



Professor William Axinn

Professor of Sociology
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Biography

Professor Axinn is a Sociologist and Demographer specializing in the creation of new data to advance the study of population change, with an emphasis on family change. His work on the causes of family change features investigation of the community, intergenerational, and psychological influences on fertility and marriage behaviors. His work on consequences of family change investigates attitudes and beliefs, mental health, and natural resources. He works on these topics in both South Asia and the United States and this work is supported by multiple research grants from the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH).

He directs the **Chitwan Valley Family Study in Nepal** (since 1994). He has worked for three decades to create and analyze measures of changing family behaviors in Nepal, publishing more than 50 peer-reviewed journal articles on Nepal, serving as principal investigator (PI) for 12 NIH-funded projects on Nepal, and founding Nepal's most successful survey data collection institution. The Institute for Social and Environmental Research – Nepal (ISER-N) has grown steadily over more than 20 years, supporting 4-6 new data collection projects every year, providing field work training to scholars from many different countries, and offering periodic short-term training courses for South Asian social scientists.

In the U.S., his work to create data for studying population and family change includes serving as Deputy Director of the **U.S. National Survey of Family Growth** continuously from 1999 to 2020, serving as the Co-Principal Investigator of both the Intergenerational Panel Study and the Relationship Dynamics and Social Life panel study, and joining the **Panel Study of Income Dynamics** team (2015-present) to build new measures of family formation during the transition into adulthood. These projects help to fuel his work to create new data collection methods for advancing population science. His research contributions have appeared in three books and 112 published articles, including 11 publications in the *American Sociological Review* or *American Journal of Sociology* and 12 publications in *Demography*.

His scholarship on **data collection methodology** focuses on tools to advance the study of population change. These methodological contributions feature advances in mixed method data collection and survey data collection. Many of the tools he worked on were novel, but became standard practice in large-scale studies. The full breadth of his contributions to data collection methods includes work on gender dynamics of interviewing across settings, integration of ethnographic and survey methods, design of life history and neighborhood history calendars, parental reporting on children's behaviors, and responsive survey design. Most recently, his methodological work focuses on innovative designs for web-surveys and mixed mode surveys

using electronic devices. This work was fundamental to the design of new multimode surveys of population change recently conducted in both the United States and Nepal.

He has been a member of the **Sociology faculty** at the University of Chicago, Penn State University, and the University of Michigan. He has taught both undergraduate and graduate students at each of these universities. Because his duties are now primarily research and administration, he teaches short courses at Michigan and return to Chicago on his sabbatical to teach regular classes. He continues to train PhD students (two currently) and his previous PhD students are on the faculty at University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill (currently chair of Sociology), Indiana University, Penn State University, University of Michigan, University of Washington, McGill University, University of Southampton, and Renmin University. At Michigan he is also appointed at the Institute for Social Research, South Asian Studies, and Public Policy.

He has also held several **administrative leadership positions**. He served a full 5-year term as Director of Michigan's interdisciplinary Survey Research Center (SRC) from 2009-2014. During his term, 125 SRC faculty from across the social sciences reported to him, SRC grew to over \$75 million in annual expenditures of external research funding on our projects, with more than 300 full time professional staff, executing more than 100 faculty-led projects per year. As the Director of SRC he was also responsible for all aspects of SRC's master's and PhD program in survey methodology (now called the Michigan Program in Survey and Data Science) and for recruiting more than a dozen new faculty. From 2003-2008 he served a 5-year term as Associate Director of Michigan's Population Studies Center (PSC), primarily responsible for training programs and management of central staff. He has had substantial experience and success mentoring population studies faculty to succeed at research, including mentoring more than a dozen faculty to obtain their first large research grant from the NIH. In 2016-2017 he created Michigan's NIH-funded "Development Core" in population studies to mentor and support junior faculty and new investigators in their applications for research grants. He directed that Core from 2017 to 2023, including renewing the 5-year funding in 2022. He worked to found and sustain the ISER-N beginning in 2001 and the Society, Population and Environment (SPE) program at Michigan beginning in 2012. Currently he serves as the interim director of the interdisciplinary International Policy Center (IPC) at Michigan's Ford School of Public Policy. His role there is to lead strategic planning for the IPC's future activities and growth. Strategic planning has been one of the strengths of his administrative leadership of research units, beginning with his work from 2006-2008 to design SRC's 10-year strategic plan (2008-2018) and then implementing it from 2009-2014.