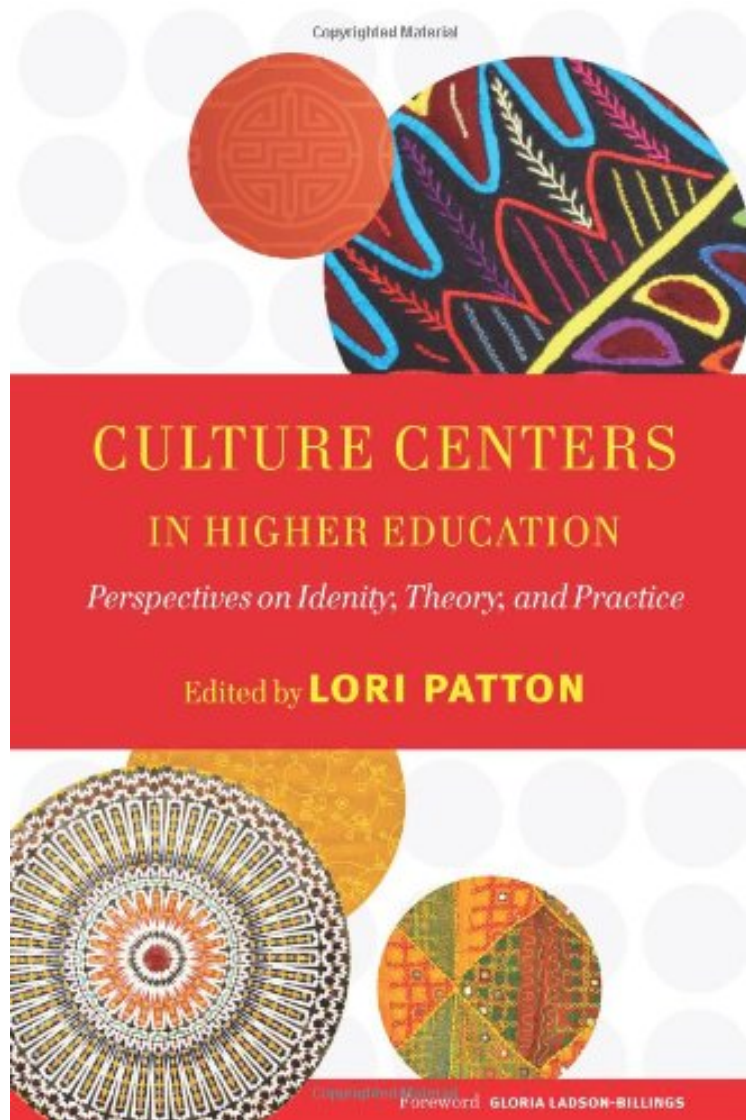


# Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice

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Are cultural centers ethnic enclaves of segregation, or safe havens that provide minority students with social support that promotes persistence and retention? Though Black cultural centers boast a 40-year history, there is much misinformation about them and the ethnic counterparts to which they gave rise. Moreover, little is known about their historical roots, current status, and future prospects. The literature has largely ignored the various culture center models, and the role that such centers play in the experiences of college students. This book fills a significant void in the research on ethnic minority cultural centers, offers the historic background to their establishment and development, considers the circumstances that led to their creation, examines the roles they play on campus, explores their impact on retention and campus climate, and provides guidelines for their management in the light of current issues and future directions. In the first part of this volume, the contributors provide perspectives on culture centers from the point of view of various racial/ethnic identity groups, Latina/o, Asian, American Indian, and African American. Part II offers theoretical perspectives that frame the role of culture centers from the point of view of critical race theory, student development theory, and a social justice framework. Part III focuses specifically on administrative and practice-oriented themes, addressing such issues as the relative merits of full- and part-time staff, of race/ethnic specific as opposed to multicultural centers, relations with the outside community, and integration with academic and student affairs to support the mission of the institution. For administrators and student affairs educators who are unfamiliar with these facilities, and want to support an increasingly diverse student body, this book situates such centers within the overall strategy of improving campus climate, and makes the case for sustaining them. Where none as yet exist, this book offers a rationale and blueprint for creating such centers. For leaders of culture centers this book constitutes a valuable tool for assessing their viability, improving their performance, and ensuring their future relevance – all considerations of increased importance when budgets and resources are strained. This book also provides a foundation for researchers interested in further investigating the role of these centers in higher education.

"This book makes a unique contribution to the higher education literature by thoroughly exploring culture centers. Although the research on cultural centers and their effect on predominantly White Institutions is minimal, Patton should be applauded for her effort to shed light on their importance. This is truly a "must read" for institutional leaders, student affairs practitioners, and graduate students who want to work as faculty or administrators in the field of higher education." (Mona Davenport, Director of Minority Affairs, Eastern Illinois University The of Higher Education)"Patton has produced a text "to offer an in-depth understanding of culture centers and their role in higher education" (p. xiv). The contributing authors include noteworthy scholars, emerging scholars, and practitioners who bring their professional experiences and expertise to bear on the topic at hand. This combination of rich theoretical and practical perspectives strengthens the book... Patton and her contributing authors do an excellent job of enhancing knowledge of the role and purpose of multicultural and race-specific culture centers on campus, as well as advocating for specific changes in practice to maintain their vital role in social justice work. This text joins a growing group of new publications on issues of campus diversity and inclusion and the role of specific administrative units in shaping and strengthening those efforts." (Journal of College Student Development)"Writings on black, Latino, Asian-American and American Indian cultural centers on campuses; also includes administrative and theoretical takes on the topic." (The Chronicle of Higher Education)"Lori Patton's book is stunning! It has closed the decades-long absence of a definitive compilation to inform Culture Center communities as they function in American Higher Education. As many colleges and universities struggle with issues of recruitment and retention of underrepresented students, this work provides a splendid blueprint for the development of Culture Centers for years to come." (Willena Kimpson Price, Director African American Cultural Center, University of Connecticut, Storrs)"Culture Centers in Higher Education documents in one volume how ethnic and cultural centers have served as places and spaces where those who have been under-represented in higher education have survived and flourished at predominantly white institutions. Throughout it documents how these centers honor and validate cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and inspire academic excellence and achievement among students without their having to lose cultural identity or values. The writers also speak to the future of cultural centers as places where multicultural centers will also have a place in order to ensure true pluralism on our campuses. As our nation becomes increasingly diverse, these centers serve as models of social justice and thus this book is a must read for all who want to ensure that their institution provides environments that exude academic success and achieve graduation for all students with their soul and identity whole." (Mildred García, President, California State University, Dominguez Hills)"Dr. Lori Patton and colleagues put flesh on bones here as they make a strong case for campus-based culture centers in the lives of the racially underrepresented students they serve. Through theoretical, organizational, administrative, and programming models these authors survey the evolving landscape of cultural practices intent on celebrating and supporting the identities of multicultural students. A compelling and provocative front-line treatment of the topic, from those whose lives have spoken and

those whose words have made a difference, this is a resourceful compendium for anyone committed to the diversification of the 21st century campus.” (Carney Strange, author of *Educating by Design and Professor*)“Culture Centers in Higher Education helps to fill a major void in higher education scholarship. It offers insight and evidence as to the importance of student culture centers as both sanctuaries and sites of resistance. Lori Patton has done a remarkable job of pulling together a range of thoughtful and skilled authors. I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in better understanding the challenges of race and ethnicity on U.S. campuses and the importance culture centers play in the lives of students.” (Robert Rhoads)“Why do students need cultural centers in the 21st century? Haven’t we moved past dividing into separate racial and ethnic groups? Given what we know about the origins and history of student cultural centers it seems appropriate to have a volume that looks across a variety of perspectives of cultural centers and asks hard questions about their utility, viability, and sustainability in difficult economic times. As editor, Lori Patton has assembled an outstanding group of scholars who bring multiple lenses to the question of the place of racial/ethnic cultural centers on the 21st century campus. This is a collection that should find a welcome home on the shelves of college and university administrators and higher education scholars alike.” (Gloria Ladson-Billings, University of Wisconsin-Madison)About the AuthorLori D. Patton joined the faculty at Iowa State University in Fall 2005 and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. Her teaching repertoire includes courses that focus on student development theory, college environments, critical race theory, and African American Studies.Gloria Ladson-Billings , University of Wisconsin-Madison