The background features several cookies and chocolate chips. In the top left, a dark brown cookie with three light brown diamond-shaped decorations is partially visible. In the top right, a light brown cookie with several dark brown chocolate chips is shown. In the bottom left, a light brown cookie with many small dark brown chips is visible. In the bottom right, a dark brown cookie with several light brown almond-shaped decorations is shown. The text is centered on a white background.

# Mentoring Experiences Through the Lens of a Mentee

Lucy Martinez

Rutgers University

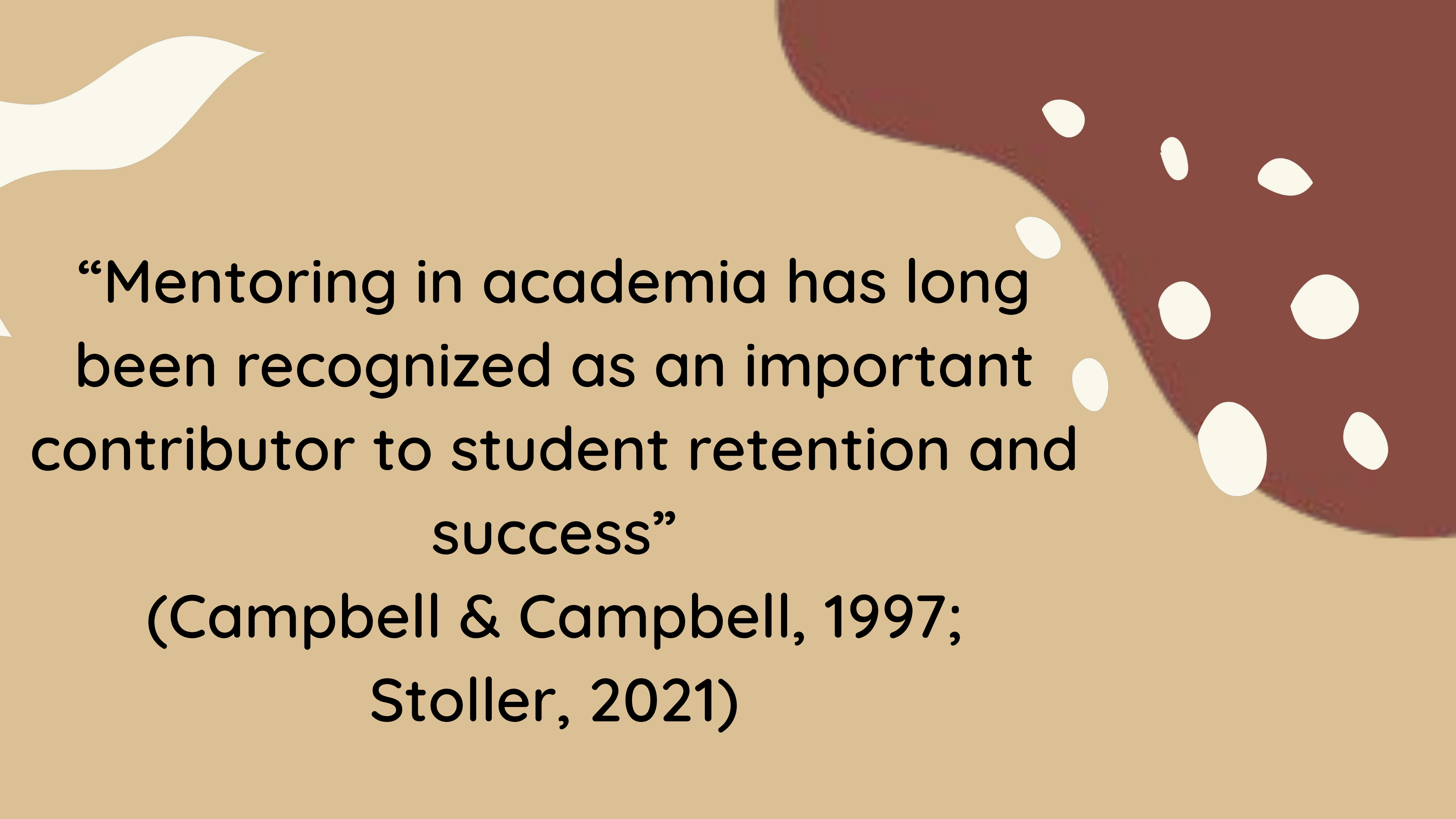
Critical Issues in Mathematics

Education 2023: Mentoring for Equity



# Outline

- 1 Overview
- 2 Qualities of a good mentor
- 3 Experiences with mentoring
- 4 Takeaways



“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

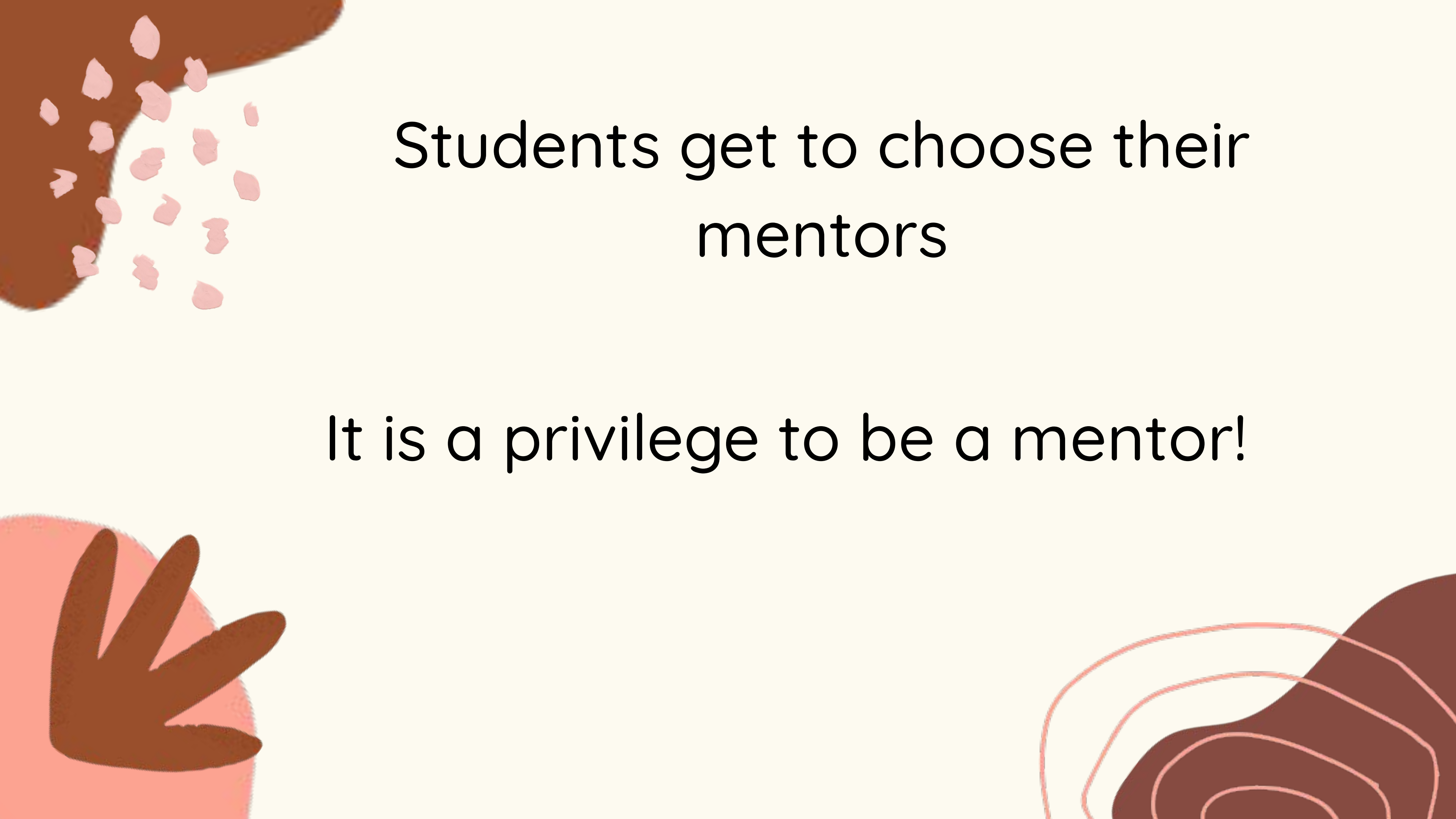




# Aware of power dynamics



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



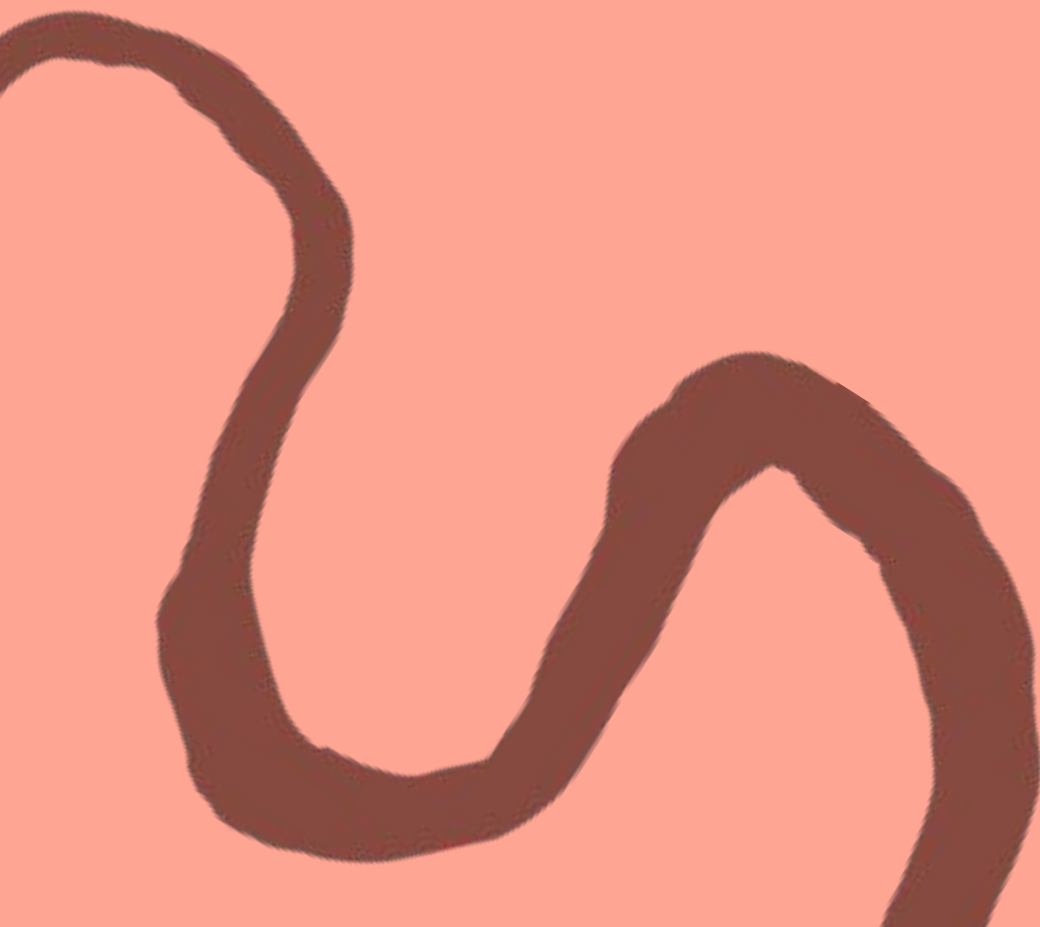
# Mentor C (4)

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!

