



Carolina Population Center

In 1966, the Carolina Population Center was founded at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. To celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2006, a project was conducted to document the history of the Center. This transcript is an excerpt from an oral history interview.

Interviewee: Ronald R. Rindfuss

Interview conducted by: Grace Camblos

Interview date: November 30, 2005

Ronald R. Rindfuss was CPC Director from 1992 – 1997, and has been a CPC Fellow since 1977.

RR: There's a number of big projects here at the Center that have a life of a decade or more. But these are all projects that have gone on for at least a decade. They, yeah, I think what I'm about to say is true. They involve faculty from a number of different departments. So they're interdisciplinary. They're large in terms of the subject matter, the substantive issues that are addressed.

They give us continuity. I mean, they give us continuity in terms of staff, they give us, most of them are built around a longitudinal data set, and longitudinal data provides data analysis opportunities that you don't get with a cross-sectional data set. They give us, most of them generate data sets that are used by others throughout the world. And so they give us a visibility. And they're often incubators for ideas. If you have a project that's large enough, you can try things that you often wouldn't have the capability of trying if you had a really small, narrow-focus project. Now, having said all of this about the advantages of big projects, I think it's to the Center's credit that we also have lots of much smaller projects that have made substantial contributions to the research literature, to training our students, and to our visibility within the community. And I think it's to the Center's credit that it doesn't - how do I say this? The small studies don't become step-children. Small studies receive attention from the various units within the Center just as much as - proportionally, as much as the large studies.