



“They are essential”: Exploring the femtor role

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When You Think Of A Mentor, What Comes To Mind?

- ▶ **Mentor:** A relationship between two people, with the goal of offering some sort of advice, direction, or counsel (Inzer & Crawford, 2015)
- ▶ Traditional, dyadic, and hierarchical
- ▶ Intrinsic part of personal, professional, and academic development
- ▶ These relationships are complex and multi-faceted
 - ▶ Advocate, advisor, sponsor, coach, role model
- ▶ Formal v. informal development

What Do Mentors Do?

- ▶ **Role Model:** Offers insight on how they “made it”
- ▶ **Advises:** Shares institutional and professional wisdom, critiques performance, makes suggestions
- ▶ **Coaches:** Helps with learning new skills and practicing new behaviors
- ▶ **Protects:** Helps find new and challenging opportunities while protecting her from “dead-end” job assignments.
- ▶ **Supports:** Listens with a sympathetic ear, explains unwritten rules, and acknowledges disappointments and triumphs.

Mentor v. Femtor

Mentor

A relationship between two people, with the goal of offering some sort of advice, direction, or counsel (Inzer & Crawford, 2015)

Femtor

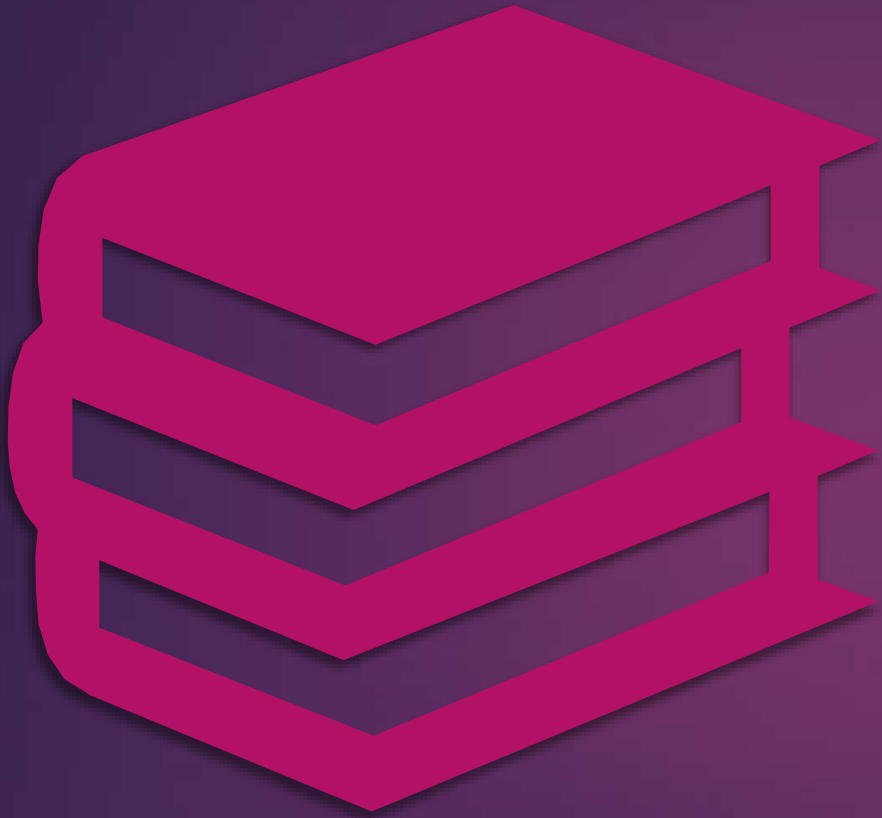
A mentor, but identifies as a woman and offers a woman's perspective, support, guidance, and knowledge

But Why The Difference?

The etymological meaning of *mentor* comes from the root *men*, which means to counsel, whereas *protégé* comes from the French verb, *proteger*, which means to protect (Darwin, 2000)

Mentoring Networks

- ▶ Having *one* mentor may not meet the needs of the mentee
- ▶ Network may include people inside and outside of the organization
- ▶ Perceived quality of the relationships = stronger network



Dissertation Time

Problem of Practice



- Community colleges neglect leadership development



- Community colleges are gendered institutions



- There is a lack of women in senior leadership positions



- The lack of women in senior leadership positions impacts women faculty members



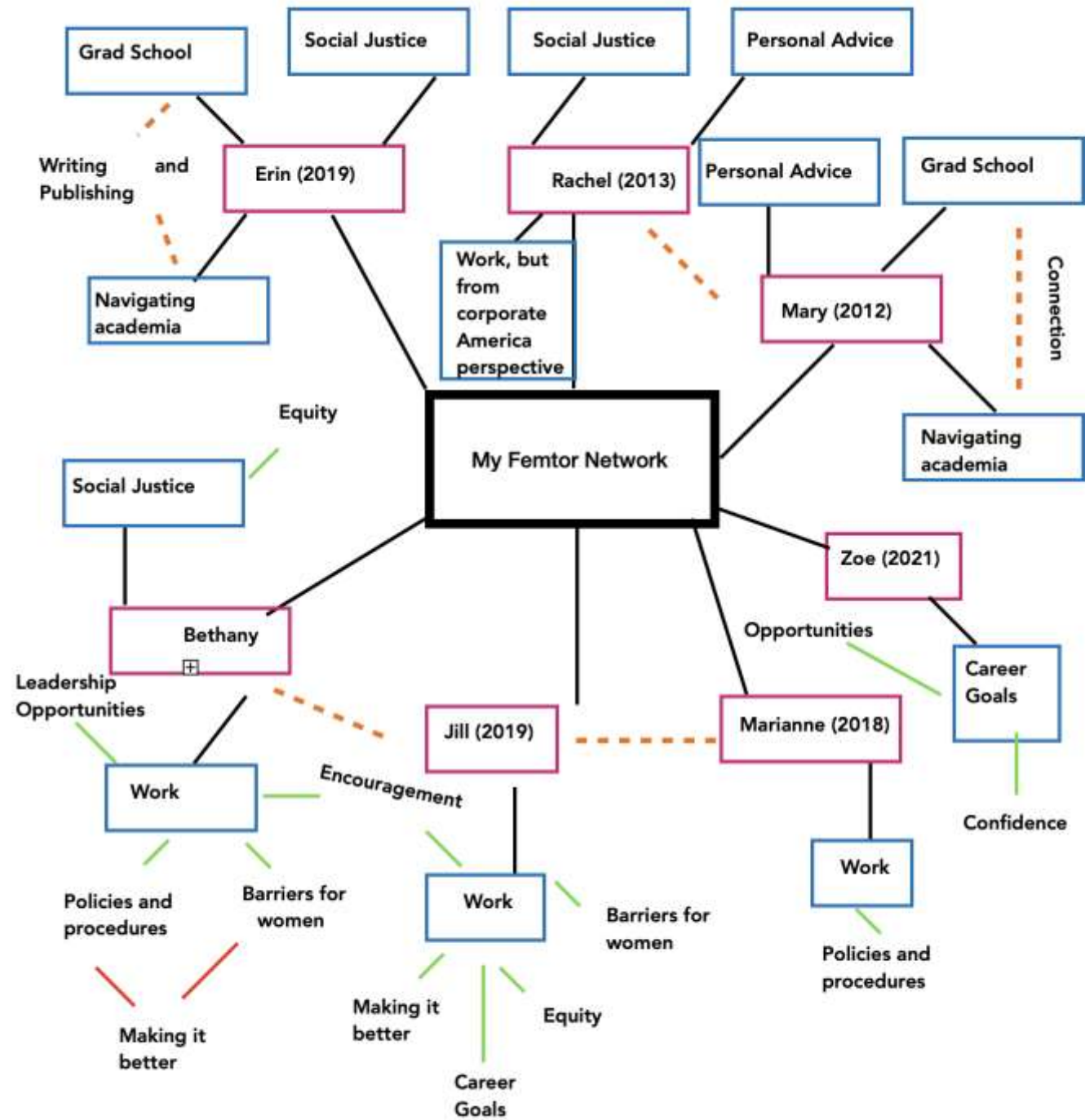
- Women faculty members lack support and guidance to navigate their careers



- Development and utilizations of femtor networks

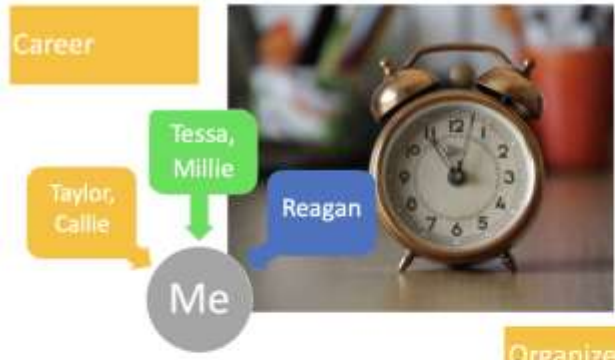


- Femtor networks help women faculty members navigate their career and institution

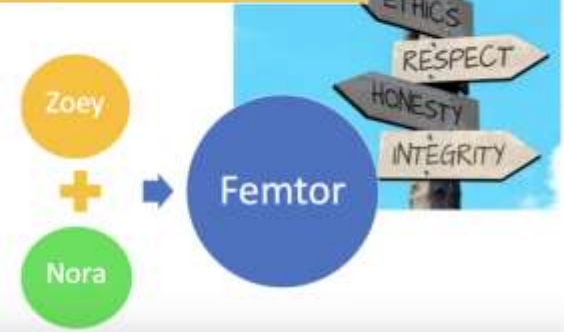




Friendship



Organized Mentor Program



We begin our story in the land of Always Winter (contingent Lectureship) and having been granted a full-time position, must navigate our way to advancement...

Academia: the Hidden Realm

Key:

- difficult terrain
- dangerous terrain
- enemy territory

Ally * **Denise**
 guide and scribe
 (answerer of questions, ambassador)

Jessica

professional development
 (trusted advisor) → recommended me to design an online course, ALP, mentor.

Kassandra

(trusted advisor - leader of online learning, professional development ally)

Guided Pathway beast!

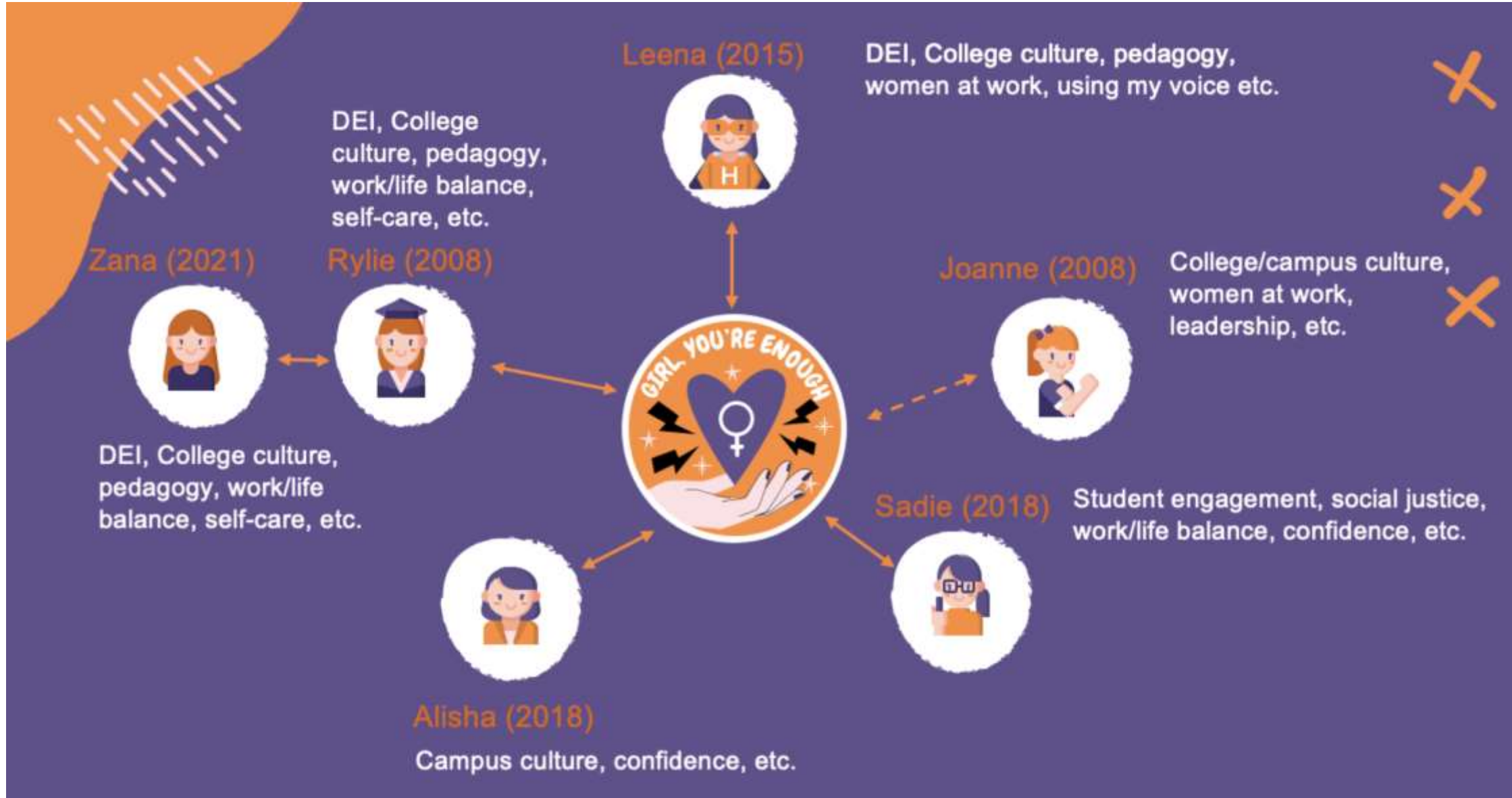
SWAMPS OF MADNESS

Sea of Stagnation + Despondency

BUDGET MOUNTAINS

★ Advancement!
 Retirement!
 Contentment!

MEDICATED MOUNTAINS



Draw your network

- ▶ Take ~15 minutes to create a visual representation of your own network that centers on you as the femtee
- ▶ Think of:
 - ▶ Who has helped your career
 - ▶ Who make up your network
 - ▶ The role they serve / what they help you with / benefits
 - ▶ Connections between femtors (if any)
- ▶ There is no wrong or right way to do it!
- ▶ Be creative 😊

Reflection

- ▶ What was it like to create a visual representation of your network?
 - ▶ Any revelations?
- ▶ How has your network influenced or shaped your professional career?
 - ▶ What have they helped you with?
- ▶ How would you describe your network?
 - ▶ What adjectives come to mind?

Findings

- ▶ **RQ1: According To The Women Faculty Members, Who Is Included On Their Femtor Network?**
 - ▶ **Theme One:** *“This is Not Just a Handful of People, It’s a Pretty Broad Network of Women”*
- ▶ **RQ2: How Do Women Faculty Members Utilize Their Femtor Network?**
 - ▶ **Theme Two:** *“Who Am I Within This Institution?”*
 - ▶ **Theme Three:** *“Avoiding the Mountains of Mediocrity”*
- ▶ **RQ3: How do femtor networks influence women faculty member’s professional experience?**
 - ▶ **Theme Four:** *“Girl, You’re Enough”*

Benefits

- ▶ Develop and advance careers
- ▶ Solve problems
- ▶ Impact decisions
- ▶ Reform institutional culture
- ▶ Long-term career advancement
- ▶ Navigating gendered barriers in higher education
- ▶ Identify strengths and skills
- ▶ Learn to navigate the political culture
- ▶ Exposure
- ▶ Coaching
- ▶ Acceptance
- ▶ Role modeling
- ▶ Friendship
- ▶ Counseling
- ▶ Helps avoid burnout and emotional stress
- ▶ Increased job satisfaction
- ▶ Career opportunities
- ▶ Validation
- ▶ Increases organizational commitment
- ▶ Protection



Growing Your Network

Growing Your Network

1. Know your goals

- ▶ Short and long term
 - ▶ Leadership, career advancement, work/life, navigating gendered academia

2. Find individuals with similar lived experiences

- ▶ Think about their experience and success
- ▶ Be intentional and (kinda) strategic

3. Have a diverse network

- ▶ More opportunities, growth, perspectives

4. Network to meet new people

- ▶ Ask your network to introduce you to people

Forming the Relationship

- ▶ Approach kindly v. waiting for initiation
- ▶ Elevator pitch
 - ▶ **Include:** goals, why you think this person is a good fit, expectations
- ▶ Develop trust
 - ▶ Share lived experiences
 - ▶ Be authentic
- ▶ Set realistic expectations
 - ▶ Respect their time and boundaries
- ▶ How can you help them?

Sustaining the Relationship

- ▶ Make it easy
 - ▶ Be consistent
- ▶ Drive the relationship
 - ▶ Maintain open communication
- ▶ Be teachable
- ▶ Show gratitude
- ▶ Take risks
- ▶ See how you can help them

Being a Femtor

Being A Femtor Is A Skill!

- ▶ Be empowering and motivating
- ▶ Communicate and listen
 - ▶ Ask probing questions
 - ▶ Active listening
- ▶ Empathy, caring, and authenticity
 - ▶ Share stories
- ▶ Offer constructive criticism
- ▶ Advocate for them
 - ▶ Add them on projects, committees, etc.
 - ▶ Encourage self-advocacy
- ▶ Introduce them to your network
- ▶ Not a One-Size-Fits-All

Benefits of Being A Femtor

- ▶ Share your expertise and experience
- ▶ Help shape future leaders
- ▶ Strengthens your leadership skills
- ▶ You also learn new things
 - ▶ Life-changing relationships
- ▶ It's okay to say no!
 - ▶ Time consuming and complex relationships

Final Reflection

- ▶ How does femtoring/mentoring work at your institution/organization?
- ▶ Where do you see a need?
- ▶ Any additional thoughts or questions about femtoring?

Further Reading:

- ▶ **On Being a Mentor: A Guide for Higher Education Faculty, 2nd Edition**
 - ▶ Author: W. Brad Johnson
- ▶ **Nine Guiding Principles for Women in Higher Education**
 - ▶ Author: Karyn Z Sproles
- ▶ **Faculty Mentoring: A Practical Manual for Mentors, Mentees, Administrators, and Faculty Developers**
 - ▶ Authors: Susan L. Phillips and Susan T. Dennison
- ▶ **Feminist Mentoring In Academia (just published!)**
 - ▶ Edited by Jessica A. Pauly, Stevie M. Munz, and Leandra Hinojosa Hernández

Conclusion

- ▶ It's not a “one-size-fits-all” approach
- ▶ Continuous v. Time & Place relationships
- ▶ Cyclical effect (passing the torch)
- ▶ Continue making connections
- ▶ They ARE essential!

Questions?

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