

Princeton University

HONORS FACULTY MEMBERS
RECEIVING EMERITUS STATUS



May 2021

The biographical sketches were written by staff and
colleagues in the departments of those honored.

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In the Nation's Service and the Service of Humanity

CONTENTS

Faculty Members Honored in 2021 for Receiving Emeritus Status

Chih-p'ing Chou	3
Lynn William Enquist	7
Edward William Felten	10
Andrew L. Ford	12
Olga Peters Hasty	15
Michael Jennings	18
Gerta Keller	21
Sara McLanahan	24
Alexander Nehamas	29
Philip Nord.	32
James Richardson.	36
Thomas Shenk	38
Yakov Sinai.	41
Marta Tienda	43
Robert J. Wuthnow	46

MARTA TIENDA



Marta Tienda was born in Donna, Texas, in the Rio Grande Valley, just a few miles north of the border with Mexico, from which her father had earlier emigrated. The family later moved to Michigan when he got a job in the auto industry. Marta grew up in Michigan and attended Michigan State University, where in 1972 she received her bachelor's degree with a major in Spanish. She returned to Texas as a graduate student in sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. She earned her Ph.D. in 1977 with a specialization in demography.

Marta began her academic career as an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and rose to the rank of associate professor with tenure in just four years; she reached the rank of professor three years later. In 1987, Marta moved to the University of Chicago, where she was named the Ralph Lewis Professor of Sociology in 1994. She joined Princeton's faculty in 1997 and retires in 2021 as the Maurice P. During Professor in Demographic Studies.

In the United States of Marta's youth, Mexicans were a tiny minority. In 1970 they constituted just 2.4% of the U.S. population (and just 0.2% of Michigan's population). The concept of a Hispanic or Latino did not yet exist. Indeed, the words "Hispanic" and "Latino" had not yet been coined to refer to persons of Latin American origin, who then comprised just 4.7% of all Americans. Over the next fifty years, however, the Hispanic population was radically transformed by mass immigration, rising from 7.8 to 60.5 million persons, eventually comprising 18.4% of the nation's inhabitants. In 2021, the year of Marta's transfer to emeritus status, Mexicans alone make up 11.3% of the U.S. population and comprise 61.9% of all Hispanics.

In 1970, Hispanics comprised a small set of regionally isolated populations made up of Mexicans in the Southwest, Puerto Ricans in New York, and Cubans in South Florida. In 2020, however, they had become a nationwide population with significant numbers living in all fifty states as well as the District of Columbia. In addition to 37.2 million Mexicans, the population in 2020 included 5.8 million Puerto Ricans, 2.4 million Cubans, 2.1 million Dominicans, 5.9 million Central Americans, 3.9 million South Americans, and 3.2 million persons of diverse other origins.

Marta's professional career as sociologist and demographer has centered on the study of this remarkable demographic transformation

and its implications for U.S. society. During her scholarly career, Marta has made core empirical and theoretical contributions not just to the study of Hispanics but through her analyses of the status, wellbeing, and prospects for Latinos, to the understanding of racial and ethnic stratification generally. Her work has enabled social scientists to better understand the social mechanisms responsible for the production and reproduction of poverty and privilege in the United States.

A question on Hispanic origin was first included in 1980 on the short form of the U.S. Census that goes to all households. Marta drew on the resulting data to collaborate with Frank Bean in writing *The Hispanic Population of the United States* (Russell Sage Foundation, 1987), the first comprehensive profile of the nation's growing Latino population. It undertook the first analysis of the emerging structure of Hispanic identity and went on to document the great diversity of the population by race, nativity, and national origin. Across successive chapters, it detailed the distinct histories of immigration and patterns of residential segregation, marriage, childbearing, educational attainment, employment, and earnings of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Central and South Americans.

In 2001, with doctoral student Haya Stier, she cowrote *The Color of Opportunity* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), which drew on data from William Julius Wilson's Urban Poverty and Family Life Project to undertake a comparative analysis of the life prospects of Blacks, Whites, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans living in poor neighborhoods of Chicago. The book documented for social scientists how the serial deprivations and disadvantages experienced over the life course by Blacks and Hispanics restricted their economic opportunities and limited their life chances, a theme she further explored in a volume coedited with Michael Rutter, *Ethnicity and Causal Mechanisms* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

As the nation's Hispanic population has continued to grow and evolve in the twenty-first century, Marta has played a leading role documenting the progress and pitfalls that Latinos experienced in the United States. She chaired the National Research Council's Panel on Hispanics in the United States, which published its findings in two widely cited volumes: *Multiple Origins, Uncertain Destinies: Hispanics and the American Future* (a consensus report on the state of Hispanic America) and *Hispanics and the Future of America* (a collection of background papers on the status and welfare of Latinos written by panel members), both published in 2006 by the National Academies Press.

In addition to her longstanding work on Hispanics, in later years Marta turned her attention to the study of achievement differentials

in higher education. In a 2019 article published in the *Journal of Higher Education*, she and student Linda Zhao uncovered stark differences by race and ethnicity in rates of graduate school enrollment and advanced degree attainment, differences that hinged critically on whether students had attended a research-oriented institution as undergraduates.

Marta has also made important contributions to the study of adolescent sociality. In the *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, for example, she and her collaborators described an innovative mobile diary study they developed and used to survey adolescent respondents biweekly over the course of a year, thereby creating a tool that investigators could use to better capture the complex dynamics of close interpersonal relationships and how they influence adolescent social and psychological wellbeing.

In recognition of these and other career achievements, Marta has been elected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Academy of Political and Social Science. In July 2021, Marta will begin her term as president of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Marta also served as president of the Population Association of America, the preeminent professional association for demographers, in 2002. Her perspicacity as a social observer is illustrated by her presidential address, which presciently forecast “the reemergence of ascriptive civic hierarchies” and warned of their “potentially deleterious social and civic consequences,” thus foreshadowing the white nationalist reaction that elected Donald Trump.