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**McKee, K. D., & Delgado, D. A. (Eds.) (2020). *Degrees of difference: Reflections of Women of Color on graduate school*. University of Illinois Press.**

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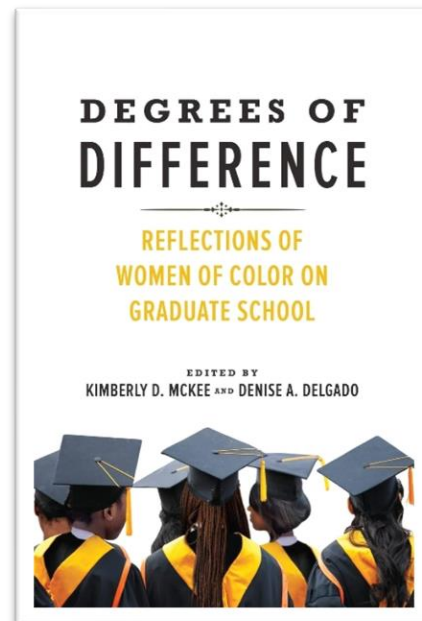
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In this collection of reflective essays written by women of color contributors, readers get a better understanding of the complex challenges, opportunities, and relationships embedded in graduate education in the United States.

Comprising eight chapters across 200 pages, this book offers a clear and timely co-edited text about many unwritten rules of academia. The collection discusses multiple themes that acknowledge the layers of oppression that women of color in graduate school experience, and also describes some of the creative ways students manage to thrive. In our review of this book, we focus on three major themes we found in the text: (1) the many challenges faced by women of color graduate students, (2) the opportunities that women of color found in graduate school, and (3) the relevance of community-based relationships. While these chapters navigate these various themes, they are all connected by an overarching conceptual through-line: women of color finding ways to navigate frequently hostile environments.

Women of color in this book encountered myriad institutional, social, and emotional challenges while pursuing their graduate education. The two sub-themes that adequately capture these challenges are: negotiations



within their homes (Chapter 1, 2), which speak about gendered expectations, as well as the importance of co-caring. In the first two chapters of the text, Sampson and Youssef elaborate on these ideas in the context of familial obligations and gender and racial identities, respectively. The second theme, microaggressions captures the intersections of multiple oppressions, such as racism and sexism. Microaggressions are specifically discussed at length by Ashlee in the seventh chapter, where this author highlights how she dealt with the model minority stereotype and racial and sexual objectification during graduate education.

Meanwhile, the contributors in this text also came across multiple opportunities in graduate school. There are three sub-themes that highlight the opportunities that graduate students found: resistance, resilience, and hope. Specifically, resistance shows how to push back against many forms of oppression (e.g., racism, anti-immigrant bias, sexism) and survive in the academy. Personal and professional resilience emphasized the need for self-care and balancing graduate school and life. New ways of cultivating hope touched on the significance of self-reflection and self-compassion in discovering new ways of being in academia. When reflecting on this aspect of the book, the work of Idoate (Chapter 4) stands out because of the lengths that this author took to establish anticolonial ways of leadership. For example, Idoate advocated for the increased use of Indigenous teaching methods, specifically the “Seven Point Indigenous Framework for Native American Education” (p. 89).

Lastly, community-based relationships focus on the relationships by presenting different ways to understand and find valuable networks for women of color graduate students. Fernández (Chapter 3) highlights cohort interactions in her McNair Scholars Program, which helped her deal with imposter syndrome and recreate supportive relationships in graduate school. On the other hand, Chapter 5 is centered on the Canadian higher education context, in which Wills and Mugabo had to take the extra steps to seek communities outside their schools. In general, the contributors of this book have a shared understanding that creating safe spaces for women of color is paramount for their success and wellbeing in graduate school. Based on the narratives shared, it is clear to see that network and coalition building is a must.

Certainly, this book has many strengths. First, we appreciate how multiple disciplines are represented by the various contributors (ranging from education and rhetoric, to social work, and medicine). Having a broad swath of academic disciplines represented in this book ensures that readers learn about the broader nature of graduate education in the U.S., rather than the idiosyncrasies of a particular field. Because of the disciplinary breadth of the book, it would be a valuable resource for graduate educators from any discipline.

Another major strength we identified is the practicality of the text. As discussed earlier, in Chapter 3, Fernández offers a set of cogent suggestions for graduate students from her perspective as a McNair Scholars Program alumna. Covering topics such as cohort and community, mentoring, and self-care, this contributor provides readers with pragmatic advice. Similarly, in Chapter 6, Ejiogu advises prospective medical school students by listing 15 specific lessons learned about medical education. These lessons cover: financial support, peer-interactions, standardized board exams, and work-life boundaries. Throughout *Degrees of Difference*, the contributing authors present achievable and measurable strategies such as these that readers may consider utilizing during their own graduate education.

Finally, we appreciate the emphasis on network and community, since this collectivist approach to graduate education may be resonant for readers. In addition to Fernández's cohort-based community in Chapter 3, the aforementioned Idoate talks about her cross-generational relationships with Indigenous mentors, which has helped her navigate Western academia and find a home (described in Chapter 4). Idoate also draws from examples of failure to communicate her ideas about honoring relationships, mentoring, and research, especially how many of the day-to-day interventions she carries out in the medical sciences are time consuming and repetitive (and oftentimes, not coupled with sustained policy change). Moreover, in Chapter 5, Mugabo shares how she and other Black students at French-speaking universities in Montréal formed "the Black Intellectuals' Reading Group" (p. 106). This reading group was a space for not only community building, but also a Black studies education that was largely lacking in the broader city. In the same chapter, Wills explains how she found a community outside her graduate school while working in restaurants and then in Boston, where she met other Korean adoptees. Meanwhile, in Chapter 8, Taboada provides specific strategies for female social work students, such as joining affinity groups and seeking mental health support, to promote their resilience. Such diverse stories of these women of color scholars seeking and expanding their spaces empower us to reimagine the communities we want and need during graduate education.

Overall, this book offers a rich resource for women of color graduate students who may often feel rendered invisible, underserved, and exploited by higher education institutions. *Degrees of Difference* emphasizes the need for coalition building and peer support, especially in ultra-competitive and high-stakes graduate training environments. Such coalition building can happen within the higher education institution itself, but often this happens with people at different academic institutions, or outside of the academy all together. The book's contributors share insight based on first-hand, personal experience, which may be instructive to other women of color applying to or currently enrolled in graduate school. Due to these strengths, we posit that this volume is a useful resource for administrators (especially those in charge

of admission, student affairs programming, teaching and learning centers, and/or academic advising) who want to better understand and improve the graduate student experience. Finally, policy stakeholders who shape graduate education (including representatives of the Council of Graduate Schools, the American Council of Education, and the Institute for Higher Education Policy) may also benefit from engaging with this work.

If the co-editors were ever to embark on a second edition of this important book, we would be excited to see a greater emphasis placed on the notion of joy in academic life. Throughout the text, the contributors rightfully point out the many dehumanizing dimensions of graduate school for women of color, who often find themselves at the intersection of multiple marginalities. In thinking through this, multiple authors mention the idea of Ahmed's (2017) "feminist kill-joy" (explicitly mentioned or alluded to in Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 7, for example). While we recognize the need and utility of such institutional critique and metaphors, we believe that it is also possible to live a life beyond resistance to oppression (Tichavakunda, 2021). Joy is always a possibility, and arguably very much needed, for women of color in academic spaces. The scholarship of Gilliam & Toliver (2021), Tichavakunda (2021, 2022), and Williams & McCloud (2023) might be useful springboards for this type of future work.

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