

Who Can I Run to: Black Women's Post-Graduate Mobility in Relation to Peer Mentorship

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Introduction

Abstract

This research investigated the role of peer mentorship in shaping the experiences of Black women in graduate school and influencing their post-graduate ambitions. The qualitative study used individual interviews to explore how these mentorship connections foster motivation, inspiration, and broaden career opportunities by empowering Black women to persist through their graduate studies and pursue advanced goals post-graduation. Through relationships grounded in sisterhood, reciprocity, and encouragement, peer mentors alleviate the pressures associated with systemic barriers and external challenges, offering vital academic, emotional, and mental support.

Aims of the Research

Understand how Black women's experiences within graduate school and post-graduate school are shaped by their experiences with peer mentorship.

This study hopes to identify academic and professional outcomes that can be impacted amongst Black women in graduate programs through peer mentorship.

Research Questions

1. How does peer mentorship influence Black women's experiences in graduate school?
2. What is the influence of peer mentorship on Black women's post-graduate pursuits?

Research Design

To examine how Black women utilize peer mentoring in graduate school the research will used a narrative research design. The research design allowed participants to reflect on their lived experiences throughout their graduate education journey. These interviews encompassed inquiry about the challenges faced, available support systems, and factors motivating the completion of their programs.

Method

Participants

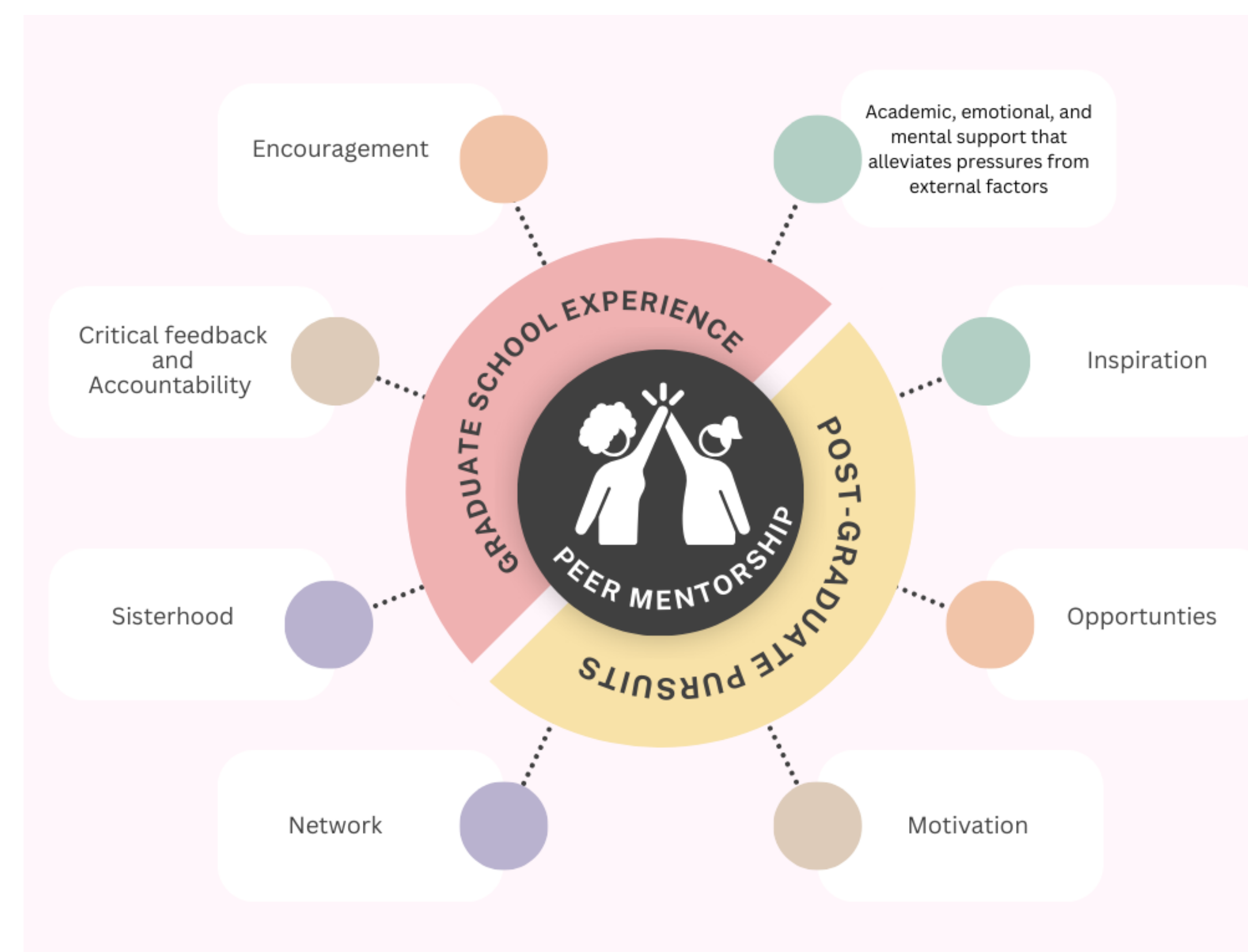
The study included 7 Black/African American women who met the following criteria:

- Age Range: 23-30 years old
- All participants have obtained a Bachelor's degree.
- Some participants are currently pursuing advanced degrees (Doctoral 4 programs).
- Others have already completed their Master's 2 or Doctoral 1 degrees.

Data Collection and Analysis

Recruitment took place through social media and affiliated service organizations. Participants received a link to complete a demographic survey to confirm their eligibility to participate in the study. The participants who indicated Black as their race and identified as a Black woman were asked to schedule an interview. Interviews lasted between 20-40 minutes.

Transcripts from each individual interview were created. Each transcript was analyzed using open and axial coding, resulting in 28 codes.



"I have been able to find that sense of community that has helped me along the way. Help me with challenges, help keep me motivated throughout the entire process, and actually challenge me in a positive way to grow further." – Sarah (Master's graduate)

"She influenced me to apply for this conference and submit a proposal And I had got accepted and presented at my first conference due to her" - Reina (Doctoral student)

Findings

Conclusion

The findings of this research show that peer mentorship is a critical support system, providing these women with intangible skills, academic guidance, and emotional strength, which collectively help mitigate the challenges posed by external and internal factors. Through peer relationships defined by characteristics such as sisterhood, reciprocity, and encouragement, Black women in graduate school find motivation, inspiration, and critical feedback to persist and excel academically. Peer mentors offer a source of motivation and encouragement that drives many to pursue advanced opportunities post-graduation. This collective empowerment fosters resilience and enables Black women in graduate programs to envision and achieve their future aspirations.

Recommendations

For Advisors:

- Encourage open discussions about the unique challenges Black women face in academia, creating an inclusive environment for support and understanding.

For Black Women Doctoral Students:

- Cultivate intentional peer mentorship relationships to build networks of sisterhood and reciprocity, allowing for mutual encouragement and growth.
- Establish "accountability circles" with other Black women peers to share feedback on academic goals, personal well-being, and future career planning.

For Institutions:

- Allocate resources toward diversity and inclusion initiatives that promote peer-led mentoring networks, professional development, and wellness resources specifically tailored to Black women.

Key References

Please scan the QR to see references



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