

## ABSTRACT

Title of Document: "IT FELT LIKE HOME:" EXPLORING PRACTICES AND MENTORING EXPERIENCES AMONG BLACK DOCTORAL WOMEN AND BLACK FACULTY WOMEN IN SISTER CIRCLES AT MID-ATLANTIC UNIVERSITIES.

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Black doctoral women in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) often express feelings associated with a lack of belonging and find difficulty with forming successful mentorships. This research study examined how Black doctoral women use sister circles and mentorship with Black faculty women throughout their journey at PWIs in the MidAtlantic United States. The purpose of this study was to investigate how Black doctoral women and Black faculty women define, participate and sustain their sister circles and how their faculty-student mentorship evolves as mentees advance in their journey. A Black feminist and sista circle framework was applied to center the experiences of the study participants.

This study found that sister circles provided students and faculty with a community of support to address professional and personal needs and a space to be authentically understood as Black women. These circles were maintained through social gatherings, write-in sessions and technology. Additionally, faculty implemented a needs-based approach to prepare their mentees as emerging scholars. However, students were

empathetic to the heavier workload of Black faculty women and limited their interactions. Hence these findings have implications for university programs and policies needed to formally support sister circles and mentorship, so institutions are accountable for the success and sense of belonging of Black doctoral women and Black faculty women.

*Keywords:* sister circles, mentorship, Black doctoral women, Black faculty women, colleges and universities