



My Long and Windy Road

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Director, U.S. Census Bureau

My Long and Windy Road to...

Career Development: It's all about heart and soul.



Career Development

- Careers are what you make them.
- Life experiences make us who we are as:
 - Human beings.
 - Professionals.

Long and windy road to my career nirvana...



We succeed through failure: A Quick Story of Epic Failure

My early attempt to reveal
inequities in foundations of
research.



U.S. Society Evolved From a Fundamentally White-Privileged Culture

“Representatives... shall be apportioned among the several States... in this Union, according to their respective Numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole Number of free Persons,... and excluding Indians not taxed, three fifths of all other Persons.”

U.S. Constitution, Article I, Sec. 2, Clause 3

This is more than what it appears on face value

When: 1999

Where: Williamsburg, VA

What: Cross cultural research (early years)



Seventh Conference on
**HEALTH SURVEY
RESEARCH METHODS**



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics

An Epic Failure: 7th HSRM Conference

- Who:
 - Renown survey methods experts.
 - Federal government-sponsored research (clients).
- Mission:
 - Disrupter aspiration.
 - Challenge existing methodologies.
 - Equity lens.

The Audience Was
Something Like This...



But It FELT Like THIS...

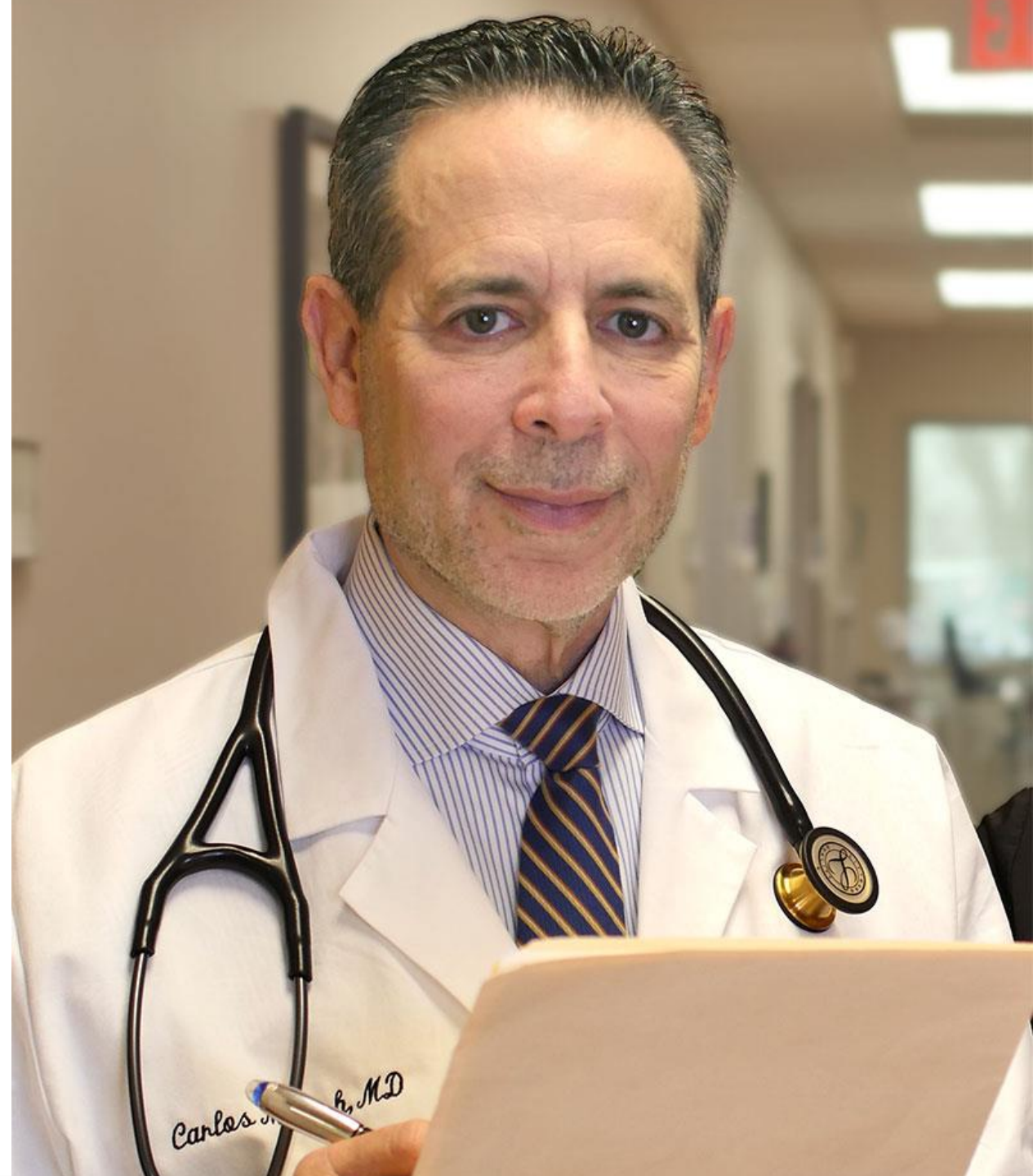


My First and Only...



Classic Symptoms

- Dry mouth.
- Sweaty palms.
- Slowed speech.
- Can't think.
- Breathing difficulty.



Intended Message

- Research reflects white-privileged culture.
 - Measurements/constructs (e.g., separate mental and physical health).
 - Conceptual frameworks (e.g., individualistic vs. communal).
 - Survey questions (e.g., English, then translate).
 - Most vulnerable measured least accurately.

Crashed and Burned

- Summarily attacked.
 - But I tried.
- What's worse:
 - First of 3-day conference.
 - Had to socialize/mingle.
- Tapped resilience and moved on.



And Yet...

- Here I am...
 - U.S. Census Bureau director.
 - 2021 president, American Statistical Association.
 - 2014–15 president, AAPOR.
 - 40-plus-year career in research.
- How did I get here?
 - I'll tell you my story...



Circa 1910

My refugee roots.



Circa 1959

2nd generation
Mexican-American



Parochial School Instilled My Values



Little Flower School
Grade 1–8

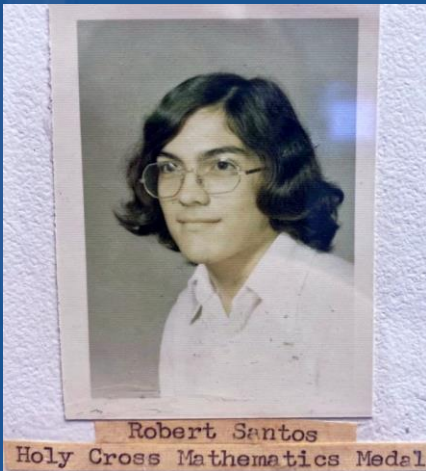


Sister Gabriella
(6th grade teacher)
Pic ~ 2019

Parochial School Instilled My Values



Holy Cross High School
Grade 9–12



The nerd:
Math medal at graduation

My Pathway Through Higher Education



San Antonio Community College
Fall 1972
(Otro vato loco)



Trinity University
BA Mathematics, 1976
(The unconventional outcast)



GRADUATE RECORD EXAMINATIONS PROGRAM

ADVANCED TEST CODES

24 Biology
27 Chemistry

31 Economics
34 Education
37 Engineering
44 French
46 Geography

47 Geology
52 German
57 History
64 Literature in English
67 Mathematics
71 Music

74 Philosophy
77 Physics
79 Political Science
81 Psychology
87 Sociology
91 Spanish

TEST DATE		APTITUDE TEST		ADVANCED TEST		REGISTRATION NUMBER
MONTH	YEAR	VERBAL	QUANT.	CODE	SCORE	
10	75	420	620	67	610	0291492
Advanced Test Subscores		SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	
Advanced Test Subscores		SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	
Advanced Test Subscores		SS1	SS2	SS3	SS4	

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THIS REPORT IS NOT VALID FOR TRANSMISSION OF SCORES TO AN INSTITUTION.

My Pathway Through Higher Education



University of Michigan
MA Statistics, 1977
(The imposter)



Mexican Origin People in the United States: the 1979 Chicano Survey (ICPSR 8436)

Version Date: Nov 4, 2005 [Cite this study](#) | [Share this page](#)

Principal Investigator(s): [Carlos H. Arce](#)

[Carlos H. Arce](#)

<https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR08436.v1>

Version V1

Download

Analyze Online (0)

At A Glance

Data & Documentation

Variables

Data-related Publications

Export Metadata

Project Description

Summary

The 1979 Chicano Survey, conducted by the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, was a household survey of persons of Mexican descent living in California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and Chicago, Illinois. The purpose of the survey was to compile a statistically representative and comprehensive body of empirical information about the social, economic, and psychological status of Chicanos. Interviews were conducted in Spanish or English, depending upon the respondent's preference. Major topics covered were mental and physical health and use of health services, family background and composition, customary practices and values, language use and attitudes, employment history, social identity, group consciousness, and political opinions and participation.

112

Downloads *
[Usage Report](#)

* past three years

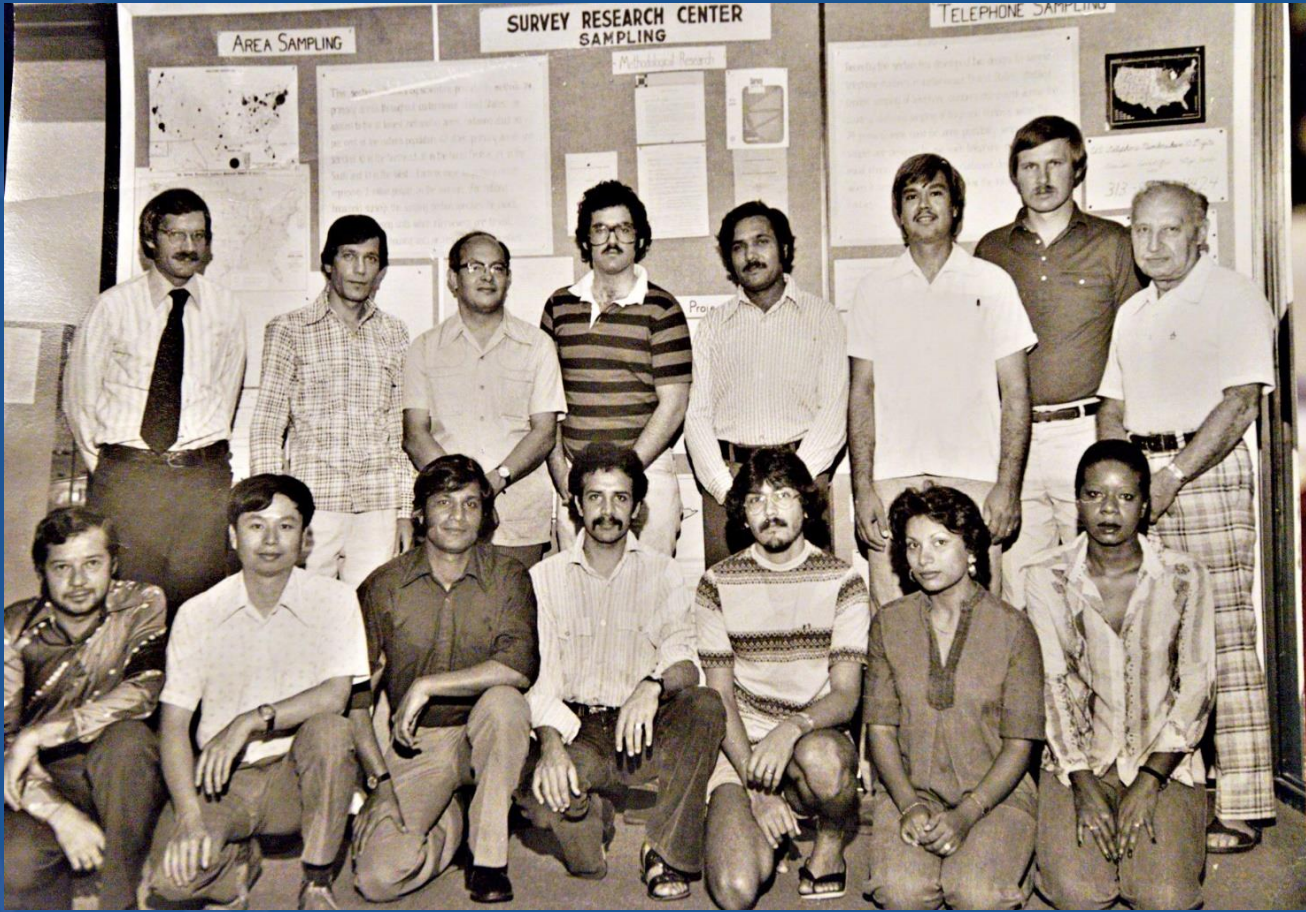
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[Data-related Publications](#)

Notes

- Curation and dissemination of this study is provided by the institutional members of [ICPSR](#), and data is available only to users at ICPSR member institutions. To determine if you are at a member institution, check the list of [ICPSR member institutions](#), or learn more about [becoming a member](#).
- The citation of this study may have changed due to the new version control.

1979 NCS 1st Sample Design



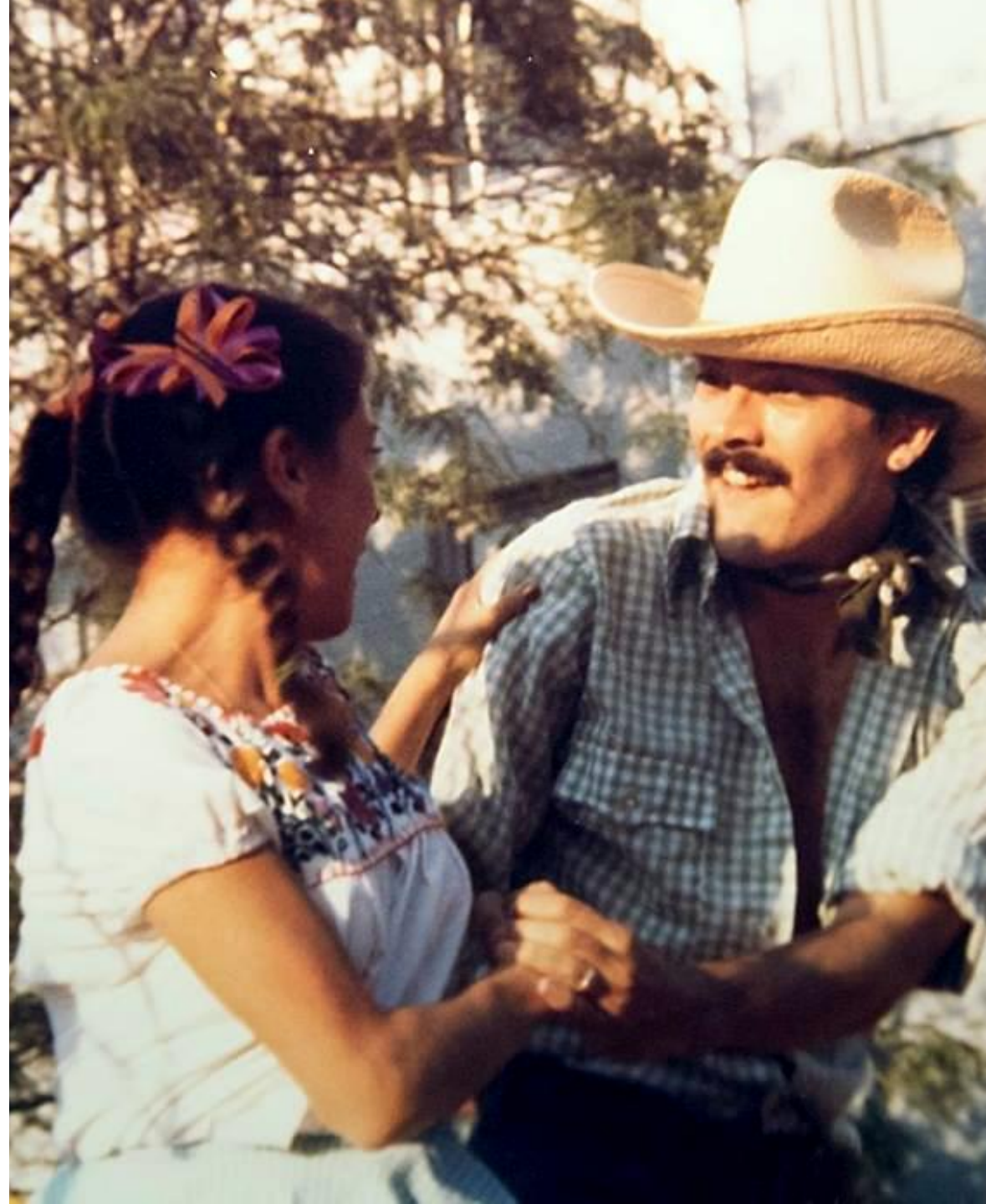
- National Area Probability Sample
 - Three stages:
 - Approximately 50 PSUs.
 - Eight SSUs.
 - Addresses.
 - 1970's Census "origin/descent"
Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban,
Central or South American, Other
Spanish, None.
 - 11,000 screened; ~1,000 interviews.

This Job's Prize: Dismantling Shyness

- The situation.
- Step-by-step solution:
 - First, a question.
 - Next, a comment.
 - Segue to active participation.
- Bonus—Becoming a sampling statistician.

Personal = Career Development

- Affinity for helping:
 - UM students.
 - Summer Latino Scholars program.
 - Stats for public good.
- Mexican-American identity:
 - Culture (NCS; methodology).
 - Personal activities.



Temple Institute for Survey Research (ISR)—1982

My 1st “real” job:

- 7-year tenure: Sampler → Sr. study director.
- This job’s prize: Independence → Growth.



Upon Arrival—Temple ISR

- Imposter syndrome, supercharged.
- *Waaaaaay* beyond comfort zone.



This Job's Prize: Independence

- Downside: MA in Statistics; didn't complete PhD in MathStat
- *Loved* challenging sample designs.
 - First task—Sample 17,500 new Social Security beneficiaries.
 - Also, Survey of Recent College Graduates for NSF.
 - Environmental: PCB study for EPA

This Job's Prize: Independence

- Curiosity—Consequences of design decisions.
 - Became a study director.
 - National in-person interview studies.
- Began writing proposals.
 - Eschewed rote, boring descriptions.
 - Relayed critical thinking leading to designs.
 - Showed our passion for good work.

Next Chapter: Survey Research Center (SRC) University of Michigan

- Senior management position:
 - 125 FTEs and 200+ field interviewers.
 - Member of SRC Executive Committee.
- Job prize: Transitional era for surveys.



University of Michigan SRC
(7 years) Director of Survey Ops

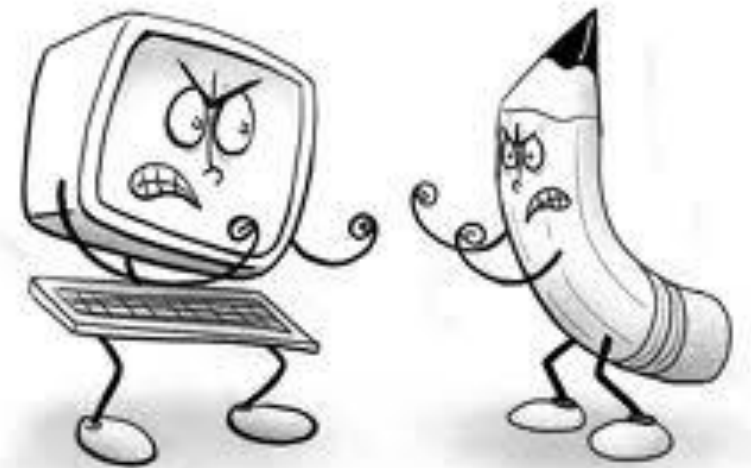
Job Prize: Survey Transition

- New position → Uncertainty+++.
- *Waaaaay* beyond comfort zone.
 - Imposter syndrome on steroids.
- Huge jump in responsibilities.
 - Risks were great.
 - As was potential reward.



Job Prize: Survey Transition

- Paper/pencil → Laptop (CAPI).
 - Sampling → Field → Coding → Computing.
- Integrated Survey Ops:
 - Design → Info collection/processing → Analysis.
- Reorganization:
 - Cultural change needed.
 - Painful but necessary (values are essential).



Next Chapter: NORC

- Larger data collection capacity.
 - Highly talented and experienced staff.
- Corporate-oriented (vs. academic).
- Job prize: Rediscover statistical work + executive.



(3 years) DSO, then
Vice President of Statistics and
Methodology

First Stint at Urban Institute

- 2-year tenure: Principal research associate.
- Approximately ten policy research centers.
- Played in everyone's backyard.
- Job prize: Research “closer to ground” —found home.
 - E.g., Housing Discrimination Study.



My 4th job.

My Crazy Life...



Nustats, Austin, TX
(5 years) Co-Owner and
Executive Vice President



Urban Institute, Washington, DC
(14 years) Vice President and
Chief Methodology

My Crazy Life at NuStats

Sampling of studies:

- Texas Higher Education Opportunity Project.
- Texas Prisoner Reentry Study.
- NOAA Recreational Fisheries Survey.
- NIST Egress Survey of World Trade Center survivors.
- EPA construction vehicle emissions.



Urban Institute (reprise)

Sampling of studies:

- Housing discrimination (LGBT, vouchers, families with children, minorities).
- Firefighter safety and deployment.
- Hunger in America (Feeding America).
- Impact of ICE Raids -- qualitative.
- National HH Travel Survey.
- Annual Survey of Refugees.
- 2020 Census Miscounts.



My Long and Winding Road

Underwent a metamorphosis:

- Math professor????
- Sampling statistician → Project director → Executive/researcher → Policy researcher
→ *all of the above.*
- Teacher? → Consulting → Managing → Mentoring and leading.

My Long and Winding Road

Metamorphosis: Pursuit of *Helping* drove me

- **Always** made time for professional associations.
 - AAPOR:
 - 2011 conference chair.
 - 2014–15 president.
 - American Statistical Association:
 - 2015–17 vice president.
 - 2021 president.
- January 5, 2022—Sworn in as U.S. Census Bureau director.

My Long and Winding Road: SXSW Photo Crew

- 8 years on SXSW photo crew.
- Focus on creativity, innovation.
- Artists think differently.
- Benefitted my career and AAPOR (e.g., research hack).



My Long and Winding Road

Bringing my *whole self* to the table

- Career experience:
 - Statistician
 - Manager/Director/Leader
- Life Experience:
 - The shy adventurer.
 - Embracer of failure as learning experiences.
- Human being:
 - Culture & values as a Latino.
 - Values.
 - Artist, family, parent, grandparent, friend.

My Long and Winding Road

A continuing metamorphosis...

- My journey is not over... it never ends!
- Nearing end of year 1 as U.S. Census Bureau director.
- What comes next?

My Long and Winding Road

Final thoughts:

- Values from childhood → who I am, how I lead, what I do.
 - Fairness.
 - Respect for everyone.
 - JEDI principles.
- Personal attributes:
 - Ganas/desire.
 - Follow your heart and soul.
 - Transcend comfort levels.
 - Resilience.
 - Recognize opportunities.
 - Reserve time for YOU.





Thank You

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