there. And of course there are now many organizations scattered all the way through that corridor that was actually Pilsen

18<sup>th</sup> Street and heart of Chicago and then 26<sup>th</sup> Street Little Village is all Mexican and it's like being in Guadalajara after that.

**BOJKO:** And do you?

**SCHENSUL:** Did you go in that--did I take you?

**BOJKO:** Actually no. You were staying that Phil is still the director? Phil Ayala.

**SCHENSUL:** Phi Ayala is the director of El Centro, and so it was very exciting event to have as part of the anthropology meetings. A memorial for Juan Velasquez in which Phil and a number of the activists showed up and a large number of very young people who knew nothing about all of this. I mean they were twenty years removed from all of these actions--no thirty years removed from all of these. Early seventies to now 2002 and so they got to hear a lot of the stories of starting up this whole process.

**BOJKO:** And do you know currently do--are there a lot of anthropologists that either work in that area or there students who are doing practica--is there a linkage with applied anthropology programs?

**SCHENSUL:** Well--uh--you know--we were--a number--there were two anthropologists who are living in those communities. Myself and Gwen Stern and--uh--they--Gwen eventually left the community in probably about early eighties. Another major organization that Gwen played a special role in is the--oh goodness I suddenly forget. Mujeres Latinas En Accion--uh--Latin women in action. And that's become a major city wide organization that was essentially started by a number of the activists in this community.

**BOJKO:** This thing on help--mental health or any?

**SCHENSUL:** A whole variety of women's health--women's issues. And--in the Hispanic community. Although I left in seventy-five--uh--I was involved and--a principal investigator of a small research grant we got from the National Institute of Mental Health on a project called the Latina Mother Infant Research Project. With Gwen Stern and with--by that time--uh--the Pilsen Mental Health Center had--was directed by--uh--a Chicano and it was based there. And also with Mujeres Latinas En Accion. So--and we were able to show that we could draw in for the first time that I knew of anybody doing research funds directly into the community. In which I played the principal investigator role it was on that basis that we--that in 1979 we got the--the Latino--see I have to remember the exact name. Latino Mental Health Research project in Hartford also came to--La Casa Del Puerto Rico and then it was taken on by the Hispanic Health Council. So a lot of--a lot of what I learned in Pilsen and 18<sup>th</sup> street was able to be transferred almost completely into--into the--uh--the Puerto Rican situation in Hartford. But I never felt that I did as good a job as I did in Chicago because we didn't know what was coming next. And then there was--

**BOJKO:** --here in Hartford?

**SCHENSUL:** That in Hartford I knew how the game needed to be played and cut some corners. There everything was new and we had to develop a whole methodology of how to begin. The principals of action research--what we call it--action research--advocacy research--collaborative research. Uh--but it was really and then it went through several evolutions that I'll talk about in a moment but that--I mean it stated out--it was constant learning. I--I had never felt a time when I loved to go to work more than this time because everything was fascinating and new.

**BOJKO:** In Chicago?

**SCHENSUL:** In Chicago and--in the summer soon after I had moved into the community. A number of the activists were protesting tearing down two apartment blocks and putting in a gas station. And so I joined in and we interviewed the--the residents in the apartment blocks and we showed what was a hardship and we presented pictures and we did everything we feeling very satisfied. Well as I'm driving by there is suddenly a gas station now. So I realized first of all a number of things. Not only was there a gas station there but the very activist were filling up their cars there--(laugh).

**BOJKO:** So what had happened to the people--the residents?

**SCHENSUL:** They were just thrown out. And--and you could build a gas station in about three days. So--uh--if you were gone for any piece--in other words--activism is something you got to keep a constant vigilance. It was up against very powerful forces. And you just couldn't take this kind of thing--you know--you just couldn't do it once and leave it. That was one of my first lessons. I very clearly in the beginning there was a stage in which we were the researchers and they were the activist. And--uh--as time went on those roles started blending. I learned more about activism. They learned more about research. The activists learned more about research and we began to partner even though our role was really research. We would get a lot of input. So that the concepts of participatory research--you know--we didn't call it then. Were very much--they had a hand in the structure of the--of the research and that was kind of the second stage. The third stage was that we began training researchers in the Chicano Mental Health Training Program with the Latino Mother Infant Research Project. One of our--one of our field workers was so--she was so good and so committed that she saw a woman--having a meeting of the Latino Mother Infant and she saw a woman walking by that was pregnant. Or looked

pregnant so she ran out into the street and came back looking glum. We said what happened? She said well I asked if she wanted to participate and she said she wasn't pregnant--(laugh)--just fat.

**BOJKO:** Now when you were training them what were you training in--what sort of--how--how where you training them and what were you?

**SCHENSUL:** Well--by that time we were using--uh--I had been schooled in a mix of methods very early on from Bert [Pelto] so we were using surveys. We were doing in depth interviews. We were observing. We were working on issues of senior citizens--drug use--of health problems--of mental health problems--education problems--legal problems and--um--by the time--towards the end I was beginning to formally conduct classes or sessions of--of training sessions. And having a team of paraprofessionals be part of the research in the--in—El Centro de la Causa--that was really a third stage of being able to get people to do their own research. And it quite surprising now--not surprising but by now there are a large numbers of PhD Mexican social scientist not necessarily anthropologists that we got in touch with as we developed this whole thing. So as--there is no question that I think research became an established tool in the community at those varying levels.

**BOJKO:** And then they were using your research to--what--how did you see them use the research?

**SCHENSUL:** Well sometimes it was to advocate. Whether it was to the Archdiocese or to the City of Chicago or to the aldermen [i.e. city council members]--or to the--one of the best instances of using data was the--um--oh I'm--the U. S. Civil Rights Commission. It was coming into Chicago to investigate complaints of teaching English as a second language program. So

they came to me and asked me about how we could organize data and I said--so I laid out kind of a six month plan and they said--but they are coming in two weeks. So somebody came up--not me--came up with one of the activist came up with the idea of what we later called Commando Research. Uh--we developed together a protocol. We synchronized our watches. We went into each school in the district at the same exact time. I think it was eleven-seventeen--as was our right because we were all residents. We asked to see the TESOL [Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages] program and--teachers--students--we observed the locations where--you know--places like boiler rooms and we had the full scale indictment of the way the TESOL program was being administered. In data we took--we were supposed to leave at twelve-fifteen and we for the most part--unless the principal wanted to talk more--so it was a hour and a half of data gathering and we wrote up a full report and presented it to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. So it was those kinds of learning--a rapid assessment of--of--being able to present the fact that most--you know--most people have the impression that it was Tex-Mex but in fact almost all the population--maybe eighty percent was directly from Mexico. They were establishing and had significant cultural and even to some degree economic resources to establish--you know--a direct pipeline between Mexico and it became a very thriving community. Although people were very poor. So as--it was a very good base to build on. You were threatened by the gangs for a time and that produced some issues. And there was negotiation among the gangs. It was something happening that needed advocacy at almost every moment. Benito Juarez High School was the name of the high school. Benito Juarez.

**BOJKO:** Okay. So after Chicago what was--now you had this experience in community research and applying anthropology and research methods in a community setting. What was your next step? Steps after?

**SCHENSUL:** Well I was recruited by a community mental health program in Miami. Who knew of our work from our publications at that time. And lots of presentations and I should also mention that we did a major presentation in the American Anthropological Association. Meetings in Toronto in 1972 that included a number of activists. John and Phil and Beto and Albert Vasquez and others. We all went up in one car and one big van and had a great time and did a presentation and it must have had two or three hundred people. So our approach--this kind of advocacy anthropology approach got to be known and I went down in the dead of winter--Chicago winter to Miami and needed a seeing eye dog to get off the plane. Because it was--everything was just so bright and I had lunch by Biscayne Bay and I was ready to sign up. But it actually was a program with enormous problems. And even though I consulted for fifteen separate work days. I knew this was the wrong place for me to be for about a week. It was organized around ethnic teams. It was a Puerto Rican team--a Cuban team--a senior citizen team. Uh--West Indian team and a Haitian team. And presumably the people they were hiring were going to be culture brokers. This was the model that developed by Hazel Weidman who made a significant role in my hiring. Were kind of the middle managers of these programs. And the idea of anthropologist would play--ethnic anthropologist. But there was no ethnic anthropologist hired so for the most part they could never match up the. And it was very frustrating for me because I was the overall director. Yet I wanted to be out on the streets and do the things I had learned. And they didn't know about these middle managers. So it became a

difficult program to be in. I only lasted about a year and a half. And came up to Hartford with the idea of involving community medicine with citizen action groups with citizen groups that involved in health action. So that got me involved with Charter Oak and Charter Oak Public Housing project. Then that eventually ended up the Charter Oak Rice Heights Health Center that we founded. It got me involved with Maria Barrero. Now the ethics coordinator for the World Bank worldwide. But then was the head of the Puerto Rico health task force. That led to the Hispanic Health Council. Involved in mental health and eventually resulted in the Hartford Community Mental Health program which is now Hartford Behavioral Health. The consortium of community health centers which now became--became the primary care consortium. The development of an NIH--NIMH grant for that allowed for the establishment of the Hispanic health council. And a number of grants. The AHEC program. Area Health Education Center Program and building of broad-base of support and activism and with research playing a very significant role.

**BOJKO:** And your role in the creation or the development of these programs--you came to Hartford into what--into one of these agencies or were you?

**SCHENSUL:** No I came to Hartford in 1976 to join the community mental health program briefly. Having left this not so satisfying experience in Miami. Working with Bert Pelto who was also a member of community medicine at that time.

**BOJKO:** At the Health Center?

**SCHENSUL:** At the health center but he was mainly in the head joint appointment in the Health Center--he was mainly in the head of the medical anthropology program at--in the University of Connecticut, Storrs. We were supposed to develop this--this outreach program to get medical

students involved in it for the summer. So I did that for the summer and our major links were the Hispanic Health Council...were the Puerto Rican health task force and this group of residents at the Charter Oak Public Housing Project. Then left for a visiting appointment for the University of Kentucky and came back to a full time job in--on the faculty at--in community medicine and then that initiated both the--the NIMH grant that was a three year grant that really sprung the Hispanic health council. The federal grant that got--got the Charter Oak [inaudible] health center started. WE began that also. . .It was from that base of the--uh--of the community of--community outreach in terms of neighborhoods and neighborhood health teams which I suppose that partly I borrowed from Miami. So we had the idea of neighbor hood health teams and in the development of Charter Oak Health Center I had a group of four residents who were working with me on research and surveying and development of information to advocate for the establishment of the health center.

**BOJKO:** Residents in the--in the neighborhood?

**SCHENSUL:** Right. In the neighborhood. Then the idea of ethnic organizations. An idea I learned from Chicago and Miami to some degree. So that there was for a short time the Black Coalition for Health Issues. BCHI--as it was called and the Hispanic Health Council and then the third area of focus was school health. The development of a comprehensive health education plan for the Hartford Public school system. And the fourth area was primary care and community health centers including community health services and Charter Oak and Asylum Hill. Those became the components that lead to the first urban area health education center program which was a grant from--uh--DHAS. Of--um--the largest grant ever received by the University of Connecticut at that time. This was 1979--eighty and we received four point four

million dollars of which for the multiple years and then the first year we contracted with a consortium of organizations built entirely separately from the university. The Hartford [Inaudible] for seven hundred fifty thousand dollars. We were a little bit ahead of our time. Primary care wasn't so accepted at that time. We were having difficulties working with the seven health schools at the university. But still it formed a basis for a primary care clerkship for impacts on school system and so the idea was to impact on both institutions and communities. Something that I've always been better on the community side than impacting on the health care side. And soon after that we developed The Center for International Community Health Studies in 1981. Which focused on the idea of community health research. But on an international basis. With developing our first links with Peru and then Sri Lanka. Beginning to build the same kinds of collaborative research. Community based activities. So there were more details for all of this story but--but there are actually a fair amount written and a monograph that I've now had some colleagues edit. That never got published when it should have and I am going to explore at SFAA the idea of publishing the monograph actually. More or less thirty years after it was--it was finished and it details all the elements. Including a lot of the personal adaptations. That is where I did the Passover service for Providence of God Church.

**BOJKO:** Now can you--

**SCHENSUL:** --and slept in the Priest's bed with Jay. The last night before he left for Miami--  
(laugh).

**BOJKO:** That is pretty interesting.

**SCHENSUL:** There were a number of activist priests at that time and we were very close with them too.

**BOJKO:** Now do you have any--what they call words of wisdom for junior colleagues considering doing applied work or recommendations in terms of educating students or--maybe not students--maybe educating other people to either become involved in the applied work or doing applied work?

**SCHENSUL:** Well--uh--

**BOJKO:** --for all the years?

**SCHENSUL:** It's been--it's been awhile since I've interacted a lot with it. Anthropology students and I've been--you know--we struggled for a long time. Well it wasn't so much as a struggle in the early--in the late sixties and early seventies to get the applied and action anthropology message across. It was part of the sign of the times. But as the country became more conservative that was a definitive shift back on the part of anthropology. Back from the community and into more traditional academic base. The other aspect was that as academic jobs became more limited anthropologists were getting real live jobs outside the academy. And having much less flexibility than the kinds--the kind of flexibility that I had. It's been dismaying to see that applied anthropology is still a very limited part of the academic world in anthropology. And methods of data collection also more limited part of anthropology. We imagine that there was going to be a burst as well of more empirical qualitative and quantitative methods. And certainly has been a trend and text and all the kinds of things. But I still remember sitting next to--coming home from the anthropology meetings in Chicago two years ago. Sitting next to a university of Michigan student--Michigan has the largest anthropology program in the country. And finding out she was in the third year and never took a methods course. Not a one--didn't know anything about qualitative--we would only do qualitative research but didn't know about text search

programs or never had touched SPSS. And there was something seriously wrong with that. So I've actually laid out some curriculum in medical--applied medical anthropology in the newsletter and a couple of other locations. But the one thing that I think needs to form the heart of--we had a--we had a program from when Bert [Pelto] was the head of the medical anthropology program from nineteen--let's call it from 1977 to about let's say 1982 or three. That was the best applied anthropology program I think in the country. Because both Bert and I were--laid our professional lives on the line in doing the work in the communities. And students apprenticed to us and they played very significant roles. And these were people--you know--Kevin O'Reilly and Peter Guanaca and Bill Dressler and all who have prominent positions. All over the country--now--and internationally as well. Who were actively involved and learning on the job. In fact I remember a group that included Doug Goldsmith who--a group who came in and thought they were coming to the orientation for the anthropology department. But we said to hell with the orientation. You've got to come out in the community. We need you out there and they came straight from Storrs into the community. So the idea of sending students out to locations especially when those locations don't include anthropologists. And having them find their way and discover what applied anthropology is all about in the field is much less good than apprenticing. Whether the apprenticing should be in regular field work or in--you know--or in applied. I think is--we've lost a little bit of the sense of the apprenticeship. One thing I would suggest that in the establishment of applied program it's the professors that provide the continuity. And they--it should be long term. Clearly these six--seven--eight--ten--twenty year kinds of programs as Jean Schensul has shown that--that this requires a twenty year gap. Because--you know--things are just not stuck in the three or five year or even two year or one

year grant periods. These are long term processes. So students should--I don't want students hanging around for twenty years. Students should come and go but once they come in that there is clearly a role for them to play and a place to learn both from the activist and researchers around the community and the faculty.

**BOJKO:** That's good okay. Basically any other reflections or?

**SCHENSUL:** Oh I got lots but--uh--unfortunately our time is limited and I wanted to report to John van Willigen in that we actually did this tape--(laugh)--so this is a good start and John if you want anything more--want more material I'm happy to supply it.

**BOJKO:** Let us know. Great thank you.

**SCHENSUL:** And to just put in another plug. Martha Bojko has done great work in Ukraine on looking at women's sexuality and adaptation to post Soviet life in Ukraine. She is the one that interviewed me and beside the fact that we've worked together for--how many years?

**BOJKO:** It's going to be almost eighteen years.

**SCHENSUL:** Oh good Lord.

**BOJKO:** You call it the apprentice--when you're talking about that twenty year and you don't want students hanging around for twenty years--but I've only been a student for a few years. Not twenty--(laugh)

***[End of interview.]***