

## **Higher Education and Research Institutions in New Mexico (USA): A Place for Hispanics and Hispanic Culture?**

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The rise of a modern system of higher education and research institutions in the United States has been shaped by ideas and traditions that mainly refer to European universities. A stronger consideration of Hispanic, Native American and other ethnic minority cultures to be studied and taught from an 'inside perspective' did not emerge before the 1970s when a considerable number of specific research centres and study programmes started to be created. Regardless of these structural innovations the proportion of ethnic minorities in higher education did not considerably increase up to now, and Hispanics continue to be clearly underrepresented among students and academic staff of the US universities and research institutions.

The paper is based on educational statistics and extensive field work including a set of interviews that were conducted with professors and institutional decision-makers at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. The main aim of my paper is to suggest a context-related approach to better understand the underlying reasons for the persisting underrepresentation of Hispanic students and teachers, and to critically explore the question if there is a place for Hispanic culture in higher education and research institutions in New Mexico. First, I will sketch out the predominant role of European and Anglo American standards for the development of higher education and research institutions in New Mexico. Second, I will analyze the proportion of Hispanics at different levels of studying and the academic career. Third, I will argue that the students' ethno-cultural, socio-economic and geographical family background can be crucial for their academic achievements, which are also related to the geographical mobility of the teaching staff and their students. Fourth, I will take a closer look at Hispanic professors in order to retrace their professional career and to address questions of cultural identity with a particular focus on contested boundaries of Anglo American and Hispanic ethno-cultural worlds to be observed in the practices and places of professional work.