

Mentoring Experiences Through the Lens of a Mentee

Lucy Martinez

Rutgers University

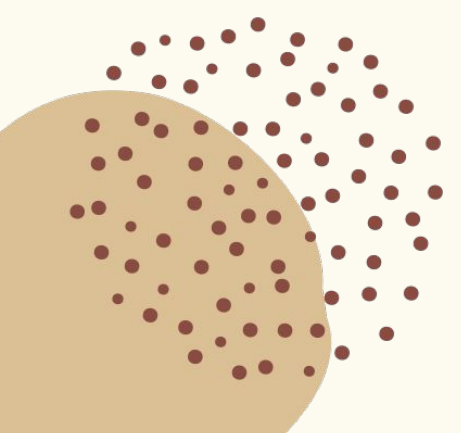
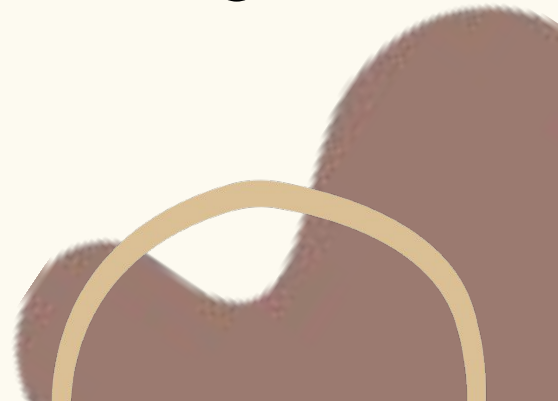
Critical Issues in Mathematics

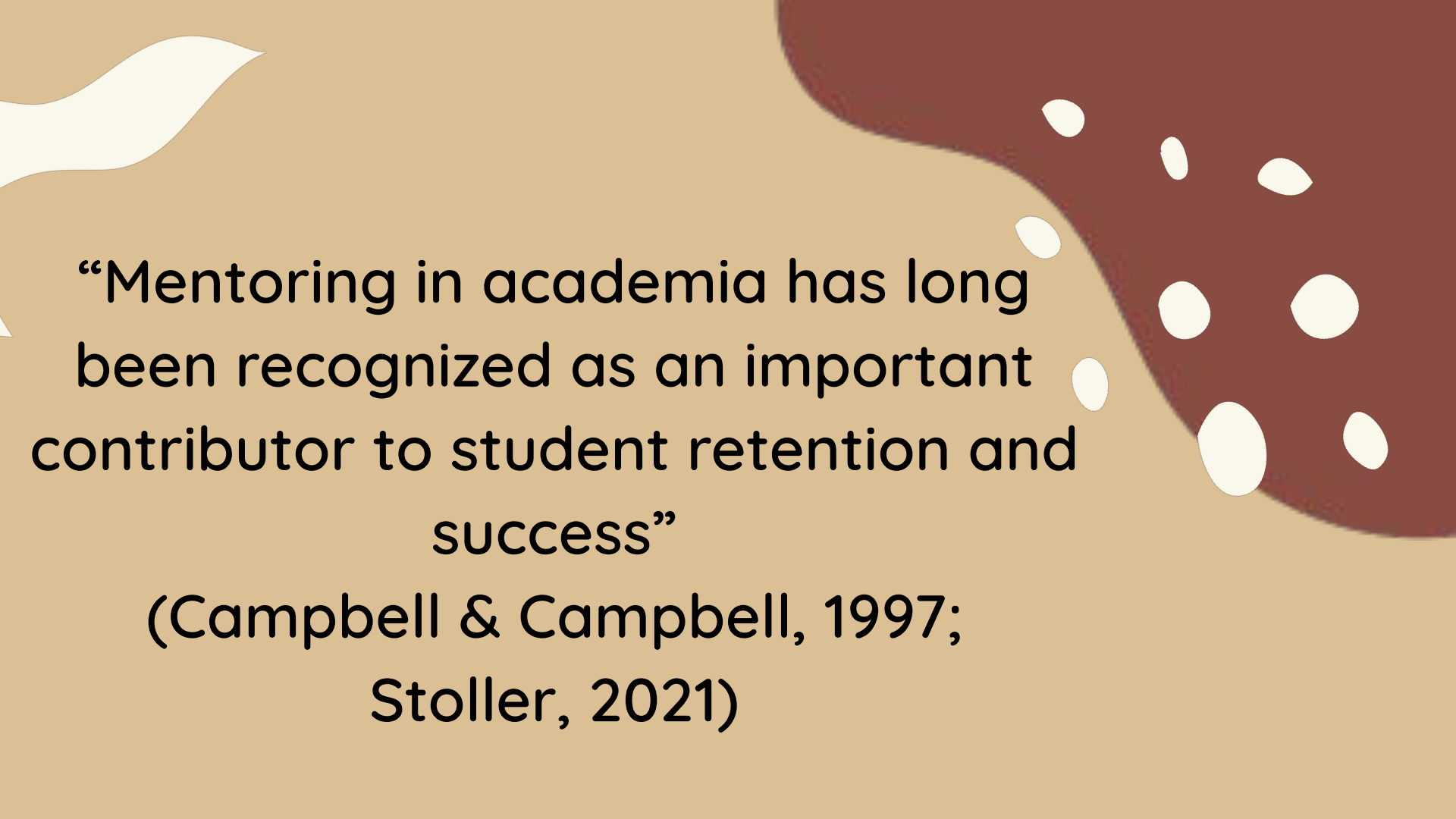
Education 2023: Mentoring for Equity



Outline



- 1 Overview
 - 2 Qualities of a good mentor
 - 3 Experiences with mentoring
 - 4 Takeaways
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“Mentoring in academia has long
been recognized as an important
contributor to student retention and
success”

(Campbell & Campbell, 1997;
Stoller, 2021)



Overview

- ◆ Mentoring comes in different forms
- ◆ Better in one area than other areas
 - Research, education, collaboration, supervising, advising, careers, etc.

Formal vs. Informal



Formal Mentoring:

- ◆ Structured/
Systematic
- ◆ Short-term
relationship

Informal Mentoring:

- ◆ Develops naturally
- ◆ Long-term
relationship → leads
into a long-term
friendship

Some qualities of a good mentor

1. Teacher, supporter, encouraging
2. Approachable, inspiring, and compassionate
3. Gives constructive feedback/criticism
 - Important: Be open and mature about receiving feedback



Some qualities of a good mentor (2)

1. Sets boundaries → Prevents conflict
2. Realistic with each other (mentor-mentee)
3. Have sincere interest → Be invested → Caring
4. Listens to understand



Some qualities of a good mentor (3)

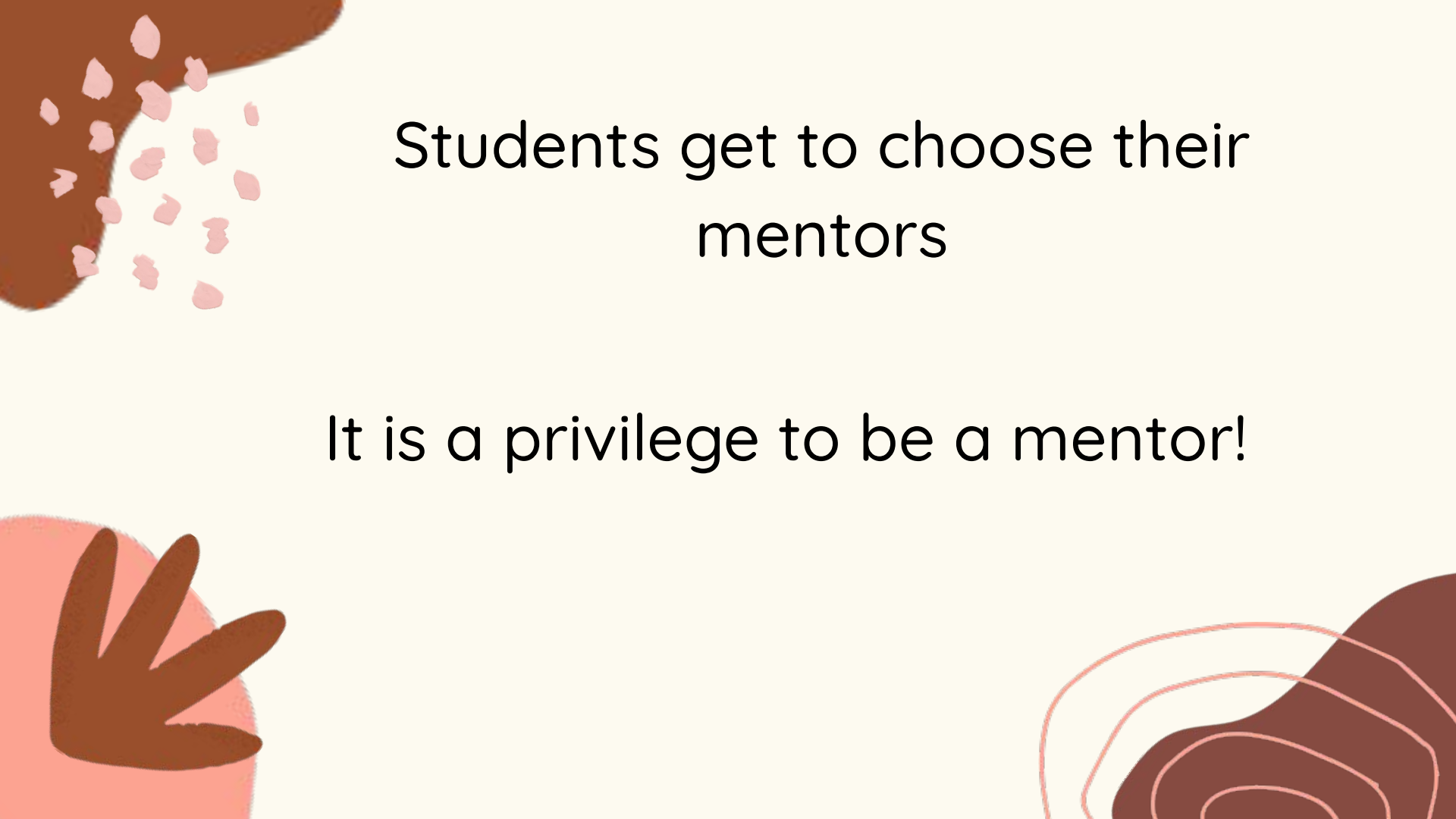
1. Understand mentee's needs
2. It is okay if you cannot fill all the areas of mentoring
 - Know your limits
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. Reflective
4. Takes initiative



Aware of power dynamics



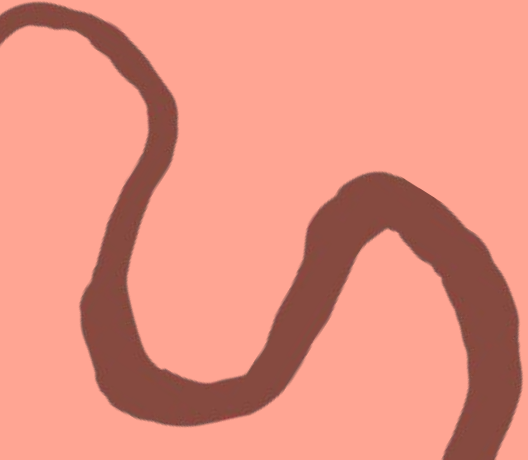
1. All mentoring relationships are power relationships
2. Mentors have responsibility and commitment
3. Mentors control access to opportunities
4. If you are not aware of power dynamics
→ Keeps mentees from being honest and open



Students get to choose their
mentors

It is a privilege to be a mentor!

My experiences as a mentee



Mentor A

1. Math Professor: Sent an email at the end of the semester
2. Offered to be my preceptor/academic advisor
3. Our relationship: Advising → Formal Mentoring
 - What math classes to take next?



Mentor A (2)



1. Developed an informal mentorship
 - It started with our mutual love of raising chickens
2. Disclaimer: Never had the opportunity to take more classes with them
 - Our meetings would be outside of office hours

Mentor A (3)

Qualities as a mentor:

1. Willing to learn about me as a student but also as a person
2. Took initiative: We invited another professor and a friend of mine to meet regularly



Mentor A (4)

Qualities as a mentor:

1. Engaging: Those coffee chats evolved into starting the first student AWM chapter
2. Resourceful:
 - If it was out of reach, knew who to recommend so I could go talk to them
 - Helped me build my network within the Stockton community



Mentor B

1. Told me to take more math classes
2. Talked to me about REUs and encouraged me to apply at the end of my sophomore year
 - Helped me review my statement



Mentor B (2)

Qualities as a mentor:

1. Encouraging: Advises students to keep taking math classes and continue their education
2. Available: Invites students to their office to chat about academics/life in school/etc



Mentor C

1. Formal Mentorship

2. Mentored me in what to do next and my options

- Helped me with choosing an REU
- Attended my talks and gave me feedback



Mentor C (2)

1. Started a research project during my second semester of junior year
2. Guided me during the application season for graduate school



Mentor C (3)

Qualities as a mentor:

1. Honest: Told me about what to expect in an REU and grad school
2. Listens to mentee's needs: Asked me about what made me happy as a person so I could pick a graduate school that was right for me



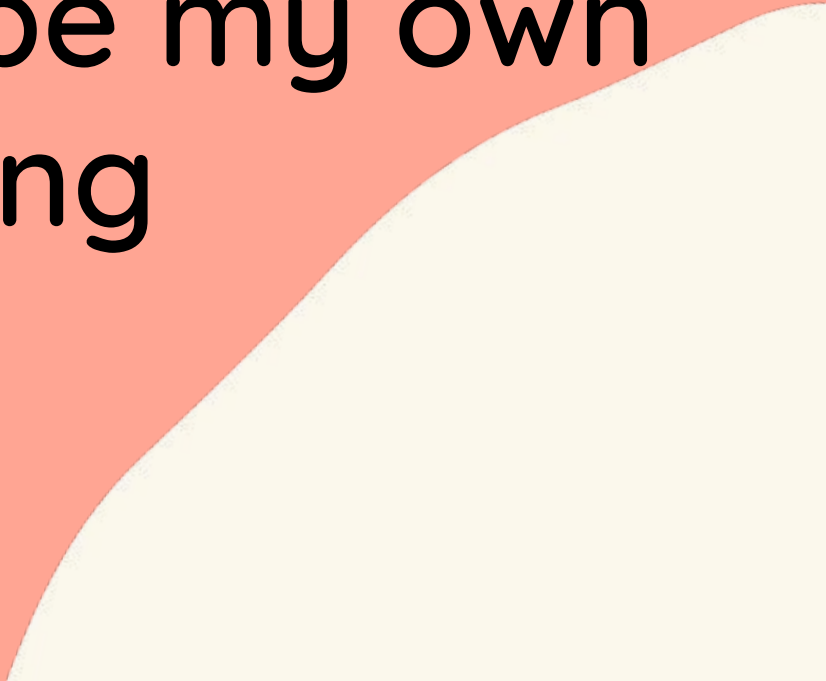
Mentor C (4)

Qualities as a mentor:

1. Realistic with each other: During our research project, I was going through a difficult time
→ We set realistic goals and expectations for our research project



My experiences are
helping me shape my own
mentoring



When have I been a mentor?



- From undergraduate to graduate school: Role of a mentor
- Summer after I graduated from undergrad: Participated in a research project interview
 - Question: Do you think you have been a mentor to any of your peers?

What have I learned?

- Build trust with mentees
- Be aware that students from underrepresented groups receive less mentorship than their peers
- Recognize when I have made a mistake:
 - Feedback/Criticism → Give what the mentee needs, not what you need



What have I learned? (2)

- Each mentee comes from different backgrounds → Different needs
- Separate my experiences from the mentee's experiences
 - We speak from experience
 - We have bias



What have I learned? (3)



- Provide a safe space for mentee without judgment
 - When I was deciding which PhD program to choose, I had personal reasons for staying close to home
- A lot of the time, mentees are looking for approval/affirmation rather than changing their minds

Main key points

- Have open communication
- Be aware of power dynamics
- Listen to understand
- Know the difference between advising and mentoring
- We always have a bias



Resources



- Campbell, T.A., & Campbell, D.E. (1997). Faculty/student mentor program: Effects on academic performance and retention. *Research in Higher Education*, 38(6), 727-742.
- McWilliams, A. E. (2019). The Power of Mentoring Relationships. *Psychology Today*, Blog.
- Stoller, A. (2021). Traditional and critical mentoring. *Radical Teacher (Cambridge)*, 119, 52-60.

Resources



- Vogel, J., Kosick, P., McShea, B., & Forrest, B. (2021). Mentoring Webs: Intertwining Multiple Mentors and Mentees to Support STEM Students. *The Chronicle of Mentoring and Coaching* 5, no. 14, 475-481

Thank you!

