



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.

Interviewees: Boone A. Turchi, Chirayath M. Suchindran, and Richard E. Bilsborrow
Interview conducted by: Grace Camblos
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Boone A. Turchi has been a CPC Fellow since 1977. Chirayath M. Suchindran has been a CPC Fellow since 1977 and a Statistical Core Consultant since 1984. Richard E. Bilsborrow has been a CPC Fellow since 1977.

GC: One of my questions is what did population research look like when you first got here and how did that change over the years?

BT: Well it's hard to know what it looked like. Because the Center was here. It was a large bureaucratic organization. It didn't do very much research at all on its own, it was supporting other departments hiring people. But it wasn't doing anything to, necessarily to, coordinate the research or facilitate it or anything like that. So population research I guess, well I would say was a lot of population researchers doing their own thing in their departments. And, without much support, direct support from the Center. And- but you know, as I say Moye was instrumental in bringing lots of people early to population research and to the University, but the Center's role in their actual activities once they got here really wasn't very large until, until basically he was gone and until Udry took over.

At that point the thing became much smaller. I mean I think initially there were only about what twenty-five or thirty fellows.

RB: Right.

CS: Yeah I guess.

BT: Down from a hundred and fifty associates. And then people started moving over, started having offices here.

GC: So when you had the offices here, were you fellows at that point or was that like a...

RB: Yeah. '77.

BT: I don't think so.

RB: Well I didn't get an office...

CS: At that time the fellow concept was new.

BT: I don't think.

GC: The fellows was in '77.

BT: Yeah. The fellows concept...

CS: This is... This is...

BT: This is about 70...

RB: '77.

GC: '77.

CS: '77.

RB: I didn't have an office here until the fellow concept existed.

BT: I think that was a Dick Udry invention.

CS: It is all Dick Udry.

BT: In fact, I know it was because he essentially scotched the whole associates' program.

RB: Oh.

BT: Associates disappeared and they started this new program and it was very narrowly focused. You had to be a faculty member.

GC: Mhm.

CS: Right.

BT: On this campus to be a fellow.

CS: That's right.

BT: And it started off very small.

RB: Well it did coincide '77 with Udry becoming director and I think that's when we had got an office here.

BT: Is that right?

CS: That's right.

GC: Mhm.

CS: The fun thing is it was his idea. The way he did that was of course-. He said, he announced to all the interested faculty that he's going have these and he said "Okay, he's gonna have first a council." And he- "who's gonna be the member of the council?" He said, "Okay, I'm going to take from health department and the social sciences." Then he said, "I'm going to draw randomly a sample."

[laughter]

CS: Then well, who he picked while I was standing. The first council it was Betty Cogswell, cause she was here. Then Vaida Thompson, and Ron Rindfuss, and Dr. Hulka, and myself. So we had something to do with how the rules of fellows, you know, how the three year, three year appointment, UNC new faculty membership interested in doing population research. And all the rules were first created in that council.

GC: Now this was the first advisory council?

CS: First advisory council.