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Howard-Hamilton, M. F. ; Morelon-Quainoo, C. L.; Johnson, S. D.; Wingle-Wagner, R. & Santiago, L. (Eds.) (2009) *Standing on the Outside Looking In: Underrepresented Students Experiences In Advanced Degree Programs*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

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Social theorist Habermas (cited in Welton 2006) would argue, it is useful and timely to explore the meaning of “inclusiveness” in American society and to reflect about the socially constructed realities and injustices of under-represented students in graduate school. The scholarly book, *Standing on the Outside Looking In*, leads the reader through theoretically grounded, illuminating and diverse experiences of under-represented students in higher education. The dialogue regarding educational attainment now concerns graduate attainment; however graduate enrollment patterns do not reflect demographic shifts and societal movements toward inclusive educational environments (p. 6). Howard-Hamilton (2009) and her colleagues explore why racial and ethnic minorities are

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under-represented in graduate school and provide “hope” of empowerment and discourse in higher educational settings. A post-modern perspective seems the logical lens in which to view the book as the experiences of under-represented students in graduate school are elevated and provide a backdrop for the context of the book (Kilgore 2001).

As Golde (2005) points out very little research delineates undergraduate and graduate attrition or focuses on the institutional environment. The authors take the reader on a post-modern journey of under-represented students in graduate study bringing to the forefront the meaning of under-representation from the perspective of the student and the role that institutions play in fostering and facilitating an inclusive environment. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 look at issues of access and choice for under-represented students and deconstruct implications of practice. These students face the challenge of navigating the higher education environment in addition to learning the professional role that is associated with graduate study. Chapter 2 explored aspirations of college students and examined degree aspirations and graduate student socialization. The purpose of the study was to identify how students come to aspire the Ph.D. and the role that institutions play in their decisions.

Students chose institutions based on the likelihood that faculty members conducted research in their areas of interest and their majors were congruent with research interests. Some students who completed summer internships or other research programs stated their experiences led them to consider graduate school. In terms of financial aid, students attending public institutions placed more emphasis on financial aid as a factor than students attending private institutions. Indeed, financial aid acted as a “gatekeeper” (p. 12) for some students. Although students did not want to borrow money, the future salary potential convinced them the debt load was worth the cost. Support structures were important to student’s choices. Students also placed importance on perceived opportunities for scholarly activities or opportunities to interact with faculty as well as fellow students. Chapter 3 challenges or redefines the importance of financial aid for under-represented students. In particular, African American students were reluctant to

borrow money and financing college added additional stress to the college experience.

The remaining chapters explore the concept of inclusiveness and affirmation in an educational environment and provide meaning to “inclusion” in a variety of contexts and among different populations. The diversity of students and faculty influenced students’ decisions to attend graduate school but some students were not satisfied with the campus climate. Some students felt that their cultures and identities were not supported and affirmed in the college environment. The tendency among researchers to analyze under-represented students as a monolithic group is challenged as diverse experiences of graduate students are given “voice”. National, cultural, and scholarly identities take shape in an educational environment that often rejects or devalues their scholarship or inadvertently discourages empowerment. Under-represented graduate students often find themselves “standing on the outside looking in.”

The strongest aspect of the book is the conceptual link between institutional change and doctoral attrition literature. As educators there is a need to examine institutional practices and ensure “inclusion” in educational environments includes institutional strategies of “developing integrated support systems,, ensuring inclusive curricula, promoting interactive classrooms, and increasing the availability of role models and mentoring” (p 66). This book on underrepresented students’ experiences in advanced degree programs adds to the current body of knowledge regarding the causes and consequences of doctoral attrition which is practical and of national interest (Lovitts 2001; Golde 2005; Gardner 2009).

The continued deconstruction of doctoral attrition leads to multiple perspectives and “truths” (Kilgore 2001) as qualitative studies characterize the recent doctoral attrition literature (see Golde, Gardner, and Lovitts), but the experiences of under-represented students are not often captured. The hope of Grioux (2001) and other adult educators is that students will become empowered in educational environments but Howard-Hamilton (2009) and colleagues remind us that “silencing” experiences of under-represented students occur where we might least

expect them, among the ivory towers. "Because of the past injustices committed against racial and ethnic minorities in this country, some faculty and administrators have believed that the nation has a moral obligation to provide opportunities to students of color" (p65). Indeed, scholars have a responsibility in society to seek out injustices and to expose them. Howard-Hamilton and company (2009) provide the scaffolding for much needed educational reform in the 21st century, and add to the dialogue of "inclusiveness" in educational environments. From a societal standpoint, such efforts can be viewed as a means of addressing the under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities in higher education and of moving higher education closer to their proportionate recruitment, retention, and graduation.

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