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Kezar, Adrianna (Ed.) (2011) *Recognizing and Serving Low-Income Students in Higher Education: An Examination of Institutional Policies, Practices, and Culture*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

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Using a post-structuralism lens, *Recognizing and Serving Low-Income Students in Higher Education: An Examination of Institutional Policies, Practices and Culture* focuses on uncovering organizational biases that prevent higher education institutions from adequately serving low-income students and recommends assessing, amending, and creating policies and practices that will aid in the successful matriculation, attrition and graduation of students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Post-structuralism focuses on the system and the need of individuals within the system to understand and make adjustments that will be more conducive to marginalized individuals or groups (table 1.1 on page 15 provides more detailed information). *Recognizing* defines low-income as

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the lack of access to opportunities, resources, information, and recognition as it is about the lack of access to money (Chambers & Deller, 2011, p. 51).

Divided into five parts, section one provides background and context on student success and socio-economic status. Part two discusses low-income students' "socialization of" access to higher education, while part three delves into matriculation and transition of low-income students on campus. Finally, part four centers on the persistence, success, and graduation of low-income students and part five concludes with discussions on the transfer and post-graduate enrollments of these students. Each chapter examines diversity from the perspective of social class, highlights institutional policies and practices, recommends ways that institutions can change their policies and practices to better serve low-income students, and emphasizes future research needed.

It is well known that college readiness is disproportionate. The lower the family income, the more likely the combination of family background, community, and educational opportunities—schools and teachers—will leave students unprepared for college success. Resolving the problem of serving low-income students in higher education requires a comprehensive, integrative and sustained approach to systemic institutional reform. *Recognizing* suggests that institutional policies, practices, and culture are the key factors/barriers that limit the success of low-income students.

Written for administrators, faculty and staff in higher education, *Recognizing* focuses on institutional policies and how these practices can be successful in aiding low-income students, rather than skills, experiences, values, and knowledge that these students may lack. As a first generation, low-income racial minority college student I appreciate this novel approach to the issue of college equity and access for low-income students. The issue of equity and access in higher education for low-income students is of added importance to me as it encompasses my personal philosophy as a student affairs practitioner to educate, advocate for, and service the needs of all students as students of lower socio-economic status are less likely to attain the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to attend postsecondary institutions of education. As a

member of the intended audience, I found the author expansive and accurate in reviewing the issue of opportunity and access for low-income students, especially when discussing school reform, allocation of limited resources—how those with the most need get the least, and need for increased awareness and assessment of institutional policies and culture as inadequate practices may do an injustice to students.

I concur with the contributors of *Recognizing* when they note that reassessing, modifying, and sustaining institutional initiatives require commitment and long-term partnerships between state departments, school districts, campus departments and offices, and community organizations. These initiatives are necessary endeavors for higher education institutions and student affairs professionals as higher education is now serving more students than at any other time in history; more students from traditionally underrepresented groups are attending, persisting, and attaining degrees than ever before—though not at a comparable rate to middle- and high-income students; and the pathway to college is scattered with the remains of youth who were not able to successfully navigate the system that privileges middle- and high-income students. Although alluded to, the publication may have been more thorough and useful had the author further explored demands from the government and the citizenry for increased institutional accountability for limited resources. Further exploration would have been appreciated regarding the impact of the economy on the enrollment of low-income students, the rapidly changing diverse student population, the technology revolution, federal legislation and court cases, and the public's declining confidence in the value of a postsecondary education.

Arguing that higher education has historically supported the needs and interests of middle- and high-income students, Kezar, cites Chesler & Crowfoot (1989) regarding structural institutional analysis. Focusing on examining the mission, culture, structure, power relationships, and resources within campuses, structural institutional analysis seeks to understand how campus structures are established to privilege or suppress certain individuals or groups of people. Kezar, an associate professor for higher education whose research interests

include access and diversity, asserts socio-economic status is largely missing from the policies and practices in place in most college and university campuses (p. vii). Further, where campuses have implemented strategies, very little reflection and research has been conducted to gauge their effectiveness. A contributing factor attributing to this is the reliance on state and federal programs to support low-income students and the focus on race and ethnicity.

Recognizing is well organized and easy to understand. The themes of revelation, exposing privilege for one group and inequities for another and by revealing practices that disenfranchise another group; deconstruction, examining specific institutional policies or practices and investigating the impact of the structure, policy, and practice; and reconstruction, providing ideas for new or revised structure, policy, or practice were consistent throughout the volume permitting the reader to fully comprehend the intent of the author.

Recognizing explores barriers to equity and access to higher education for low-income students and purports that higher education institutions could aid these students and their families in demystifying college opportunity and navigating barriers faced by this population and their families regarding higher education. The publication highlights current efforts to increase and maintain access for low-income students, such as bridge programs; the efforts of minority-serving institutions, historically black colleges and universities, and tribal colleges and universities; and enrollment management policies are discussed and evaluated along with factors that strongly impact participation in postsecondary education for low-income students: parental education, finances, academic achievement/preparedness, information and support, peer group influence and student's self confidence/self-esteem.

According to Cooper (n.d.) higher education has long been one of the main determinants of social mobility and economic progress in American society. Mortenson (1997) attributes the difference between "higher-" and "lower-performing" institutions to their institutional efforts to provide supportive academic and social environments that foster student persistence and degree attainment.

Recognizing surmises that by working collaboratively and comprehensively institutions and administrators can embrace practices to enhance college access and success for underrepresented minorities and low-income students and build a campus that enhances, evaluates, and promotes its overall diversity efforts. Identifying their strengths and weaknesses, institutions will be able to determine which programs are effective and which are not; provide an analysis of the entire institution, not just a section of the campus; and focus on the transformation of the institution, not the student.

Involving individuals at all levels will sustain deep and lasting institutional change which will complement the institution's commitment to student access, success, and diversity as "administrators and leaders need to take responsibility for changing policies, practices, cultural norms, and power conditions that shape the system in which low-income students operate and try to be successful" (p. 10). If the subject of equity and access for low-income students in higher education is of interest to you, this volume is essential to your collection as it challenges traditional concepts and theories, exposes new lines of inquiry, and provides suggestions for improving the lives and experiences of low-income students in higher education.

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About the Reviewer

Marquita O. Rodgers is pursuing a doctoral degree in Higher Education & Student Personnel at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio. Her dissertation will focus on low-income students in higher education. She received her Bachelor's in Communications from the University of Cincinnati. Ms. Rodgers worked at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio for over five years, three of which were spent heading up the organization's statewide education department. She served as a program coordinator for The Ohio State University Office of Minority Affairs Young Scholars Program (YSP) in Cleveland for over five years.

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