Editors' Introduction

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Sankofa, *Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi*, is an Akan philosophical tradition of the Adinkra cultural heritage system, and a way of knowing for the communities of Ghana and throughout the Diaspora (Temple, 2010). It translates into "it is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten" and "offers a solution to reconstituting a fragmented cultural past" (p. 128). In this volume, Sankofa is the process of expanding ways of understanding and critiquing the doctoral education experience through a racial and cultural lens, contributing the Black/African American perspective to doctoral education scholarship, and honoring pathways and lived experiences of Black/African American[1] doctoral students. To achieve this, Sankofa acknowledges educational history where Black/African American doctoral students have been forgotten, ignored, or minoritized; presents research on the value and impact of race and culture in the doctoral process; and centers the experiences of historically marginalized students and their journey toward the PhD and beyond with consideration of existing research on doctoral education.

Previous research on doctoral education and the impact of culture often focused on departmental and disciplinary norms, program milestones, doctoral activities, and academic engagement (Gardner, 2008; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Girves & Wemmerus, 1988; Golde, 2005; Lovitts, 2001, 2007; Tinto, 1993; Weidman & Stein, 2003; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). Early scholarship on doctoral socialization provided frameworks for how

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individuals developed a "congruence and assimilation orientation" toward understanding and adopting the norms and values of the profession or field and identifying a career choice without attention being given to academic individuality of the doctoral student (Antony, 2002). Meanwhile, early research on Black/African American doctoral students was limited to statistical portraits of degree attainment and persistence (Willie, Grady, & Hope, 1991; Tinto, 1993). However, in the last 10 to 15 years, greater attention has been given to the racial and cultural dynamics of doctoral education (Antony, 2005; Cleveland, 2004; Davidson & Foster-Johnson, 2001; Ellis, 2001; Felder & Barker, 2013; Gardner & Barker, 2015; Griffin, Muñiz, & Espinosa, 2012; Gildersleeve, Croom & Vasquez, 2011). Scholars have focused more intensively on the Black/African American doctoral experience (Bertrand Jones, Osborne-Lampkin, Patterson, & Davis, 2015; Bertrand Jones, Wilder, & Osborne-Lampkin, 2013; Cleveland, 2004; Davidson & Jones, 2000; Mabokela & Green, 2000) and personal stories of navigating the doctoral process (e.g., Brothers of the Academy and Sisters of the Academy). There also has been a significant increase in studies that challenge traditional notions of socialization and the doctorate (Gardner, 2008; Weidman & Twale, 2001; Weidman, Twale, & Bethea, 2016), examine the role of race in the doctoral process (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Taylor & Antony, 2000; Twale, Weidman, & Bethea, 2016), and identify the complexities of identity development in socialization (Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Sweitzer, 2009). Overall, though, the volume of research on Black/African American doctoral students does not compare with the growing research on the Black/African American undergraduate experience or on doctoral education or doctoral socialization in general.

This anthology builds on this scholarship by introducing the intersecting identities of doctoral students (e.g., race and gender or race and professional identity) and the racial and gender dynamics of the doctoral experience. Further, it presents a collective voice of empirical research on Black/African American doctoral student experiences; observations of efforts that build diversity among doctoral programs; and implications for policy, practice, and research. This volume also raises awareness about the barriers to student success and degree completion, especially in "chilly" academic environments, where students may not feel a sense of belonging or support. Through the Sankofa lens, we bring to light those issues (e.g., challenges with academic identities, environments, and relationships) that have historically excluded Black/African American doctoral students from fully participating in their doctoral programs and that demonstrate how

institutional racism makes navigating doctoral programs difficult and challenging for Black/African American doctoral students. We use the research findings and assessments in this volume to further inform policy and practice and to cultivate new conceptual and structural approaches that support individuals with historically marginalized experiences. We advocate for strategies that consider the ways in which race and its intersections with gender, discipline, and institutional context influence and shape doctoral education, career development, socialization, and student support. While the Sankofa tradition encourages us to look back at the past to understand the Black/African American presence in doctoral education, the growing research on race and culture is forging new methods for conceptualizing what success, degree completion, and transition into the academy means and looks like.

Trends in Black/African American Doctoral Degree Completion

Statistical trends have been helpful in guiding an understanding of Black/African American doctoral degree completion, but less informative about specific issues concerning student experience. For instance, in *Three Magic Letters: Getting to the Ph.D.*, Michael Nettles and Catherine Millett present data on the status of the PhD over a nearly 25-year period. Between 1977 and 2000, there was a 70.8% increase in Blacks/African Americans earning doctoral degrees albeit a 34.8% increase in the total number of doctoral degrees awarded. According to Nettles and Millett, this increase reflected a focus on reducing the disparity between the representation of Blacks and Latina/os[2] in the U.S. population and their underrepresentation among doctorates. Subsequently, the Survey of Earned Doctorates reported an increase in doctoral degrees awarded to underrepresented students between 1957 and 2016 (National Science Foundation, 2017). In particular, doctorates earned by Blacks and/or African Americans increased by 70% between 1994 and 2014, which certainly contributed to the overall substantial growth in doctoral degree completion. While these data point to a period of growth, less is known about how institutions and doctoral programs have prepared for or responded to this greater diversity and how the student experience would be different for doctoral students of color. Additionally, how might doctoral student engagement need to shift or to be more culturally specific for Black/African American students?

The Sankofa tradition facilitates renewed purpose and understanding of statistical trends regarding Blacks/African Americans in doctoral education by connecting findings across this volume to an Afrocentric conceptual framework and providing a qualitative, sociological, and phenomenological analysis of Black doctoral education.

In examining disciplinary nuances, we find that Blacks/African Americans are unevenly represented in different fields. Blacks/African Americans represent the largest ethnic minority among education and non-science/engineering programs (National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, 2015). However, there is significant underrepresentation in science, engineering, technology, and mathematics (STEM) fields. According to 2016 IPEDS (2017), Blacks earned 8.6% of doctoral STEM degrees awarded, compared with 63.6% of White doctoral STEM degree recipients, 12.1% of Hispanic or Latinx recipients, and 11.6% of Asian recipients. Despite the lack of representation of African Americans among STEM doctoral completers, there is promise, given the contributions of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

HBCUs contribute to the increased enrollment and success of Black/African American doctoral students in three major ways. First, HBCUs award a significant number of doctoral degrees to Blacks/African Americans. *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* (2016) released an article noting the increase of doctoral degree recipients produced by HBCUs. While these degrees may not be exclusively awarded to Black/African American students, these institutions still reach a high number of Blacks/African Americans. According to the Survey of Earned Doctorates (NCSES, 2015), from 2010 to 2014, two of the top five producers of Black/African American doctoral degree recipients included HBCUs—Howard University and Jackson State University—with Howard producing the highest number of recipients for not-for-profit institutions.

Furthermore, there has been a history of HBCUs graduating a significant number of Black/African American degree holders, building the availability of graduate school applicants. In the NCES report "Historically Black Colleges and Universities 1976 to 2001," Provasnik and Shafer (2004) found that HBCUs accounted for 12.9% of Black enrollment in postsecondary education while making up only 1.8% of total enrollment. HBCUs have been proven pathways for building the pipeline for Blacks/African Americans in STEM (Borum, Hilton, & Walker, 2016; Gasman & Nguyen, 2016). The American Institute on Research reported that

approximately one-third of Blacks/African Americans in STEM doctoral programs attended HBCUs as undergraduates (Upton & Tanenbaum, 2014).

HBCUs have a long-standing tradition of engaging practical strategies designed and tailored to foster academic success and degree completion for historically marginalized students (Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991). When many historically White institutions have ignored the academic contributions by students of color, HBCUs are credited for supporting the academic excellence and success of this student population. They have played a significant role in doctoral degree completion, serving as institutions for baccalaureate origin as well as for the conferral of doctoral degrees (Fry Brown, Flowers, Hilton, & Dejohnette, 2018; Joseph, 2013; Ross-Sheriff, Edwards, & Orme, 2017). The rate of Blacks/African Americans participating in doctoral education indicates growth and promise, but these data must be juxtaposed with the lived experiences and retention of Blacks/African Americans. We argue that analyzing the success of the diversification of the doctorate must be done through a critical, racial lens to develop and shape the doctoral experience into an inclusive and culturally responsive environment.

Sankofa and the Black/African American Doctoral Experience: Situating the Research

Given the strong emphasis on seminal statistical portraits illustrating doctoral degree attainment for Blacks/African Americans, situating racially and culturally focused research in the field of doctoral education involves three important factors. First, in keeping with the research developments about race and culture in higher education, it is imperative to *interrogate* the meaning of policies and practices and their impact on the experiences of historically marginalized groups (Bonilla-Silva, 2013; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Anderson 1999; Harper, 2012). In higher education research, this interrogation is based on the use of critical frameworks that raise questions about the impact of academic environments on the experiences of historically marginalized groups. Thus, the cultural practice of Sankofa centralizes race and culture as an act of resistance to the misrepresentation of the Black/African American doctoral experience within the history of doctoral education research. Further, it calls for a reconsideration of how socialization occurs in the doctoral process; how the traditional

practices of mentoring may privilege White doctoral students and exclude Black/African American doctoral students; and how disaggregation of data and more detailed analyses of admission, progression, retention, and time-to-completion rates may all indicate the existence of racial bias.

Second, the practice of Sankofa *reveals* the importance of culturally relevant practice in doctoral education and its applicability to the larger body of research on the student experience in doctoral education. Sankofa permits critical discussion of racial and cultural experiences that are often unheard in mainstream doctoral education literature. For instance, seminal research on student experiences within doctoral study has typically addressed the nature of academic culture to mean the role and function of departments and disciplines (Golde, 2005) without emphasis on the role of students' racial or cultural experiences. This volume offers studies and a review where race and culture serve as points of analysis—either solely or in connection with other theoretical frameworks.

Third, there have been calls for a "renewed national effort" to support and prepare African American students for doctoral degree completion and career/professional success (Council of Graduate Schools & Educational Testing Service, 2010). Scholarly recommendations insist on identifying vulnerabilities that hinder our national capacity for innovation. Improving completion rates, preparing future faculty, and broadening participation have been identified as key recommendations for universities, employers, and policy makers to consider for doctoral programs. However, not considering how students of varying races experience their academic environments is a disservice, and it jeopardizes our nation's ability to produce the brightest and most innovative thinkers—fostering economic and intellectual vulnerability and consequently affecting the ability of the United States to compete globally. As the nation becomes increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, understanding diverse experiences becomes essential to the current and future development of higher education (Smith, 2016). The practice of Sankofa promotes the value of race and culture as meaningful in the process of producing Black/African American doctoral degree completers. This means analyzing and further evaluating aspects of graduate education: the role of faculty in supporting and facilitating degree completion, doctoral socialization into the discipline and within the department and institution, and learning and living environments. A Sankofan approach recognizes cultural ways of knowing and doing, and it respects the history, traditions, and values of individuals of the African Diaspora.

Critical Focus Areas Regarding the Doctoral Student Experience

As represented in this volume, there are multiple aspects of the doctoral experience: identity, socialization, organizational context, and interactions with faculty. The Sankofa tradition may be applied to each of these areas by challenging traditional notions or literature and using theories, concepts, and frameworks that incorporate a racial analysis and provide discussion and a synthesis that centers on the African Diaspora or, in the case of this volume, the African American experience.

Doctoral student socialization research has focused on the following areas: student response to institutional cultural dynamics, levels of student involvement, preparation for the profession, student adjustment and assimilation, the faculty perspective, and the part-time experience (Antony, 2002; Austin, 2002; Gardner, 2008, 2010; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Taylor & Antony, 2000). Scholarship focused on the organizational perspective of the doctoral experience tends to contextualize socialization to highlight the role of academic environments (i.e., departments) as an important way to make distinctions among the ways in which students are socialized in a variety of contexts (Weidman, 2006; Weidman & Stein, 2003; Weidman et al., 2001). While this work emphasizes the value of organizations, it aptly considers that socialization processes are complex and that they vary according to individual characteristics. In this volume, authors demonstrate how race becomes a factor in socialization and career development within doctoral programs and how students experience their socialization as non-affirming. Through Sankofa, there becomes a greater appreciation for the needs and interests of Black/African American doctoral students and how preparing students for future careers might reflect more of a blending of students' academic and cultural identities.

Identity in the context of doctoral education is dynamic and complex when one considers the doctoral programs' goal of socializing and preparing students for contributing to the profession. Doctoral or graduate identity development is considered to occur as students complete their doctoral milestones and activities, which means a student's personal identity development becomes only a byproduct of navigating these doctoral requirements (Gardner & Barker, 2015). This approach does not make personal identity development a priority. However, it is during socialization that students begin to connect their social, professional, and academic

identities or see these identities in conflict with their area of research or the core principles of the profession or discipline. More specifically, doctoral students of color face the challenge of negotiating the paradigms of their academic disciplines or exclusion of their programs and institutions (i.e., doctoral student identity) with their cultural identities, citing how graduate or doctoral programs tend to be Eurocentric and patriarchal (Christman, Pepion, Bowman, & Dixon, 2015; González, 2006, 2009; Sulé, 2009). Black doctoral students—especially those in predominantly white institutions (PWIs)—report these same challenges. Students share how their race, and in some cases their gender, plays a role in how they choose advisors, what research they pursue, if and when they address discrimination or bias, how they are supported or leveraged in their doctoral programs, and what career fields are presented as options (Barker, 2014; Felder & Barker, 2013). The works in this volume recognize and speak to the ways that doctoral student identity for Black/African American students is complex and how race intersects with cultural and professional identities.

Across this volume, there are references made to the varying institutional, disciplinary, and geographical contexts in which students are matriculating. This focus on context acknowledges that where Black/African American doctoral students study and live is as important as what they study is to their long-term success. It reminds us that the type of institution, the history of an organization or environment, and student lived experiences can influence matriculation and career trajectory. Earlier in this introduction, we highlighted the role of HBCUs in the preparation of successful Black/African American doctoral students. The HBCU context fosters the conditions where students, undergraduate and graduate alike, thrive. Additionally, they provide students with the affirmation and self-efficacy in their identity to go on to doctoral programs at PWIs. Conversely, PWIs may create conditions where Black/African American students do not feel supported or their ideas and scholarly interest are not valued. These concerns are further amplified depending on where the institution is located. Barker (2014) found that Black/African American doctoral students in the American South reported that part of overcoming challenges as a Black/African American doctoral student meant overcoming racialized experiences in the city and institution.

Because context can shape a student's experience, the role of faculty members and advisors in negating these harmful environmental and contextual factors heightens. Faculty impact the doctoral socialization process, and they are central to doctoral education (Lovitts, 2001). Black/African

American doctoral student success and degree attainment is largely the result of faculty members who work diligently to support the academic process (Graham, 2013). This involves recruitment and transition into doctoral programs, supervising the doctoral experience (and retention efforts), and preparation for career opportunities beyond degree completion. The role of race in the doctoral advising relationship influences how students navigate their programs, develop their professional identity, and manage their own social identity (Barker, 2012).

The African practice of Sankofa in this work is influenced by orientation toward cultural consciousness, and it facilitates resistance by interrogating systems of oppression and misrepresentation and by insisting on the relevance of culture to defining and characterizing contemporary circumstances and experiences for historically marginalized doctoral students (Temple, 2010). Critically examining literature related to these issues is essential to addressing systemic barriers of injustice and inequity that impede degree completion. These barriers serve to hinder doctoral socialization of historically marginalized doctoral students, thus creating and sustaining vulnerabilities in our national system of graduate education. Furthermore, this volume presents racial implications for doctoral student socialization that may serve to more effectively and successfully support Black/African American doctoral students' engagement, development, and completion.

Overview of Chapters

This volume emphasizes Sankofa as a viable tool for engaging a culturally relevant examination of the doctoral experience. Chapters focus on multiple themes, including the role of context in the Black or African American doctoral experience, disciplinary experiences, and the role and impact of faculty–student engagement. The Sankofa practice of "going back" involves the acknowledgement of a key historical trend at the beginning of each chapter that is related to the chapter's topic and current relevance to student experience. Historical trends are drawn from *U.S. Doctorates in the 20th Century* (National Science Foundation, 2006).

To set the context for the volume, Felder Small provides an overview on the status of Black/African American doctoral students. Her chapter, "Understanding Race, Culture and the Doctorate," draws on several important statistical portraits of doctoral degree completion to present a broad-based discussion of how race and culture are represented

(or not represented) in the presentation of data and student experience. The Sankofa perspective speaks to "going back" to fully understand the contributions of African Americans and the implications for higher education in previous representations of data. Specifically, Felder Small offers several recommendations for strategies for building institutional capacity to support the development of racial and cultural understanding.

In chapter 2, "Programmatic Efforts Supporting Doctoral Student Socialization in Education: A Literature Review," Felder Small, Liggans, Chirombo, and Freeman shed light on how programmatic efforts impact doctoral student socialization. Drawing on the field of education and concepts of socialization and student success, they examine African American doctoral student socialization within specially designed programs that primarily address marginalization due to historic legacies of exclusion. In this work, Sankofa represents a focus on the programmatic efforts to develop practices that center race and culture. Understanding the role of these efforts is critical to addressing the ways African Americans are marginalized during the doctoral process and their transitions into the academy as faculty.

In chapter 3, Yi and Ramos explore how African American women have placed their race and gender at the center of their education. Their work enacts Sankofa by speaking to the experiences women of color face when their identities are excluded and/or challenged by academic norms, resulting in women of color being isolated, their research not embraced, and their experiencing racial and gender bias. Through the powerful counter-stories in "Resistance Narratives: Counter-stories of Black Female Doctoral Students," the authors highlight how these women have navigated the doctorate and their previous education through the lenses of race and gender. These perspectives allowed them to increase their awareness of structural inequities and to better navigate racist and sexist spaces.

A growing body of literature examines the experiences of doctoral students who are pursuing doctoral degrees in STEM and how they come to navigate their academic identity as scientists along with their racial, gender, and other identities. Two chapters in this work contribute to this scholarship by focusing on the disciplinary areas where Blacks/African Americans have been represented by low participation and degree completion rates. Burt's research, presented in chapter 4, "Demystifying the Monolithic Black Male Mystique," builds on theoretical frameworks and research through his own empirical study. Burt emphasizes that existing research tends to characterize Black males as being monolithic and to suggest "one-size-fits-all" policies

and practices. In his chapter, he explores the within-group differences of 11 Black male doctoral students in engineering. The findings from this chapter provide implications for taking more nuanced approaches to aiding in the educational experiences of Black males that may apply to researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. Recent trends suggest that while there has been some progress made toward increasing the representation of Black students in science graduate education, they are less likely to transition into academic or research positions at the end of their training.

In Chapter 5, "Being One of Few: Examining Black Biomedical PhDs' Training Experiences and Career Development through a Campus Racial Climate Lens," Griffin, Gibbs, and English interviewed 21 Black doctoral degree recipients in the biomedical sciences to better learn what messages trainees received about what it means to be a scientist and to work in academia throughout their training. The authors' study examines how these messages are sent and received by the doctoral recipients, as well as the recipients' processes of determining whether the values of science aligned with their own values.

Additionally, chapters in this volume focus on the impact of institutional mission and the engagement of faculty on the student experience beginning at the start of the PhD path and across the institutional contexts of HBCUs and PWIs. In chapter 6, Felder Small and McCallum represent Sankofa by challenging traditional mentoring models and examining the power of the HBCU institutional mission on the student commitment to pursue the PhD and examining how HBCUs guide African American students into the academy. In their chapter, "From Firm Foundations to Where? Understanding the Role of HBCUs in Black/African American PhD Student Commitment," the authors highlight undergraduate socialization experiences, with a particular focus on (1) the relationship between institutional mission and student experience, and (2) the ways such relationships inspire students to pursue graduate education and the professoriate. Suggestions from this chapter reveal opportunities for building the doctoral pipeline.

In chapter 7, "Rethinking Engagement: Examining the Role of Faculty–Student Interactions and Black Doctoral Student Success at HBCUs," Boykin facilitates Sankofa through her discussion of the variance within and the impact of faculty–student interaction on doctoral students' positive academic experiences and perceived persistence. Specifically, external engagement—social components for student success external to a student's academic program and research practices—has been found to

be a critical component for and best predictor of optimal experiences and increased belief in self in regard to program completion. Boykin provides recommendations for dissertation supervisors, faculty, and administrators.

Examining the outcomes of the cross-race faculty and doctoral student relationships, Barker and Washington examine how Black doctoral students negotiate and manage their identities when working with White advisors and within predominantly White institutions or spaces. In chapter 8, "Double Consciousness: Exploring Black and Doctoral Student Identity within Cross-Race Advising Relationships," they use Du Bois's concept of double consciousness to better explain the experiences where Black doctoral students encounter situations to reflect on their identities. In this chapter, Barker and Washington provide recommendations for research and practice where programs and institutions may create spaces for students to be supported both academically and culturally. Sankofa emerges through an interrogation of student–faculty relationships within challenging academic situations and marginalizing academic functions.

In the concluding chapter, Felder Small and Barker summarize findings presented across the volume and put forth recommendations for policy, practice, and research. Sankofa is further addressed to draw conclusions about its applicability within the volume as well as within the larger body of academic research on doctoral education.

Conclusion

There is a growing percentage of Black/African American students enrolling in doctoral programs. While this growth indicates success, it is important to remember that Black/African American students still experience racism and discrimination and differential treatment in advising, mentoring, and career development. Additionally, many Black/African American doctoral students continue to struggle with their racial and doctoral identities in ways that are not understood by program administrators or faculty. In many instances, PWIs broadly and doctoral programs specifically have failed in designing experiences and developing culturally responsive socialization approaches that recognize and reflect a student's personal and cultural interests. Sankofa presents a more Afrocentric and culturally inclusive perspective for better understanding the experiences of Black/African American doctoral students. The volume contributors demonstrate the varying ways that race matters in developing support mechanisms, advising doctoral

students, building doctoral pipelines, developing doctoral processes, and cultivating faculty–student engagement. The goal of this volume is to bring greater attention to why Black doctorates matter and how ethnic principles like Sankofa can inform practices and policies that support not only Black doctoral students but other students of color as well. Further, we hope the work presented in this volume contributes to the research in this field by providing new ways of framing and critiquing doctoral education and offering new considerations for programmatic design and policy.

Notes

1. In this manuscript, *African American* and *Black* may be used interchangeably, as determined by the authors.

2. Millett and Nettles used the U.S. Census term *Hispanic*. The authors have opted to use *Latina/o* instead.

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