

The lived experience of professional mentorship and its implications for formal mentoring programs

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McNeven, Sean

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The lived experience of professional mentorship and its implications for
formal mentoring programs

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Sean McNeven

Bachelor of Arts

Graduate Diploma in Education (Sec)

Graduate Diploma in Teacher-Librarianship

Graduate Certificate in Autism Studies

School of Education and Professional Studies

Arts, Education and Law

Griffith University

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Declaration: This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation.

Signed:

Name:

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Abbreviations

OF – Outcomes Framework

PCYC – Police and Citizens' Youth Club

YMCA – Young Men's' Christian Association

Abstract

School-based mentoring (SBM) facilitates nurturing relationships between adolescent student mentees and older and more experienced mentors, often to address concerns regarding aspects of the mentees' social-emotional development. Though there is a body of evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of SBM in supporting mentees towards resolving these developmental concerns, our understanding of how and why it is effective is continuing to develop. The role of the mentor in effecting positive developmental outcomes, particularly in a professional capacity, is currently not well understood.

This study investigated the lived experience of professional mentors and the ways in which this lived experience shaped their conception and operationalisation of the role. Participant diaries, semi-structured interviews and follow-up interviews were employed as data collection methods in a hermeneutic phenomenological research design. The data analysis conducted for this study also employed a hermeneutic phenomenological method that developed a descriptive and interpretative account of the lived experience of professional mentorship.

Findings from this study suggested that the conceptualisation and operationalisation of professional mentorship is shaped by the relational and organisational imperatives operating within formal SBM programs. The elements and dimensions of these imperatives were seen to directly influence the lived experience of professional mentorship. While the findings of this small-scale study must be viewed tentatively, they will be of interest to mentors, youth workers, success coaches, social workers, teachers and the current literature on youth mentoring.

Chapter One: Introduction

In Homer's *Odyssey*, the aged Mentor provides wise guidance to Odysseus' young son, Telemachus, in the absence of the young man's father. This type of relationship, in which a person of greater age, experience and knowledge provides guidance to a younger person, has been present throughout history. Such relationships have been particularly important in communities of faith, such as the teacher-disciple traditions in Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, as well as the master-apprentice relationship of the medieval guild system. The tradition of mentoring has continued into the modern era, during which it has been formalised across a range of fields into organised mentoring programs. Programs such as *Big Brother Big Sister* (Herrera et al., 2011) have been established in the youth development field to nurture the development of adolescents, particularly those experiencing some form of impediment to development (Kram, 1983). Formal youth mentoring programs provide formalised frameworks within which the establishment and development of mentor-mentee relationships are supported and supervised. Within this frame, the work of youth mentors has generally addressed the social-emotional, cognitive and identity development of 'at-risk' mentees (Rhodes, 2005). In later instances, SBM programs have been established within education systems, such as in the United Kingdom (Doveston & Rose, 2008), to support the social-emotional and academic development of adolescents. This research is concerned with the role of mentors who are formally employed as mentors within SBM programs (professional mentors). In particular, this research investigates the influences and experiences that shape the role of the professional mentor and how it is conducted.

This chapter outlines the context, scope and nature of the current research. It first explains the aim of the study and then introduces the research question. This introduction is followed by an explanation of the significance of the study and the research design employed to address the research question. The position of the researcher, the rationale for the study and the thesis format are then outlined. The chapter concludes by addressing the distinctions between the terms *mentor* and *coach*, and how the term mentor applies in this study.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of professional mentors working in SBM programs. The term *professional mentor* denotes a mentor who is formally employed in a financially remunerated capacity to provide mentoring services (Lakind, Eddy and Zell). The current study engaged professional mentors in dialogue and reflection to develop insights into how operationalisations of professional mentorship are influenced by the ways in which mentors construct the role. This study sought to identify key constructs that constitute the lived experience of professional mentorship. It was anticipated that the insights generated from this enquiry would support the expansion of research into this aspect of SBM, and that it would be of interest to mentors and managers working within formal mentoring programs. The participants in this study were two professional mentors recruited working for an SBM program that targeted Junior secondary students between the ages of 12 years and 15 years who, through their school-based behaviours, had manifested indications of disengagement. As professional mentors, they led volunteer mentors in engaging mentees in group-based pro-social activities and in establishing an environment conducive to the establishment of secure mentor-mentee relationships.

Extant research into formal mentoring programs can be broadly classified into two general strands. The first strand has focused on the measurement and description of mentoring's effectiveness as an intervention (Dubois et al., 2002). The second strand has focused on the identification, description or measurement of features and practices that may engender effectiveness in mentoring programs (Brondyk & Searby, 2015). The current study was situated in the latter strand in that it sought to present an interpretive description of the features and practices of professional mentorship.

Research Question

The overarching question that guided this study was:

What are the essential constructs that constitute the lived experience of professional mentorship?

The purpose of the question was to identify the phenomenological constructs that constitute professional mentors' lived experiences of the role. It was expected that understanding the phenomenological constructs would enable the researcher to identify, detail and describe three key understandings: how professional mentors define their own effectiveness within the role; to understand what input professional mentors believe is required of them to generate positive outcomes in mentees; and how the first two understandings may shape how professional mentors undertake their role.

Significance of the Study

The aim of the current study is to describe the lived experience of professional mentorship through an examination of the practices by which they undertake the role and the understandings which inform these practices. For some time, significant funding has been invested in mentoring by groups, such as the PCYC and the YMCA, which

conduct mentoring programs within schools. The formal mentoring programs offered by such organisations are generally employed as a method to address developmental needs of adolescents who have been identified as *at-risk* (Wesely, Dzoba, Miller & Rasche, 2017). The risk to which such young people have been considered subject has generally been defined in terms of disengagement from normative social standards and from formal education (Quin, 2016). In particular, a young person's failure to complete secondary school has been identified as a significant risk for young people as it has been shown to be reliably predictive of high levels of unemployment, social dislocation and incarceration (Henry, Knight & Thornberry, 2012). Formal mentoring programs have been employed as a coordinated response to address intra-personal factors that contribute to a young person's choice to disengage (Anastasia et al., 2012; Brondyk & Searby, 2013). Such programs have been predicated on a belief in the capacity of mentorship to divert at-risk young people from harm's way. Though extant research (Dubois et al., 2011; Ehrich et al., 2004; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002) has provided evidence that mentoring can be effective in addressing developmental needs of young people, there is currently no clear insight into what constitutes "best practice" in mentoring (Anastasia et al., 2013). Moreover, there has been little research conducted into how individuals interpret and enact that which is assumed to be "best practice".

The significance of the current research is that it addresses questions concerning how professional mentors undertake their role and what influences the choices they make in this regard. Very little research has yet been conducted into models of practice employed by professional mentors. Extant research has predominantly focused on the outcomes of mentoring programs. Given the central role a mentor plays in engaging a

mentee, the practices which they undertake to engage mentees and the understandings that inform their practices are of vital importance to the effectiveness of mentoring.

Research Design

This study employed hermeneutic phenomenology as its research methodology. Hermeneutic phenomenological research eschews the adoption of a theoretical position. Rather, it seeks to uncover the phenomenological constructs that constitute the lived experience of a phenomenon, such as professional mentorship, and to describe the phenomenon as it is lived (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Given that the intention of the current research was to examine and describe the how professional mentors' lived experience shapes their conceptualisation and operationalisation of the role, hermeneutic phenomenology presented as a most appropriate research methodology. Interviews, participant journals and follow-up conversations were employed as data collection methods to capture the lived experience of the mentors. Hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive approach in which the researcher conducted hermeneutic analysis of the data to arrive at the current study's findings and recommendations. The design and use of a multi-phase process allowed the researcher to clarify understandings with participants, triangulate data and employ reflexivity.

The Position of the Researcher

I have worked in both public and private education systems as a teacher, teacher-librarian, learning support co-ordinator, curriculum coordinator and success coach. Through these roles, I have accrued extensive experience in working with students who were considered at-risk of not completing formal schooling. Since the start of 2015, I have worked as a success coach, at a metropolitan state high school. The primary purpose of this role is to identify students who are

at risk of disengaging from formal education and to help them reengage. In this role, therefore, I have pursued goals and undertaken functions that are very similar to those of a professional mentor. In this role, I have also liaised with mentoring groups to facilitate their provision of SBM services. The similarity of my professional experiences to those of the participants in the current study and my consequent immersion in the research context is, as explained below, considered an advantage in the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to research (van Manen, 1990).

Participants in the current study worked within a mentoring program that operated in a range of schools conducting weekly mentoring sessions. Each session was of approximately two hours' duration. The sessions were conducted in a space provided within each school and the size and qualities of the spaces vary depending upon spaces available at respective schools. Within this program, matching occurred through an informal process. Mentors and prospective mentees participated in group-based "ice-breaker" and familiarisation activities during the first two sessions, and at the end of the second session, mentees nominated which mentor they would like to work with. In instances in which more than one mentee nominated a single mentor, small group mentoring was arranged in which the nominated mentor would work with no more than three mentees. In the third and subsequent sessions, mentors and mentees would gradually grow their relationships in a combination of one-on-one and whole group interactions.

Thesis Format

This thesis follows a standard five-stage format which, after this introductory chapter includes a review of the literature pertinent to this research (Chapter 2). First, key rationales for the engagement of adolescents in mentoring are reviewed. The

influences of social-cognitive theory and attachment theory upon mentoring are then discussed. An examination of research into the effectiveness of mentoring follows and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the characteristics of mentors that research indicates may contribute to positive outcomes.

A description of hermeneutic phenomenology as a research methodology is provided in Chapter 3 together with arguments for the appropriateness of this methodology to the current study. The participants of the study are also introduced, and the data collection tools and analysis process are outlined. Ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of data collection and interpretation conclude the chapter, illustrating the rigour of the study.

The four phases of data analysis are described in Chapter Four together with a discussion of the emerging findings. As such, the chapter is divided according to the four phases of analysis. These phases follow the gradual, iterative process by which hermeneutic analysis was employed to draw phenomenological constructs out of the raw data.

Finally, the research findings are presented in Chapter Five. These findings are then used to respond to the research question and to link the results to the literature. An application of these findings is then presented in a model that expresses the posited effects of identified imperatives upon the mentoring program. The limited scope of the research is also addressed along with its contribution to the fields of SBM and professional mentorship. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

Mentoring versus Coaching

Within formal youth mentoring organisations, there has been a tendency to conflate the roles of mentor and coach (Jones & Rose, 2007). This section is intended to pre-empt and allay such confusion and to demonstrate that the two concepts are, indeed, quite distinct from each other. In particular, it is intended to clarify the distinct features that characterise the role of a mentor.

There are a range of features that define the nurturing relationship between mentor and mentee. First, a mentoring relationship is understood as being a dyadic relationship between an older, more experienced or more capable individual (the mentor) and a novice (the mentee). Second, within the relationship, the mentor plays a supportive role in relation to the mentee. Third, mentor-mentee interactions are characterised by a power dynamic in which the mentor often has a lead role but does exert influence rather than control (Karcher et al., 2006; Mertz, 2004). Fourth, the mentee's growth and development are the prime objectives of the relationship (Karcher et al., 2006; Mertz, 2004). These features particularly differentiate mentoring from other forms of developmental support, such as coaching.

In a coaching relationship, the field of discussion is defined by professional context, and the coach acts as a facilitator to identify and draw out the client's thinking through active listening and strategic questioning, so to arrive at a plan for action. Coaching focuses on specific role- and work-related outcomes (Broadbent, 2014). Coaching interactions do not engender direct advice, but generally move from guiding the client towards articulating a perception of the challenges they face to unlocking their own insights and realisations to overcome obstacles and accomplish more (Gormley &

van Nieuwerburgh, 2014). Mentoring, on the other hand, tends to focus on broader, more holistic and, often, more personally-oriented goals wherein direct advice and guidance are often sought and given (Broadbent, 2014). A mentor guides and supports, smoothing the way by building self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as by directing, managing and instructing (Fletcher, 2000). Further, the power dynamics operating in the respective roles are considerably different: a coach tends to be more of a peer or someone of similar standing; whereas a mentor is usually someone of greater age, experience and insight (Broadbent, 2014). Table 1.1 summarises the distinctions between coaching and mentoring.

Table 1.1
The differences between coaching and mentoring

Coaching	Mentoring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional contexts • Peer • Challenge-oriented • Facilitative role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad range of contexts • Elder • Personal development-oriented • Guidance and advisory role

Though all experiences of mentorship may share the broadly-defined typical characteristics described above, there are many different types of mentorship, a range of different terms by which they are identified and a great variety of operational profiles. The varied forms that mentoring can take is a function of the array of range of contexts across which mentorship is employed. Each context has its own unique characteristics that influence how the mentoring that occurs within it is conducted (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Kochan & Pascarelli, 2012; Mullen, 2012).

In recent years, SBM has become a popular format for youth mentoring, particularly as an intervention for disengaged students who have demonstrated a pattern of failure to meet normative expectations of social, behavioural or academic development (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011). For such young people, mentoring has been, and is, employed to: a) ameliorate negative environmental effects (Rhodes, 2009); b) to help work through difficulties or delays in becoming independent, self-regulating learners (Erickson, McDonald, & Elder, 2009); and c) to enhance “social skills and emotional wellbeing, by improving cognitive skills, and by providing the mentor as a role model” (Rhodes, 2005, p. 35). By addressing these domains, either individually or collectively, SBM has been employed as an intervention to re-engage at-risk young people in positive social interaction with their peers, to promote their adoption normative behaviours and to re-engage them in formal education. A range of studies has indicated the general effectiveness of SBM in reengaging at-risk adolescents in normative behaviours (Caldarella et al., 2009; Herrera et al., 2011; Kolar & McBride, 2011; Portwood et al, 2005), but considerable contention remains as to which features of SBM are attributable to its effectiveness.

Summary

Chapter 1 has provided an outline of the proposed thesis and has detailed the background of the study, described the contextual influences, and established the research question. The methodology of the study was briefly outlined and the researcher’s position with regard to the research established. This outline was followed by an overview of the thesis chapters. The chapter concluded with a clarification of mentoring as a key term and concept within the current study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter presents a review of the literature and explores past efforts to establish the legitimacy of mentoring as an effective intervention to address developmental needs of at-risk youth. The theoretical foundations of mentoring are introduced, and the difficulties encountered in establishing empirical evidence to support these foundations are outlined. The centrality of the mentor to the posited effectiveness of mentoring is then discussed. Finally, the chapter describes specific characteristics of mentors that have been identified as contributing to the effectiveness of mentoring. The current study's relevance and significance is considered in the context of past efforts to understand and improve the practice of School-Based Mentoring (SBM).

The Value of Mentoring Relationships

The mentor-mentee relationship is of prime importance to assisting mentees to identify developmental pathways and traverse the developmental gap between where they are and where they would like to be. Within this relationship, the mentor assumes multiple roles: teacher, sponsor, exemplar, counsellor, host and guide, and developer of skills and intellect (Abiddin & Hassan, 2012; Anderson & Shannon, 1988; Mertz, 2004). Consequently, the theoretical frameworks developed around mentorship are focused on the development and dynamics of the mentor-mentee relationship, the primary function of which is to enhance the quality of developmental outcomes for mentees.

The effectiveness of mentoring relationships in enhancing outcomes for mentees has generally been defined and measured in terms of developmental changes in mentees' motivation and behaviour. Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, and Cooper (2002) identified five mentoring outcome domains in their meta-analytical review of 55 evaluations of the effects of

mentoring programs on youth. These domains were: (a) emotional, (b) behavioural, (c) social, (d) educational, and e) employment. Of these five domains, the most commonly applied to evaluating youth mentoring programs have been the emotional and educational measures. The emotional outcomes have usually been measured according to scales developed for psychology research and designed to test particular psychological outcomes perceived to reflect mentees' wellbeing (Langhout, Rhodes & Osborne, 2004). Academic outcomes have generally been measured in terms of academic results and data around disciplinary referrals, attendance and school-connectedness (Dubois et al., 2011). The importance attributed to the mentor-mentee relationship in addressing these outcome domains derives from the theoretical foundations of mentoring.

Theoretical Foundations of Contemporary Mentoring

Historically, the study and development of mentoring across a broad variety of contexts have been predominantly informed by social cognitive theory and attachment theory. These theories, particularly as they apply to SBM programs, are concerned with the dynamics of effecting positive change in mentees' perceptions and behaviour. Social cognitive theory is concerned with how changes to perceptions of self may contribute to producing positive behavioural outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Attachment theory is concerned with how relational experiences may produce positive outcomes in perception and behaviour (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2012).

Much of the contemporary research work in the mentoring field has been framed by social cognitive theory, as pioneered by Bandura (1997). Within this theory, the concepts of personal goals, outcome expectations and self-efficacy are considered essential to successfully promoting significant behavioural change. Personal goals are aspirations for

intra-personal or extrinsic achievements to which an individual chooses to orient their thoughts and behaviour. Pursuit of a personal goal is influenced by outcome expectations. These expectations are beliefs about the likely consequences of adopting a particular behaviour and as such, they strongly influence the formation of an individual's intention to adopt a new behaviour (Bandura, 1997). Outcome expectations are influenced by self-efficacy in that self-efficacy is one's own sense of capacity to successfully perform a specific task under specific conditions. In social-cognitive theory, self-efficacy is regarded as being vital to one's perceived capacity to engage in behaviours required to undertake a task. Self-efficacy has been particularly influential in shaping contemporary understandings of the purpose and functions of mentoring. Bandura (1997) theorised that for an individual to possess the self-efficacy required to effect behavioural change requires resources and guidance from others in their social support network, such as mentors.

Attachment theory, as first articulated by Bowlby (1982), is important to the conceptualisation of youth mentoring. The theory is built around the notion that in their early years, children form attachments, or emotional bonds, with their primary caregiver. From these experiences, a child will develop a base model for roles and behaviour in current and future close relationships. Within this model, a child will develop *scripts*, which describe the patterns of behaviour they expect to occur in relational interactions. These expectations will shape an individual's behavioural responses in relational contexts. A child will develop a secure base model if their relational experiences have been consistent, coherent and supportive such that they promote trust, learning exploration and the attainment of developmental markers (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Hart 2011). A secure base model is characterised by roles and scripts describing normative relational interactions. Alternatively, an insecure base model will develop if attachment experiences are not consistent, coherent

and supportive. An insecure base model is characterised by corrupted roles and scripts describing problematic relational interactions. In a classroom, a child's insecure base model and scripts are likely to produce fractious relationships with teachers and/or peers. In such circumstances, the mentor's role can be seen as paralleling that of a parent in that they provide the opportunity for an adolescent who has not developed a secure base model and whose scripts manifest maladaptive behaviours to alter their base model and revise their relational scripts in light of new experiences (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994). Table 2.2 summarises the key elements of social-cognitive theory and attachment theory.

Table 2.2

Distinguishing elements of Social Cognitive Theory and Attachment Theory

Social-Cognitive Theory	Attachment Theory
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal - positive social behaviours • Means - Develop self-efficacy and relational constructive personal goals and expectations • Underwritten by social support network • network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal - positive social behaviours • Means - Develop constructive expectations and responses outcome • Underwritten by social support

Significant criticisms have been levelled at the empirical validity of attachment theory. Kagan (1996) insisted, contrary to attachment theory, the working models developed in infancy have only marginal influence on future behaviours. Field (1996) criticised Bowlby's (see above) sole focus upon the mother-child dyad from infancy to adolescence, suggesting that children develop a range of attachments, which are expressed in different ways. Harris (1998) went further, challenging Bowlby's assertion that the parent-child relationship is of over-riding significance, insisting instead that the development of an

individual's internal working models is significantly influenced by peers, particularly during adolescence.

Despite these challenges, the essential theoretical structure of attachment theory, including the central concepts of attachment styles and working models, have been validated by a growing body of research (Dallos & Comely-Ross, 2005). Steele et al. (2003) and McGoron (2012) have demonstrated that young children who have experienced some form of early-life trauma have been manifested developmental improvements and reduction in psychopathology if they obtain secure attachments. Zillberstein et al. (2017) posit that youth mentoring based on attachment-based relational strategies has the potential, over time, to modify mentees' working models by acting as "a type of secondary attachment relationship". This assumption seems borne out by a range of studies indicating that the qualities young people value in mentoring relationships coincide with those characteristic of secure attachments (Spencer et al., 2004; Ahrens et al., 2008; Munson et al., 2010; Hiles et al., 2013). Such thinking is foundational to models of mentoring, such as that presented by Rhodes (2005).

Rhodes' model of youth mentoring (Figure 2.1) identified the source of mentoring's capacity to successfully address mentees' developmental needs as being the mentor-mentee relationship. She recognised that successful mentor-mentee relationships were characterised by empathy, trust and mutuality. Rhodes suggested that these relational characteristics enable the mentoring relationship to yield positive outcomes in social-emotional, cognitive and identity domains. Rhodes' model also illustrated that the quality of these mentoring relationships can be moderated by a range of factors, including: the mentee's interpersonal history, social competence and developmental stage; the duration of the mentoring

relationship; program practices involved in establishing and supporting the mentoring relationship and its duration; and the youth’s family and surrounding community context (Rhodes, 2005).

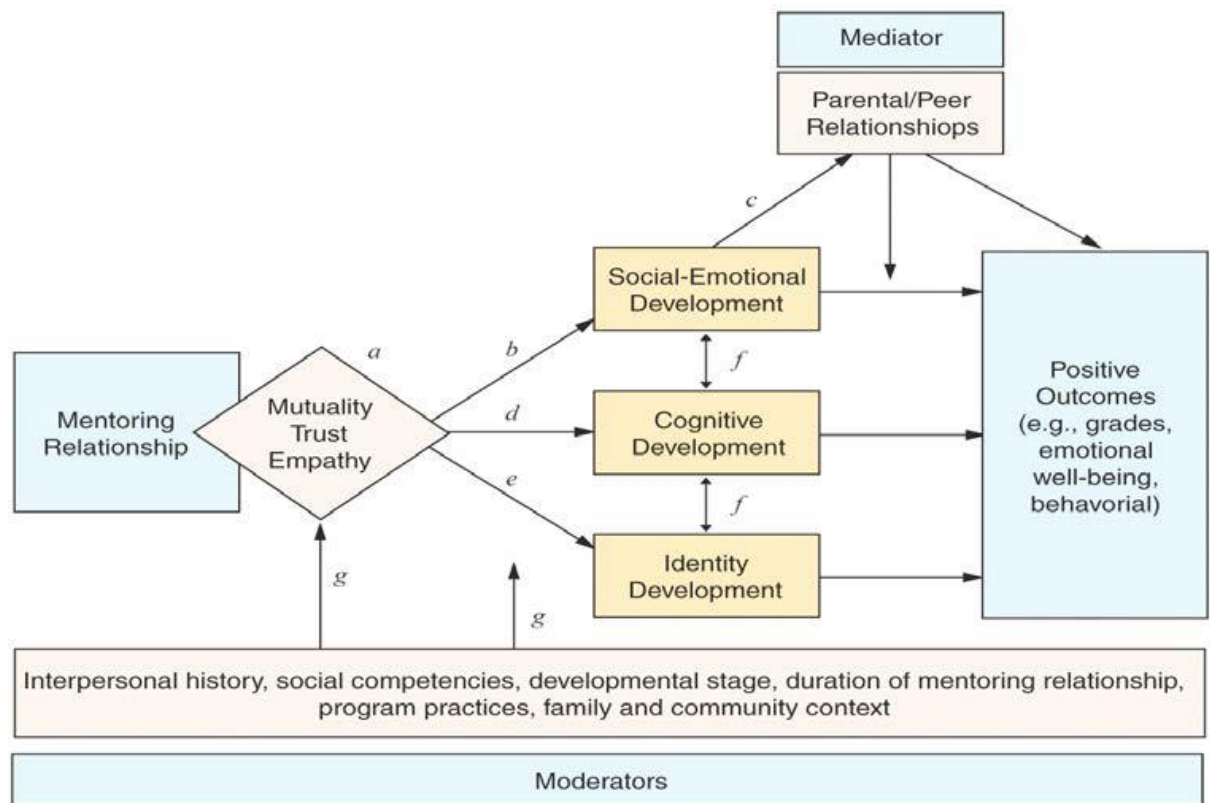


Figure 3.1 Model of Youth Mentoring

Figure 2.1. Rhodes’ model of youth mentoring. Note: Reprinted from “A model of youth mentoring”, by J.E. Rhodes, 2005, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. In *Handbook of youth mentoring*. Copyright (2005) by Sage Publications.

Effectiveness of Mentoring

SBM has been identified across a range of research as an effective mode of mentoring (Converse & Lignugaris-Kraft, 2009; Herrera et al., 2011; Kolar & McBride, 2011).

However, there is contention within the extant body of research as to whether there is sufficient evidence of the efficacy of SBM, relative to other mentoring formats and in

absolute terms. Of the five outcome domains presented by Dubois et al. (2002), studies have presented positive findings in the emotional, behavioural and educational domains (Converse & Lignugaris-Kraft, 2009; Grossman et al., 2002; Kolar & McBride, 2011; Portwood et al., 2005). However, other studies have presented findings that cast doubt on the capacity of SBM to effect significant emotional and behavioural change (Dubois et al., 2011).

Significant studies that have identified SBM as an effective intervention are summarised in Table 2.3. This summary incorporates an overview of the strength and major findings of each of the studies considered. Most of the studies presented were conducted in the United States where SBM programs have proliferated in recent times.

Table 2.3

Summary of studies relating to the effectiveness of school-based mentoring

Study	Methodology	Sample size (mentees)	Sample range	Outcome domain	Findings
Converse and Lignugaris-Kraft (2009)	Quantitative – pre/post control group design	32	1 site	Emotional	Significant improvements in self-perception
Grossman et al. (2002)	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	1138	1 site	Emotional	Significant improvements across a range of indicators, including self-worth, from relationships of over 12 months' duration.

Portwood et al. (2005)	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	170	5 sites	Educational	Significant improvements in school achievement
Herrera et al. (2011)	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	1139	10 sites	Educational	Improvements in perceptions of competence for learning.
Holt, Bry & Johnson, 2008	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	40	1 site	Educational	Improvements in school connectedness
Caldarella et al., 2009	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	16	1 site	Educational	Improvements in reading and writing skills
Converse & Lingnugaris-Kraft, 2009	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	16	1 site	Behavioural	Reduced disciplinary referrals
Kolar & McBride, 2011	Quantitative - pre/post control group design	160	1 Site (BBBS)	Behavioural	reduced disciplinary referrals
Karcher, 2008	Quantitative - one group pre/post test design	516	19 sites	Attitudinal	Improvements in self-esteem and connectedness to peers

The focus of each of the studies summarised in Table 2.3 has been to determine whether SBM is an effective intervention to address developmental needs of at-risk adolescent students. The studies provide evidence that SBM has been effective across the emotional, educational and behavioural outcome domains identified by Dubois et al. (2002). Moreover, its effectiveness has been demonstrated across a range of contexts, in that both

localised, small-scale studies and larger studies have reached broadly consistent and complementary conclusions. For instance, the studies by Converse and Lingnugaris-Kraft (2009) and Kolar & McBride (2011) both indicated that SBM was responsible for reduced disciplinary referrals. Likewise, the studies conducted by both Converse and Lingnugaris-Kraft (2009) and Grossman et al. (2002) indicated that SBM contributed significantly to mentees' sense of self.

Poor comparability within and between studies cited in Table 2.3 represents a significant limitation to consonance between studies. Comparability between studies has been significantly minimised by the fact that no two of the studies have engaged their respective participants in an SBM program of the same nature and in the same dosage. Within the study conducted by Herrera et al. (2011) comparability is also a limitation as there was a wide variation in the content and duration delivered by mentors. Comparability is further undermined by a lack of description of the mentoring interventions employed as the independent variable in most of the cited studies. For instance, whereas Caldarella et al. (2009) present a summary of how the manner in which mentors and mentees engaged, Portwood et al. (2005) name the Youth Friends program in their study but do not provide any detail about mentor-mentee interactions. Such detail is of critical importance to the question of causality between mentoring practices and mentee outcomes which has been the focus of the cited studies.

A further methodological limitation within some of the cited studies is the quality of the sources from which data for dependent variables are derived, such as surveys and school-generated data. Portwood et al. (2005) comment that surveys targeted at youth can be problematic as respondents “often express a lack of understanding or confusion over even “standardized” questions, and the psychometric properties of the measures routinely used in

mentoring research are less than satisfactory” (p. 144). In their own study, (Portwood et al., 2005), the survey employed contained a large number of items, likely to compromise the quality of student responses. Moreover, the questions used had reasonable, though not outstanding, reliability. In the study conducted by Converse and Lingnugaris (2009), the use of Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODR) as a dependent variable indicative of student engagement compromises the quality of the study’s findings. This is because conditions for referrals may be variable with fidelity of staff application of defined school behaviour standards and behaviour management processes.

Achieving sufficient sample size is a further limitation to studies of SBM programs. As Dubois et al. (2002) note, small sample sizes limit the power of analyses to detect statistically significant results. In instances when program effects are small, which is currently the case within the extant SBM literature, particularly large samples are required. Most of the studies cited in Table 2.3 had quite small sample groups for a qualitative study. Of particular concern are the studies by Caldarella et al. (2009), and Converse and Lingnugaris-Kraft (2009), both of which had sample sizes of 16.

It is notable that each of the studies summarised in Table 2.3 has employed a quantitative methodology. A search of the literature reveals little to no qualitative studies that address the overarching question of the effectiveness of SBM as an intervention. There have certainly been many qualitative studies that have described and evaluated various aspects of mentoring practice investigated aspects of SBM, but none that have considered the question of whether SBM is a valid undertaking. This suggests, perhaps, that more substantial qualitative studies may be required to introduce depth, texture, nuance and variety to the data that currently informs conclusions to the question of whether SBM is an effective intervention.

Some research into SBM programs has produced results which indicate their lack of effectiveness as an intervention. Rhodes (2008) points out that there are strong indications that SBM may not be as effective as community-based mentoring programs, such as BBBS, and that this is most likely due to the shorter sessions and significantly briefer, less intensive relationships inherent in the SBM format. Previous research by Grossman and Rhodes (2002) indicated quite strongly that the benefit to mentees accrued in positive mentoring relationship that lasted beyond 12 months. By contrast, SBM programs only engage mentors with mentees during school hours and only during school terms. The latter presents as a likely cause of disruption and discontinuity to relationships across the holiday breaks. Consequently, there can be little doubt that the effectiveness of SBM programs is constrained by the parameters within which many SBM programs currently operate.

With regard to the efficacy of SBM in absolute terms, the study most strongly critical was Dubois et al.'s (2011) comprehensive review of four meta-analyses conducted since 2002. They reported that the emotional and behavioural improvements attributable to SBM could only be considered relatively modest. However, other studies that have found SBM to be ineffective have had significant weaknesses in their designs. For example, the meta-analysis conducted by Wood & Mayo-Wilson (2012) reported that SBM's effect across a range of indicators was non-existent. However, the meta-analysis only considered six studies conducted between 1980 and 2011 and there was a wide variance in results reported by these studies. The meta-analysis conducted by Wheeler et al. (2010) reported statistically significant effects in only six of 19 outcome domains that were considered, but only three studies were considered. Collectively, the studies that have cast doubt on the effectiveness of SBM have been relatively few and of smaller range than those supportive of SBM.

Furthermore, while a range of studies have indicated that SBM has some potential to produce positive outcomes in mentees, several other studies have indicated potential negative impacts associated with mentees' participation in SBM programs. Perhaps the foremost concern is that mentor-mentee matches of less than 12 months' duration are likely to produce negligible improvements in mentees' academic and social outcomes (Jekielek et al., 2002) and may also have a negative impact upon mentees' sense of self-worth (Grossman et al., 2002; Grossman & Chan, 2012). Bernstein et al. (2009) report that up to half of the mentor-mentee matches in SBMs terminate prematurely. This represents a significant risk to the well-being of mentees as abrupt endings to relationships tends to leave mentees feeling confused (Spencer, 2009) or disappointed and responsible (Larose et al., 2005). Though little data is available regarding reasons for early terminations, poor quality mentor-mentee matches and inadequate mentor training have been identified as potentially significant causal factors (Rhodes & Dubois, 2008). This is perhaps indicative of a lack of adequate quality control being currently exercised in the planning and preparation of some SBM programs.

Despite a range of research finding some evidence in support of SBM, few research findings have been strongly supportive of its posited effectiveness. This lack of strong supporting evidence may be partly due to the ongoing uncertainty as to how to reliably measure their success (Nunez et al., 2013). As SBM programs have been widely heterogeneous in terms of function, design, resourcing and delivery (DuBois et al., 2011; Larose et al., 2009), comparability between programs has been problematic. Further, a range of variables operate within each outcome domain. For example, in considering academic outcomes, an individual mentee's learning behaviours are the product of their motivations and characteristics that are moderated by a complex array of personal, environmental and behavioural factors within which a multiplicity of variables are at play (DuBois et al., 2011;

Rhodes, 2005; Schwartz et al., 2011). Further significant moderating variables for SBM programs include the characteristics, motivations, personal qualities and experience of mentors (Darling et al., 2006; DuBois et al., 2002; Simoes & Alarcao, 2014); the dynamics and duration of each mentoring relationship (Grossman et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2011); and a lack of requisite focus upon developing quality processes and practices within programs (Dubois et al., 2011).

The variability of research outcomes is also likely to reflect difficulties with the design and reach of the research published to date, rather than with the actual potential of SBM as an effective intervention. The qualitative studies that have been conducted over the past decade have been relatively few and they have had quite small sample sizes (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). This, combined with the significant variability in how mentoring programs are conducted, makes comparability and generalisation very difficult. Despite the consequent ambivalence of initial conclusions, Rodriguez-Planas (2012) pointed out secondary analyses of SBM program outcomes data have demonstrated promise for their effectiveness. For instance, such secondary analyses have suggested variability in the effects of mentoring across different subgroups of youth (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken Herrera, 2011; Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor 2010; Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011). These examples include urban, male Latino adolescents (Jackson, Sealey-Ruiz, & Watson, 2014); Maori students (Noonan, Bullen & Farruggia, 2012); and students with particular behavioural disorders (Grossman, Schwartz & Rhodes, 2012). Such findings highlight that variability in mentoring outcomes may be accounted for by a wide and complex range of factors that need to be identified in order to account for variation in the effectiveness of SBM.

The importance of the mentor

Much of the extant research into SBM indicates that the most significant factor in determining the success or failure of mentoring to promote positive developmental outcomes has been the quality of the mentor. DuBois et al. (2002, 2011) suggested that a mentor's quality corresponds to their possession of a range of attributes which have been strongly correlated to significant outcomes across a range of studies (Allen & Eby, 2011; Grossman and Rhodes 2012; Kenchewa et al., 2014; Lakind, Eddy & Zell 2014; Strapp et al., 2014). These attributes are: a) capacity to commit to mentoring relationships; b) personal characteristics; c) self-efficacy; and d) professional status.

Capacity to commit.

The capacity of a mentor to commit over the long-term is a highly influential to the achievement of successful outcomes (DuBois & Rhodes 2006; Grossman & Johnson, 1999). Grossman and Rhodes (2002) found that positive outcomes became progressively stronger as relationships persisted for longer periods of time. Subsequent studies by Karcher (2005) and Spencer (2006) supported these findings, suggesting that relationships that lasted one year or longer yielded the most significant effects, whereas relationships that lasted less than three months were associated with negative outcomes, even after controlling for potential confounding influences such as baseline characteristics of youth. Provision of coherent structural support, including sufficient mentor training and appropriate emotional support for mentors (Karcher, 2005, 2008; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Spencer, 2007), clearly manifested in the research as being essential to the improvement of mentor commitment and, hence, the longevity of SBM relationships (Herrera et al., 2013; Karcher, 2008).

Personal characteristics.

The personal characteristics of mentors are presented as important to a mentoring program's effectiveness in an array of studies. Spencer (2006) identified the characteristics of authenticity, empathy and companionship as being markers of enduring and successful mentoring relationships in a qualitative study of 24 mentor-mentee relationships. Mentees' perceptions of the mentor as authentic, empathic and as companions considerably increased their likelihood of gaining psychological benefit from mentoring, according to a regression analysis conducted by Renick, Thomson and Zand (2010). Their study investigated data gathered for a quasi-experimental, multi-site study involving 24 'at-risk' youth. Authenticity and empathy particularly have been identified as manifestations of a mentor's level of attunement, or their ability to respond with intentionality to their mentee's needs (Allen et al., 2003). Further, numerous studies (Allen & Eby, 2011; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Kanchewa et al., 2014; Lakind, Eddy & Zell, 2014) have cited the characteristics of mentors as a significant determining factor in the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

Mentors' motives for engaging in mentoring have also been identified as being significant to the promotion of positive outcomes through mentoring (Keller, 2005; Spencer, 2006). Mentors have reported a range of different motives for their involvement in mentoring others, including the expression of values; to improve their psychological development; to gain career-related experience; to improve their social interaction; or to reduce negative feelings such as guilt (Stuckas, Clary & Snyder, 2008). However, of these motivations, those that can be considered altruistic have been associated with higher quality outcomes from mentoring relationships (Philip & Hendry, 2000).

Self-efficacy.

A mentor's self-efficacy has been strongly associated with positive outcomes. Strapp, et al. (2014), in their longitudinal study of 41 mentors, found that mentors with higher self-efficacy tended to meet more frequently and regularly with their mentees and demonstrated higher degrees of persistence. Beyond their initial possession of significant levels of self-efficacy (Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly & Povinelli, 2002), mentor self-efficacy has been demonstrated to have improved according to their perceptions of having received quality training and ongoing, high-quality support (Lakind, Eddy & Zell, 2014; Strapp et al., 2014).

Professional status.

The professional status of mentors has been identified as an overarching factor that draws together the key elements of relational capacity, genuine intention and self-efficacy. The term *professional mentor* has been used by Lakind, Eddy and Zell (2014) to identify individuals who are formally employed and remunerated for undertaking the role and functions of a mentor. They have argued that the weight of empirical evidence suggests that professional mentors are most effective. It has been reported that their *professional* status has been instrumental in enabling them to a) establish high levels of self-efficacy, b) prioritise mentoring commitments, and c) expend considerable effort performing difficult or unpleasant tasks. In addition, Jones and Rose (2007) reported that the expertise and long-term commitment engendered by mentors' professional status facilitated the development of deep and long-lasting relationships with mentees. Monetary compensation was not perceived to detract from their altruistic motivations, but rather enabled them to devote themselves fulltime to their altruistic pursuits and to do so as experts (Lakind, Eddy & Zell, 2014). Simoes and Alarcao (2013) posited that qualified and experienced teachers are likely to make

highly effective SBM mentors as they are highly likely to present with the ideal combination of predispositions and professional expertise.

Contribution to the Literature

While recent research has begun to isolate, with greater specificity and reliability, the constituent elements of SBM programs and their relationship to positive changes in emotional and academic outcomes, three significant gaps currently exist in the literature. First, there has been little to no research yet conducted into SBM in Australian school contexts. Second, very little research has yet been conducted into the work and effectiveness of professional mentors. Third, the current body of research is largely composed of quantitative studies. Consequently, there is a current need for qualitative studies to produce data complementary to that produced by quantitative studies. Whereas quantitative studies have provided measures of the effectiveness of SBM programs and a range of their features, qualitative studies would contribute to further developing understandings of how SBM programs and the work of their mentors are conceived and conducted.

While the impact of mentoring upon the development of mentees has been the subject of numerous studies, there has yet been very little research into how mentors' conceptualisations of their role are constituted and constructed. Given the posited causal relationship between how mentors undertake the role and the quality of outcomes for mentees, it is important to develop a more detailed and accurate picture of how mentors in SBM programs construct their understandings of the role. Such knowledge is important for its potential to enable the design and delivery of more precisely- and reliably-targeted training and supervision protocols. Therefore, the aim of this study was to develop a clearer and more

detailed insight into the lived experience of mentors, and how, within this experience, the role of professional mentor is shaped and conducted.

The methodology to be employed in this study makes a unique contribution to the extant literature. Studies have generally sought to either measure the effect of mentoring interventions in terms of outcomes or to isolate variables responsible for high yields in particular outcome domains (Dubois et al., 2011). The current study is unique in that it is a qualitative study that seeks to richly describe the lived experience of professional mentors rather than measure the outcomes of their work or isolate causation for the outcomes. The nature of the qualitative methodology employed in this study has enabled the researcher to identify possible structural and operational inhibitors to the effectiveness of SBM as an intervention. As such, it builds on the research that has identified SBM as having limited effectiveness by identifying potential reasons for this limited effectiveness (Dubois et al, 2011; Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012). Moreover, the current study extends the work of Rhodes (2008) and Grossman et al. (2012) factors which limit the effectiveness of SBM programs as they are currently delivered.

Summary

This chapter has described the theoretical foundations of mentoring and examined the extent to which research has validated SBM as an effective intervention to address developmental needs of at risk students. This review has shown that while the extant literature has been ambivalent in its conclusions about the effectiveness of SBM, this may be a function of the complexity of the SBM context and the limitations of the research hitherto undertaken. Studies validating the effectiveness of SBM have indicated that the quality of the mentor is a highly important determining variable. This discussion in this chapter has shown that a

mentor's quality has been defined in terms of their personal characteristics, self-efficacy and professional status. Informed by this literature, the current research describes the lived experience of professional mentors, and how the role of professional mentor was shaped and conducted within this lived experience. The following chapter describes the methodology used to achieve pursue the research goals.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter presents the methodology employed to address this study's research questions. It explains the selection of hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology appropriate to the intent of the research and the context in which it was conducted. It goes on to describe the data collection protocols that were used and to explain their appropriateness in terms of hermeneutic phenomenology and the research context. Finally, it describes and explains the hermeneutic data analysis process employed in this research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current research was to describe the lived experience of professional mentors and, accordingly, to understand how the practice of professional mentorship is shaped. Consequently, this study had two complementary foci with regard to professional mentors' engagement with their mentees. The first was the description of how professional mentors worked to fulfil their professional objectives. The second was the interpretation of these lived experiences in order to develop insights into how the professional mentors constructed their understandings of the role.

Methodology Summary

The methodology employed in this qualitative research was hermeneutic phenomenology. This is an interpretive approach that seeks to describe and interpret how human beings experience particular aspects of the world (phenomena), and construct meaning around them (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2005; van Manen, 1990). Gill and Liamputtong (2009) asserted that in qualitative research, "it is understood that, in order to understand people's behaviour, we must attempt to understand the meanings and interpretations that people give to their behaviour" (p. 311). Similarly, as Lincoln and Guba (2002) explained, phenomenology holds

that in order to understand behaviour, it is vital to investigate how meaning is generated, associated with other meanings, incorporated with values and beliefs and articulated into purposeful action.

The hermeneutic strand of phenomenology, initiated by Heidegger, proposes that “human beings cannot exist except within the framework of an encompassing world” (Mackey, 2004, p. 181). As such, Heideggerian researchers maintain that an individual’s preconceptions and understandings are embodied in their experiences and interpretations of a phenomenon, and that any understanding of a phenomenon cannot be isolated from this embodiment (Lowe & Prowse, 2001). Consequently, neither researcher nor participant can entirely disengage from their subjective experience of the world to arrive at objective position in relation to a phenomenon. Rather, what a researcher is attempting through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to research is to present a clear and rich interpretive description of the phenomenon as it has been experienced by participants (Smythe et al., 2008). The researcher seeks to describe the meanings individuals ascribe to their situated lived experiences and interpret how these meanings influence the choices they make (Flood, 2010). Within this approach, it is understood that the researcher’s own beliefs, experiences and preconceptions will inform the interpretative process and, therefore, must be foregrounded (Smythe et al., 2008). The epistemological foundations of hermeneutic phenomenology, therefore, made it a particularly appropriate methodology to employ in the current research context.

Hermeneutic phenomenology was well-suited to the intent of the current research. It allowed the researcher to describe and interpret professional mentorship in order to develop a richly-detailed picture of how the phenomenon is experienced in the world, rather than to abstract and explain the phenomenon in terms a priori theory. Adopting a hermeneutic

phenomenological approach meant that the researcher was not constrained by theoretical parameters and was, thus, more able to focus on developing a clear and comprehensive picture of how professional mentors perform their role. Employing hermeneutic phenomenology also allowed voice to be given to the professional mentors' interpretations of their respective lived experiences, rather than losing the richness of these experiences to the reduction and abstraction inherent in more positivistic research methodologies (van Manen, 1997). It also allowed voice to be given to the professional mentors' interpretations of their respective lived experiences, rather than losing the richness of these experiences to the reduction and abstraction inherent in more positivistic research methodologies.

The appropriateness of hermeneutic phenomenology to the current research context was compounded by the fact that the researcher was working in a role very similar to that of professional mentor. In his role as Success Coach, in a state high school, the researcher's function is to mentor young adolescents who are having difficulty engaging in formal schooling. In this regard, his work is similar in intent, functions and execution to that of the participants. To this end, the researcher could be regarded as an 'insider' within the participants' line of work. Within hermeneutic phenomenology, for a researcher to develop an understanding of a phenomenon requires their understanding of the multi-dimensional context in which it is situated (Flood, 2010). Therefore, it is preferable for a researcher who is investigating a phenomenon to be immersed in the lived experience which they are studying. Examining their own lived experience of the phenomenon contributes to developing the researcher's insight into the phenomenon and, consequently, contributes further depth to the research enquiry (Hammersley, 2000; van Manen, 1990). At the commencement of the current study, the researcher was informed by his own particular set of experiences of the phenomenon and held a subjective position with regard to it.

Hermeneutic phenomenology also recognises the collegial relationship which existed between the researcher and the other professional mentors as an asset to inquiry. An important aspect of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is that researcher and participants co-construct interpretations of the phenomenon (Gadamer, 1982; van Manen, 1990). This aspect of hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry recommended that through dialogue, researcher and participants should collaborate on identifying the constructs which constituted the lived experience of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). The purpose of such collaboration was to achieve what Gadamer (1976) called the *fusion of horizons*, the horizon being the fluid background of presuppositions, ideas and experiences to individuals' interactions with the world. Reflective and interpretive dialogue is approached as a dialectical undertaking in which the horizons of researcher and participant 'merge' to produce a more precise, clearer and richer picture of the phenomenon as it has actually been experienced (Lavery, 2003) .

The dialogues between the researcher and participants produce phenomenological texts, which are the focus of the hermeneutic process of interpretation and at the heart of hermeneutic phenomenological methodology (Smythe et al., 2008). The object of the interpretive process is to analyse the language employed by participants in discussing their lived experiences in order to develop a descriptive interpretation of their individual lived experiences of the phenomenon (Flood, 2010). In the current research, the phenomenological texts on which the researcher conducted hermeneutic readings included work logs, interview transcripts and participant narratives. In the interpretive reading of each phenomenological text, the researcher entered into a *hermeneutic circle*, moving between discrete parts of the text and the whole of the text, reading sensitively, listening for gaps or silences, reading between the lines and delving beneath the surface of a text (Sloane & Bowe, 2011). The

objective of the researcher's engagement in the hermeneutic circle was to identify constructs that constitute the lived experience of professional mentorship.

Participants

This study included two participants who were recruited through a purposive sampling method. Two criteria were applied in the selection of the participants:

- a) Duration practising as a professional mentor. This criterion sought to identify individuals who had been engaged in a paid position to provide mentoring services to adolescents for a significant period of time. The primary purpose of the sampling was to identify professional mentors who "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched" (Kruger, 1988, p. 150). Preferably, these were to be professional mentors who had been in the role for at least 12 months. This ensured that each participant had a range and depth of experience from which to draw when discussing their work.
- b) Willingness and ability to talk freely and at length with the researcher about their work. As phenomenological interviewing was the primary means of data collection, it was advantageous for the prospective participants to have a professional relationship with the researcher. Selecting participants with whom the researcher was already on collegial terms ensured that participants entered into the interviews feeling trust and equanimity towards the researcher. Rather than compromising the data with the researcher's subjectivity, as discussed above, this is understood as an essential element in ensuring the conduct of a successful phenomenological interview (Kvale, 1996).

The sampling process was initially problematic as permission was not granted from the employing body to contact the intended pool of participants for this study. Subsequently, an alternative pool of prospective participants was identified and permission for their participation in the study was subsequently granted from their employer and the participants.

The sampling process was then conducted in three stages:

Stage 1. An email was sent to professional mentors with at least 12 months' experience as a mentor, inviting them to participate in the research project. Three professional mentors responded affirmatively to the invitation.

Stage 2. The three professional mentors were each invited to write a brief account of their experience of the professional mentor role. The purpose of this was to gather some indication of which prospective participants were likely to be most reflective and communicative, and therefore, the richest sources of data. Only two of the professional mentors submitted these accounts.

Stage 3. The two remaining professional mentors were chosen as a selective sample. This was far fewer participants than the six participants that the researcher had intended. Nevertheless, proceeding into the research with only two participants remained a legitimate and well-informed decision. In terms of informed practice, Boyd (2001) considered between two and 10 participants as sufficient to reach data saturation when employing phenomenological interviewing. In practical terms, as the processes of phenomenological interviewing and analysis are both very time-consuming, having only two participants meant that the limited time within which the researcher had to complete the research dissertation was not overburdened. To do otherwise would have risked compromising the quality of the data and the subsequent interpretive work.

Data Collection

Four data collection methods were used in this study and the process of data collection proceeded through five distinct stages. Data collection methods employed were: protocol writing, participant diaries, phenomenological interviews, and journaling. Each data collection method contributed a distinct layer to the development of phenomenological descriptions of professional mentorship. Each of the methods, except for journaling, corresponded particularly to one of the five stages of data collection, so that the methods were employed progressively throughout the data collection process. This progressive development of the data allowed the researcher to focus on one data collection method at a time, thereby improving the prospective quality of the collected data.

Data collection methods

Qualitative data collection methods characteristic of hermeneutic phenomenological research were employed in the current study. The data collection methods employed were: protocol writing; participant diaries; phenomenological interviews; and journaling.

Protocol writing.

The researcher's articulation of his experience working with at-risk students served as a starting point for data collection. Prior to engaging with the participants, the researcher conducted protocol writing, in which he described his experience of working as a professional mentor. As suggested by van Manen (1990), the protocol described the researcher's personal experience in experiential terms and focused on particular situations or events. The purpose of writing the protocol was to orientate the researcher more precisely towards the research questions and the nature of phenomenological enquiry. Further, it primed the researcher's

reflexivity by requiring explicit identification of assumptions and preconceptions which he brought to his consideration of the research question.

Participant diaries.

Prior to interviews being conducted, both participants completed a participant diary (Appendix A) over five consecutive working days. The purpose of the diary was to gather data on activities engaged in during each day and the professional mentors' reflections about each of these activities. Each entry was formatted to ensure ease of completion for participants, thus making it more likely that entries would yield quality data in terms of detail and completeness. As Gill and Liamputtong (2014) suggested, participant diaries are valuable for helping to build rich contextual understandings of each participants' lived experience. Furthermore, this data collection method provided insights into cues and prompts that could be effectively employed during the interviews.

Phenomenological interviews.

Phenomenological interviews were employed as the principal means of gathering data in this study. In the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition, interviewing is less a formal, structured process than it "is literally an interview, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996, pp. 1-2). Such relative informality derives from the understanding that the method must not overwhelm the intent of enquiry as embodied in the research question. Consequently, within the phenomenological tradition, it is important for an interviewer to maintain an uncompromising connection to the research purpose and to respond with sensitivity and precision to an interviewee's cues within the interview context (van Manen, 1990). As such, the interviews conducted for the current study were somewhat informal and discursive in nature.

The intent and structure of the interview questions were critical considerations prior to the phenomenological interviews being conducted. The questions were designed to access participants' experiences of the phenomenon in as much detail as possible, rather than accessing their thoughts about the phenomenon (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). Consistent with phenomenological methodology, the researcher's intent was for participants to do almost all of the talking. Consequently, the questions asked by the researcher were intended to hone in on particular aspects of the professional mentors' lived experiences while still allowing flexibility to explore the broader experiential context (Gallagher & Francesconi, 2012). The diagram below (Figure 3.1) illustrates the range of question types used by the researcher during the interviews:

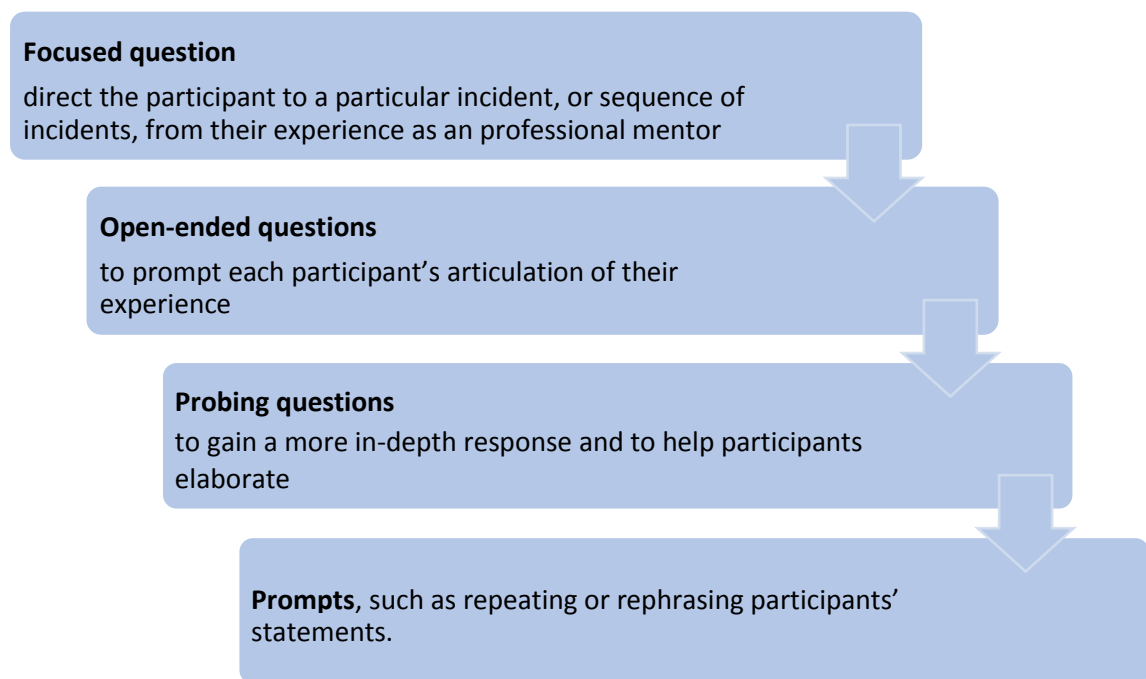


Figure 3.1. Interview question types.

The context in which phenomenological interviews are conducted may have significant bearing upon the quality of data that the interviews yield (Walker, 2011). Therefore, the selection of spaces conducive to constructive dialogue was a critical

consideration in preparing to conduct each of the interviews. In particular, these spaces needed to be quiet, free of interruptions and, in every sense, comfortable for participants. Walker (2011) also cautioned for the selection of interview spaces in which privacy is preserved and the means of recording are unobtrusive to the point of invisibility. Consequently, the interviews were conducted at a variety of closed and quiet rooms at locations chosen by the participants, with a mobile phone used as a recording device. Recordings were later transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy before recordings were erased.

Journal writing.

Throughout the process of data collection, the researcher maintained a journal. This reflexive method was intended as a repository for memos recording what the researcher saw and heard throughout the data collection stage, as well as a record of insights gained and the unfolding patterns of the work (van Manen, 1990). Groenewald (2004) cautioned that the researcher should “maintain a balance between descriptive and reflective notes” (Groenewald, 2004, pp. 13-14). The key purpose of the journal was to ensure the researcher maintained a thoughtful and reflexive engagement with the unfolding data.

Data collection process

The data collection process was informed by the work of Gadamer, a key figure in the development of Heidegger’s hermeneutic phenomenology (Spence, 2017). Consistent with this tradition, the data collection process sought to gradually refine insights into the phenomenon through careful questioning and reflection. The process proceeded through five stages, as summarised in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1

Stages of the data collection process

Stage 1	Conducted naïve readings of the interview transcripts and diaries – to become immersed in the material and begin to grasp meanings
Stage 2	Conducted structural analysis through reflective readings of the texts, in order to identify constructs. These were reflected on in relation to the initial naïve understanding.
Stage 3	Constructed ‘narratives’, or phenomenological descriptions, for each participant. Each narrative was based on analysis in which identified constructs were summarised and reflected on in relation to the research question and the context of the study. Each text was then re-read with reference to the naïve associations and relevant literature to revise, widen and deepen the understanding of the text.
Stage 4	Engaged in hermeneutic conversations with each of the study participants, focused initially on the narratives, with the aim of refining and expanding understandings of identified constructs.
Stage 5	Rewrote narratives to reflect refined understandings of each text

Rigour and Trustworthiness

Rigour and trustworthiness were established through the incorporation of methods traditionally used in interpretivist modes of research: triangulation, reflexivity, and member checks (Ezzy, 2001). Reflexivity was especially important to the establishment of rigour in this hermeneutic phenomenological research study. It is the method by which researchers are conscious of and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and subjective positions may impact on the data produced in a study (Langdrige, 2007). Lowes and Prowse (2001) asserted that phenomenological researchers “must acknowledge and document their preconceptions and the possible effects of these preconceptions” on the research process (p. 476). Doing so contributes “significantly to the substantive validation of the work as the necessary precondition of all further understanding” (Angen, 2000, p. 390). Reflexivity was achieved in this study through the researcher’s maintenance of a research journal.

Triangulation is understood as the use of multiple sources of data to produce rich, robust and comprehensive accounts of a phenomenon (Golafshani, 2003). In this study, triangulation was achieved by using a range of data collection methods, including a researcher protocol, semi-structured interviews and participant diaries. Member checking is understood as a method by which research participants are given the opportunity to verify that the researcher's interpretations are authentic and representative, thus establishing the trustworthiness of the interpretations (Angen, 2000). A form of this method, incorporating the central concepts of co-constitutionality and the fusion of horizons, is commonly employed in hermeneutic phenomenological research. In the current research, the researcher and each participant engaged in conversations to verify the accuracy of the researcher's descriptions of their lived experiences of the phenomenon.

Analysis

Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis seeks to rigorously and richly identify and describe constructs, or "structures of experience", which constitute the lived experience of a phenomenon (Finlay, 2009, p. 79). Analysis is conducted through the researcher's reflective thinking within a hermeneutic circle. This is an analytical process by which the researcher develops an understanding of the construct by reading the research texts (interview transcripts, participant diaries, etc.), examining the individual parts of the text and one's understanding of each individual part by reference to the whole. The process of the hermeneutic circle is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

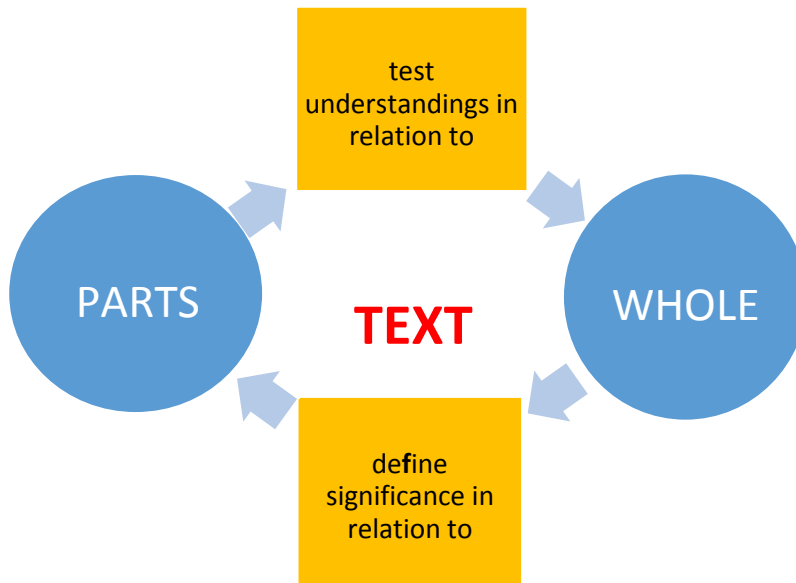


Figure 3.2. The hermeneutic circle.

In the current study, the researcher undertook hermeneutic analysis of the interview transcripts and the narratives. The gradual unfolding of the researcher’s insights through iterative reading and reflection upon the data within these texts was documented by the researcher as a research journal. The intent of this analytical process was to “transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence – in such a way that the effect of the text is at once a reflexive re-living and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful” (van Manen, 1997, p. 36). As Swanson-Kauffman and Schonwald (1988) suggested, such texts should enable those who have experienced the phenomenon to analyse their own reality through the identified and described constructs.

Throughout the analysis stage, the researcher sought to identify the presence of his own bias by cross-checking his interpretations, as articulated in the research journal, with the interview transcripts. Consequently, the researcher was able to maintain fidelity to the mentors’ constructs and ground interpretations in the data. Throughout, the researcher remained open to questions that emerged from analysis of the data, allowing the texts to

speak. A gradual emergence of insight was produced through this ongoing dialogue between the researcher and the research texts (Bontekoe, 1996).

A characteristic feature of the hermeneutic phenomenological approach to data analysis is that the interpretive field is widened to include study participants in the hermeneutic circle (Wilson, 2014). In the current study, this took the form of conversations between the researcher and each participant about their respective narratives. In these conversations, the researcher and participants collaborated “to interpret the significance of the preliminary [constructs] in light of the original phenomenological question” (Wilson, 2014, p. 99). These conversations enabled the participants to co-construct a refined interpretation of their respective lived experiences of professional mentorship with the researcher.

Ethics

The current research was conducted in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. As such, due consideration was given to informed consent, confidentiality and contingencies regarding the impact of participation in the research upon participants’ professional engagement. Consent to conduct the proposed research was sought, in the first instance from Griffith University and the management of the SBM body which employed the professional mentors participating in this study.

Both participants entered the research voluntarily with informed consent. Each participant was provided with an informed consent agreement form, which addressed the following dimensions of participation: the voluntary nature of participation and their freedom to discontinue at any time; the purpose of the research project; the procedures to be employed; the risks and benefits of the research; and the procedures used to protect confidentiality (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012). The informed consent agreement form was

explained to each participant prior to each of their interviews. Bailey (1996) counsels that presenting participants with terms which are both honest and confidential will reduce suspicion and promote sincerity in the interactions between participants and researcher. Appendix B contains the informed consent form as it was provided to the participants.

It was highly likely that, in the course of the interviews, and the subsequent conversations, participants may have disclosed information of a sensitive nature about themselves and their students. It was vital, therefore, that all participants were de-identified. This considered not just their names but also any descriptors which may be used to identify the schools in which the professional mentors worked. The interview recordings, the interview transcripts and the researcher's journal were stored digitally in a secure location and recordings were erased following preparation of transcriptions

Summary

The intent of the current research was to develop insights into the constructs that constitute the lived experience of professional mentorship. A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was employed. A range of qualitative data collection methods, including protocol writing, semi-structured interviews, participant diaries and journaling, were used to gather data from three professional mentors, including the researcher. These data were used to develop phenomenological descriptions, or narratives, of the lived experience of professional mentorship. Hermeneutic analysis of the data and narratives uncovered phenomenological constructs that constituted the professional mentors' lived experiences of their role. This analysis enabled the researcher to produce descriptive interpretations of the phenomenological constructs that influenced the professional mentors' conceptualisation and operationalisation of their role. The following chapter presents a detailed account of the data

analysis process through which phenomenological constructs of professional mentorship were identified.

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

This chapter describes the hermeneutic phenomenological process of data analysis employed by the researcher in the current study. In its hermeneutic phenomenological sense, data analysis is the rich description and interpretation of participants' lived experiences of a phenomenon. In the current study, the phenomenological component of this analysis sought to develop "thick descriptions" (van Manen, 1997) of constructs that constituted the professional mentors' lived experience of their role. In the hermeneutic component of data analysis phase, the researcher sought to understand the professional mentors' experiences and make their meaning comprehensible in terms of the phenomenological constructs (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). Through this process, the researcher elicited an account of constructs that constituted the professional mentors' lived experience of professional mentorship. In its description of these constructs, the chapter is a response to the primary research question:

What are the constructs that constitute the lived experience of professional mentorship?

This chapter describes the pursuit of this question through four successive phases of data analysis. The chapter also presents the findings derived from each phase of analysis and the gradual delineation of the phenomenological constructs.

Phases of Data Analysis

The focus of the data analysis was the various phenomenological texts. The analysis of these texts proceeded through four phases of analysis in an iterative spiral, moving towards meaningful identification and interpretation of phenomenological constructs of professional mentorship. The four phases of data analysis are described in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Description of the phases of data analysis

Phase	Description
1	The researcher oriented to the data and elicited mentors' beliefs and values (first order constructs) from work logs and initial interviews, articulating them in respective narratives for both mentors.
2	First order constructs were layered with supplementary data from follow-up interviews and with the researcher's own understandings and interpretations (second order constructs). From this, the researcher produced an initial interpretive text which sought to articulate the consistencies between both participant's beliefs and values in greater depth and more refined detail.
3	Hermeneutic inquiry was conducted through iterative readings and reflection on the interview transcripts in relation to the interpretive text produced in Phase two. This process helped to identify meanings that the mentors had not explicitly articulated due to the tacit nature of their beliefs and values
4	Constructs were developed from the phenomenological texts produced in Phases one to three of the analytical process. These were further elaborated and their relationship clarified by reading and re-reading the accumulated data. This stage involved continuously moving backwards and forwards between the literature, the research texts and the earlier analysis, moving from parts to whole, in a hermeneutic circle.

Phase 1

The researcher read Zac and Holly's work logs to develop more detailed understandings of the activities that both undertook as professional mentors. The work logs revealed that both professional mentors were motivated to achieve positive outcomes for mentees, and that they were highly organised and methodical in their approaches to this work. Beyond engaging with mentees and managing the work of volunteer mentors in mentoring sessions, the work logs demonstrated that a large proportion of Zac and Holly's time was dedicated to planning and evaluating the work conducted during the mentoring sessions.

The researcher’s interpretation of the work logs was that Zac and Holly valued having control over the mentoring sessions in order to achieve defined and targeted outcomes. This raised questions about the extent to which Zac and Holly’s prioritisation of control and the demonstrable achievement of outcomes influenced how they undertook their role. In his initial interview, Zac explained that the mentoring program’s mandated outcomes were articulated in the Outcomes Framework (OF). The OF (Appendix 4) seemed, in both professional mentors’ interviews, to be the touchstone for their planning and the source of criteria used to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring program. Zac and Holly’s respective experiences were synthesised into separate narratives (Appendix 2). In subsequent hermeneutic readings of these texts, the researcher identified phenomenological constructs, which are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Mentors’ beliefs and values identified in phase 1 analysis

Emerging constructs
Being a successful mentor necessitates certain personal characteristics due to the challenging nature of the job.
Mentors are role models of social and emotional maturity.
To be a mentor is to serve a young person’s need to grow into social and emotional maturity.
Mentor-mentee relationships are best developed within a structured environment order.

The construct that manifested most prominently within the narratives was that youth mentoring is challenging work. The challenges were related almost entirely to the development and maintenance of positive relationships with mentees. Zac and Holly talked

about the personal characteristics they believed were required to meet challenges and engage successfully in mentoring. Resilience, authenticity and commitment were presented as the characteristics of foremost importance.

Despite the challenges that mentoring presented them, Zac and Holly had committed themselves to the work because they had an abiding interest in helping to improve the lives of young people. Zac recounted that he initially regarded becoming a mentor as a stepping stone towards a career in Psychology, but he found that once he started mentoring,

... I really did enjoy it. I don't know. I guess just maybe I felt like I was helping them [the mentees].

In Holly's case, she explained

I mean that's why I started Psychology because I had that natural empathic side to me where I wanted to assist other people. Yeah I guess create some sort of change in people's lives.

The initial interviews revealed that the *change* to which Holly referred was conceptualised by both mentors in terms of social and emotional development. Zac explained:

So, the overall outcomes of the program are around developing the emotional and social capabilities of a young person. So, emotional would include self-esteem, grit and determination, empathy and autonomy and control. The social stuff is around teamwork, communication and leadership skills. We make that explicit to the mentors at the very start of the year. We also tell the young people as well, this is what - this is why you're in the program. We're going to help you develop these skills and capabilities.

Holly conceptualised these capabilities as enabling mentees to achieve a degree of maturity and capacity to adopt more adult roles and responsibilities:

It [the mentoring environment] is kind of set up as it is a mature environment. You know you have a relationship one-on-one with someone. You have relationships within a group that kind of in some ways parallels a lot of workplace sort of interaction. You know you work within a team supporting and encouraging each other and then you'll have a one-on-one relationship with the manager or what not. But in the same way I guess it can transfer to other contexts - family or friendship groups or community.

The work of addressing mentees' social-emotional development occurred during weekly mentoring sessions. A mentor's roles in these sessions were explained as both a rolemodel for social-emotional maturity, and as a purposeful facilitator of social-emotional skills development. The former was presented in the interviews as an incidental dividend of the mentors' own social-emotional maturity. The latter was seen as a result of the careful planning, preparation and delivery of mentoring sessions. Zac explained that, as a professional mentor, he directed the volunteer mentors before each session,

...this is what the session's about. This is what we're addressing. It's about autonomy and control, for example. Here are the key talking points to follow with the young person. This is why we're doing this activity et cetera. So, that they understand that the session's about those outcomes...

The mentoring sessions were organised around an outcome or set of outcomes from the OF and broken into three stages each with a different purpose. The stages were: (i) group activities; (ii) meal preparation and eating; and (iii) one-on-one time for mentors and

mentees. In the group activity stage, mentors and mentees engaged in activities and subsequent discussion which were themed around the identified outcomes for the session. The meal stage provided further social engagement between the mentors and mentees and an opportunity for mentor role modelling. The final stage provided an opportunity for individual mentors and their mentees to engage in less structured interaction. These interactions were usually conducted around informal activities such as painting, basketball, guitar lessons or story writing. The choice of activity was negotiated between each mentor and mentee. Zac and Holly believed that the three stages provided a reliable structure for achieving the session's identified goals. Holly explained that such structure was necessary as a defence against *ambiguity*, and without structure you can lose direction and when it's a year-long program you can lose sight of the - you know all the outcomes... you just don't feel like you're achieving anything. Then you sort of - that's where you start to disengage as a mentor I guess.

The importance Zac and Holly attributed to structure seemed to create a significant tension between operational and relational elements of mentor-mentee interactions. The researcher's informed pre-supposition was of genuine, mutual human connection between mentor and mentee being the central feature of mentoring and pivotal to its positive effects. However, in their initial interviews, neither Zac nor Holly explicitly identified this as the main priority for mentoring sessions. Zac indicated that the development of mentor-mentee relationships was a goal, but that the establishment and development of these relationships were only likely to be successful in a highly structured setting. Therefore, greater importance seemed to be placed on developing an appropriately structured setting for mentor-mentee interactions. Zac said that, once volunteer mentors and mentees were matched, though they had a level of autonomy in the one-on-one time, they never had complete ownership of the

relationship. He explained that what happens during the on-on-one time really depends on the young person and the mentor, and also the time of the program. So usually if it's at the start of the year, once they've been matched, we'll have some activities and some discussion topics for them to follow. But if it's halfway through the year, or the back end of the year when that relationship has been established for some time, the mentor and the young person, they know what to do...but again, it never works like that, where they're completely autonomous.

In their initial interviews, both Zac and Holly expressed the opinion that mentoring relationships have the potential to yield positive social-emotional outcomes for mentees. However, by the end of the first phase of analysis, the researcher was left with the impression that considerably more of their practical effort was directed towards developing productive group dynamics and delivering targeted activities than in promoting significant relational bonds between individual mentors and mentees. The researcher identified this tension as an important area for further discussion during the follow-up conversations in Phase 2.

Phase 2

The follow-up conversations were conducted approximately one month after the initial interviews. They provided the opportunity for the researcher to further enquire into the apparent tension that Zac and Holly experienced between creating a well-structured environment and supporting the development of substantive mentor-mentee relationships. In the follow-up conversations, Zac and Holly both intimated that the discourse of the interviews had led them to question their established assumptions about mentoring. Holly expressed this at the conclusion of the follow-up conversation. When asked to add anything

else about what makes a successful mentor she stated, “I feel like I've gone so far deep down the rabbit hole I don't know what's good anymore”

Similarly, Zac said of the initial interview, that “...after reflecting, [I realised] we dug deep last time. A lot of the stuff I'd never thought about.” The follow-up conversations revealed that, in the interval between interviews, the mentors’ attitudes towards the opposing poles of this tension had changed considerably.

The reflective dialogue engendered by the initial interviews seemed to have reorientated both Zac and Holly’s focus from the structure and processes of mentoring sessions towards the role of the mentor-mentee relationship. Signifying this shift, considerable portions of the follow-up conversations referred to the potentially transformative effect of mentoring upon mentees and the centrality of the mentor-mentee relationship to such transformation. In the initial interviews, Zac and Holly insisted that the mentoring program did not seek to identify and address mentees’ deficits. However, in their follow-up conversations, they spoke about mentoring being able to facilitate *change* and *transformation* by facilitating mentees’ acquisition or enhancement of social-emotional skills. The expansion and alteration of mentors’ thoughts about mentoring are reflected in the differences between the phenomenological constructs as they manifested in Phase one and Phase two of the data analysis. These constructs as identified in Phase two are summarised in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2.

Mentors’ beliefs and values identified in phase 2 analysis

Emerging constructs

Establishment and maintenance of the mentor-mentee relationship is the mentor’s highest priority

Dialogue between mentor and mentee is the most powerful catalyst for change

A structured approach can focus mentors' sense of purpose, scaffold mentor-mentee relational development and promote growth of mentees' social skills.

Owing to the challenging nature of the job, being a successful mentor necessitates particular personal characteristics: altruism; empathy; authenticity; resilience; autonomy; reflexivity; confidence; commitment

Mentors need to be role models for mentees

The aim of the mentoring relationship is to bring about transformation through the growth of social and emotional maturity.

The importance of relationship.

Aligned with the reorientation of Zac and Holly's focus from operational to relational considerations, the opinions they expressed about how mentoring may be most effectively conducted also shifted significantly. Their prior identification of the primacy of group interaction shifted to a stronger focus on the dyadic mentor-mentee relationships. Zac identified the one-on-one time as more important than group activity but expressed some frustration that "it wasn't always happening as we had planned... this year." The shift was also evident in Holly's thinking when she explained that next year there would be "...more of a focus on the relationship and spending one-on-one time – a lot more one-on-one mentoring, a lot less group."

Her justification for nurturing the mentor-mentee relationships was that "...a lot of learning is implicit in the relationship [between mentor and mentee]."

Zac echoed this sentiment, saying:

The change [in the quality of mentees' social and emotional engagement] is mostly attributed to the relationship regardless of the content that the relationship is built around...the change is happening through the relationship.

He explained that:

It's having a personal, intimate connection with another person where there's no fear of others – particularly peers – picking up your weaknesses and then using that to your disadvantage...That person can be a lot more comfortable and explore themselves and explore the topics that we're trying to push...

Along with their acknowledgement of the central role of mentoring relationships in producing transformation in mentees, Zac and Holly continued to regard operational factors as having a vital mediating role in their conceptions of mentorship.

The importance of structure.

Throughout the follow-up interviews, Zac and Holly maintained their view that a structured approach to mentoring was very important to achieving positive outcomes in mentees. Holly explained that structure, particularly organised around clearly articulated outcome objectives, was a source of focus for the mentors' interactions with their mentees because:

It does help for there to be a focus to each session and for that to be the outcome of the session does help to make a bit more purpose to what [the mentors] are trying to do and what conversations they're trying to bring up.

Zac insisted that the program's structured approach remained important for two reasons.

First, he believed that the group activities were valuable for their capacity to teach social skills in a social context, claiming their social competencies may not be as developed as assumed and could not be truly known until:

you take that young person out of that [one-on-one] context-and then put them into a group of their peers. They may not be as socially, you know-responsive and- So I think it's important for their social development.

Second, he believed that the group context provided opportunity to scaffold the development of mentor-mentee relationships. He noted, this is “where the big change happens but the problem is getting to that stage where the conversational learning takes place...” He regarded the structured, group-oriented, activity-driven components of mentoring sessions as providing the conditions in which mentor-mentee relational growth could be initiated and nurtured.

Balancing relationship and structure.

The mentor-mentee relationship came to be identified by Zac and Holly as being of prime importance to the effectiveness of mentoring, over and above the program’s structure. Both expressed a belief that the program’s structure – its overarching objectives and defining methodologies - should not be allowed to overwhelm and compromise the dynamics of the mentor-mentee relationship. These assertions appeared, to the researcher, to confirm the tension which, in the initial interviews, seemed to be at the heart of the mentoring program. The researcher understood this tension to have derived from the mentors’ perceived need to balance the targeting and pursuit of program objectives with the need to nurture authentic relational bonds with mentees. The tension between these otherwise complementary imperatives was seen by the researcher as manifest in the dichotomous nature of relationships between mentors and mentees. Holly explained that these relationships require:

...an adolescent approach with an adult agenda. If you become too friendly and forget about the structure, it’s blurring boundaries...but if it becomes too ‘adulty’, too

preachy and too structured, then the young person's going to disengage because it's not what they're interested in.

The element that is the friendship is enjoying spending time together, enjoying learning about each other's lives; then there's the adult component which is trying to develop their social-emotional skills and plan activities and be the initiator of conversations. That development of the relationship, [the mentors] have to lead it.

Zac summarised the complexity of this dynamic in the term, *professional friendship*:

you're the wiser figure in that sense, and you're a professional friend. But you still need to go into it as if you would to any type of friendship.

Characteristics of effective mentors.

Zac and Holly indicated that balancing the two imperatives required the exercise of particular personal characteristics: empathy, authenticity, resilience, autonomy, reflexivity and commitment. Zac explained that "...if a young person's having a bad day...then don't try and preach them about problem-solving. Use your judgement." For mentors to have the wherewithal to make such judgements, Zac and Holly believed that it is necessary for them to possess or develop a particular range of characteristics that can be seen as defining a requisite profile of social and emotional maturity. These characteristics are delineated in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4.

Essential characteristics of effective mentors

Quality	Reasons for importance	Data
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Empathy	Making a personal connection with a mentee necessitates being able to genuinely identify with them.	I mean that's why I started psychology because I had that natural empathic side to me where I wanted to assist other people. Yeah I guess create some sort of change in people's lives. So yeah that was definitely a big factor I think in wanting to get employed in that kind of role.
Authenticity	Establishing a genuine connection of friendship the mentor's engagement is not perceived as manufactured.	... you just need to be there. You need to be present. You shouldn't be thinking about what you're going to say next.
Resilience	Mentors will inevitably make mistakes, have their plans for sessions go awry or have to cope with mentees' difficult behaviour. This necessitates mentors to have the capacity to 'bounce back'.	If they [strategies] don't work, it's not the end of the world. You may take two steps backwards, but go back to your planning and involved the other person in that, and then come up with a solution yourselves.
Autonomy	For a mentor-mentee relationship to be authentic, mentors need to take ownership and responsibility for its development.	Make decisions independently..., you don't always have to come to us. Make decisions together. If they don't work, it's not the end of the world...but go back to your planning and involved the other person in that, and then come up with a solution yourselves.
Reflexivity	Mistakes or failures should be used as opportunities for learning and growth.	I'd say [one of the most important attributes of a mentor] is self-awareness, you know being willing to really think about and examine your own actions and learn quickly from failure.
Commitment	A mentoring relationship will not develop and endure unless the mentor is prepared to stay the distance.	

At the end of Phase 2 of analysis, the tension identified in Phase one had come into sharper focus. It appeared to derive from two sources: the inter-relation between nurturing of mentor-mentee relationships and the pursuit of mandated program goals; and the question of the relative effectiveness of one-on-one mentoring relative and group activities in pursuit of the program's goals. Achieving clarity around these two sources of tension became a particular focus of the researcher's analysis in Phase 3.

Phase 3

In Phase 3, the researcher engaged in successive hermeneutic readings of the interview and conversation transcripts and the phenomenological narratives. These hermeneutic readings yielded a picture of mentors trying to reconcile their personal views regarding the primary importance of mentor-mentee relationships with the organisational imperative of targeting specific outcomes and reliably demonstrating the achievement of these outcomes. Zac and Holly seemed to be trying to develop an effective compromise between the competing imperatives.

Both understood implicitly that the organisation responsible for the program had to be able to justify the time, money and material resources that it devoted to the mentoring program. In the initial interviews, this imperative seemed predominant. Developing sources of evidence to validate the program seemed particularly important. As Zac explained:

I think - and this probably coming from the influence of the organisation - we want to start [collecting]...hard data on [outcomes attainment]. So that's why we've embarked in a bit of a mission down the measuring road this year, in that we're looking at what are robust data measures we can use for the mentoring program.

Zac and Holly also indicated that recognising the organisational imperative as important necessitates working within a formal framework. The OF was the current framework to which they referred but when they began with the program, they worked within a *strengths-based* framework. A strengths-based framework functions by identifying mentees' existing strengths and capabilities then working, through "meaningful relationships and activities" to enhance and accentuate strengths in order to create opportunities for positive change and growth (Hammond & Zimmerman, 2012). Zac and Holly seemed predisposed to working within defined frames of reference. Such frameworks seemed to be valuable as a means of coherently articulating the program's goals, criteria and the standards by which mentee growth would be defined, measured and interpreted.

However, between the interviews and the follow-up conversations, Zac and Holly's reflections upon their personal experiences seemed to have instructed them that *the relationship is everything*, as Holly put it. Consequently, the primacy of structure seemed to give way to the primacy of relationship and Zac and Holly placing a higher priority on development of the mentor-mentee bond. Their identification of the prime importance of an individual mentor's capacity to engage effectively with an individual mentee was perhaps why Zac and Holly seemed to value particular personal characteristics they regarded as essential to successful mentoring. These characteristics were seen as enabling the mentor to manifest the type and quality of interactions that Zac and Holly regarded as essential to the successful development of mentor-mentee relationships.

From the perspective of the mentoring organisation, balancing the primacy of the relationship imperative with the demands of the organisational imperative was likely to be problematic. The development of a relationship is often discursive and unpredictable and this may be at odds with a program focused upon the attainment of defined outcomes within a

defined period of time. The difficulty in managing this dichotomy was evident in Zac and Holly’s thinking in that, while they were expansive in their discussion of how and why the group sessions worked, their discussion of one-on-one interactions was far less detailed, despite having identified mentor-mentee relationships as being of prime importance. However, the operative element that both mentors identified in the one-on-one time was mentor-mentee dialogue. As the researcher moved into Phase four of the data analysis, dialogue between mentors and their mentees continued to manifest as a powerful force in the mentoring experience.

Phase 4

Phase four of the data analysis consolidated and built on the preceding three phases of analysis. In this phase, the researcher sought to delineate the phenomenological constructs of Zac and Holly’s lived experience of professional mentorship that had gradually emerged through the previous three phases. The researcher sought to develop sharper detail and greater depth of interpretation through further hermeneutic readings of the interview transcripts, the phenomenological narratives and the researcher’s journal. The phenomenological constructs identified through this process are summarised below, in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Phenomenological themes identified in Phase 4 analysis

	Phenomenological Themes	Interpretation	Data
1	The aim of the mentoring relationship is to bring about a mentee’s	A mentor’s motivation to promote and facilitate positive transformation in their mentee is instrumental to such transformation	The change [in the quality of mentees’ social and emotional engagement] is most attributed to the relationship regardless of the content that the relationship is built around...the

	transformation through the growth of social and emotional maturity.	occurring. Zac and Holly's program was particularly focused on improving in the quality of mentees' social and emotional capabilities in order to promote a transformation to maturity.	change is happening through the relationship.
2	Establishment and maintenance of the mentor-mentee relationship is the mentor's highest priority	For a mentor to effect transformation in mentees' social and emotional maturity requires a strong relational bond between mentor and mentee.	I wasn't really focused on how [mentoring] was going to impact upon [the mentee's] life. I was more focused on establishing this good relationship...I definitely remember the relationship quality being a more important outcome.
3	Dialogue between mentor and mentee is the most powerful catalyst for change	Beginning with relatively superficial conversational engagement, as a mentor-mentee relationship develops, the content of the dialogue should deepen and, in doing so, address substantive issues around the mentee's personal experience and social-emotional development.	...a personal, intimate connection with another person where there's no fear of others – particularly peers – picking up your weaknesses and then using that to your disadvantage...That person can be a lot more comfortable and explore themselves and explore the topics that we're trying to push... There are lots of barriers to getting there...but that's where the conversational learning takes place.
4	Owing to the challenging nature of the job, being a successful mentor necessitates that the mentor can exhibit particular personal characteristics	A mentor must bring a particular range of characteristics to their engagement with their mentee in order to establishing a quality relationship. Characteristics of particular significance were empathy, authenticity resilience, reflexivity and autonomy.	Just knowing that okay, I'm actually doing something to help these young people out here. ----- [He] just went into it as himself. Presented himself, you know, not behind a mentoring mask or anything like that. ----- [S]elf-awareness, you know being willing to really think about and examine your own actions and learn quickly from failure. ...take control of the situation. Make decisions independently.

5	Mentors need to be role models for mentees	Role modelling served both passive and active functions. In passive mode, mentors behaved in their accustomed mature manner for mentees to observe and absorb these	While they're not selling they're whole life story... [the mentor is] openly reflecting on failures they've had in their life that may relate to where that young person's at, sharing and showing that it's a learning experience.
6	A structured approach can focus mentors' sense of purpose, scaffold mentor-mentee relational development and promote growth of mentees' social skills.	Assuring the transformative potential of mentoring requires structure to control for the limitations and vulnerabilities of mentor-mentee relationships.	[The mentor-mentee relationship is] a professional friendship in that you have to establish those parameters at the start. We will meet at this time every week, under [the mentoring organisation's] guidelines or the school guidelines. The relationship will go until x. This is what's expected of me, this is what I expect of you. Just establish those things.

Conclusion

The phenomenological constructs identified in the analysis stage of this study collectively form a picture of concentric priorities within a formal mentoring program. First, the dialogue that occurs between mentor and mentee is central to the transformative power of mentoring. Second, the promotion and nurturing of mentor-mentee dialogue should be the principal function of the mentor-mentee relationship and the principal concern of a formal mentoring program. Third, the structural features of a formal mentoring program – its mandated goals, practices and evaluation processes – should principally serve to support the initiation and development of mentor-mentee relationships. In the following chapter, the significance of the phenomenological constructs are discussed in relation to the extant literature and in terms of their implications for the recruitment, training and mentoring practices of formal programs are discussed.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

This chapter provides a discussion of the influence of the phenomenological constructs constituting the lived experience of professional mentorship identified in Chapter 4. The influence of these constructs is discussed as an expression of the relational imperative that was identified in the current research as one of the forces defining the operation of the mentoring program. This chapter also discusses the influence of the organisational imperative in forming the phenomenological constructs, particularly with regard to the tension in its interaction with the relational imperative. A discussion of the implications of these findings for professional mentorship follows and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the current study's limitations and recommendations for further research.

The Phenomenological Constructs and the Imperatives

The six phenomenological constructs identified in this study are expressions of the mentoring organisation's relational and organisational imperatives. The relational imperative was identified as the impetus to engage each mentee in meaningful and potentially transformative relationship. The constructs identified within the relational imperative were strongly linked with the role of the mentors. These constructs included: a) a mentor's personal characteristics are important to their mentee's outcomes; b) the mentor-mentee relationship is the mentor's highest priority; c) dialogue between mentor and mentee is the most powerful catalyst for change; and d) mentors need to be role models for mentees. The organisational imperative was identified as the logistical dimensions of the formal mentoring program set by the organisation that were considered necessary for the program to function. These constructs were identified as: a) transformation to maturity is the central aim of the mentoring program; and b) a structured approach to mentoring is a necessity. In the

following section, the phenomenological constructs are discussed as expressions of the relational and organisational imperatives and the tension between the imperatives is discussed as an important influence that shapes the lived experience of teacher mentorship.

The relational imperative

The term *relational imperative* refers to the perceived importance to the work of a mentor of the initiation, development and maintenance of a substantive relationship with their mentee. Findings from this study show that the four constructs namely, personal characteristics, the priority of the mentor-mentee relationship, being a role model, and the importance of dialogue as a catalyst for change, closely align with previous studies in the field.

Being a successful mentor necessitates particular personal characteristics.

In this study, the mentor was identified as being at the heart of successful mentoring. A mentor's personal characteristics seemed to determine their capacity to engage their mentee and maintain this engagement over an extended period of time. The key characteristics identified in the current study were: empathy, authenticity, resilience, autonomy, reflexivity and commitment. This finding is consistent with earlier studies (Allen et al., 2003; Converse & Lignugaris-Kraft; Renick, Thomson & Zand, 2010), that indicated the significance of mentors' empathy and authenticity to the achievement of positive mentee outcomes. In addition, findings in the current study suggest that, through experience, prospective mentors may develop each of these characteristics with experience over time.

The mentor's personal characteristics enabled the achievement of positive outcomes within the mentoring program. Spencer (2006) and Allen et al. (2003) also identified the characteristics of authenticity and empathy as markers of a mentor's capacity to establish and maintain quality relationships with their mentees. In their longitudinal quantitative study,

Strapp et al. (2014) found that mentors with higher self-efficacy tended to demonstrate higher degrees of persistence and commitment through more frequent and regular meetings with their mentees. Adding to these qualities, the current study also indicated mentors' demonstration of self-efficacy was indicative of their characteristics of resilience, reflexivity and autonomy.

The mentor-mentee relationship is the mentor's highest priority.

In the extant literature, the practice of mentoring is generally regarded as being built around the supportive, dyadic relationship between an older, more experienced or more capable mentor and a mentee (Karcher et al., 2006). The mentor's physical presence and conscious engagement with their mentee is the core around which the mentoring relationship is initiated and developed. Mertz (2004) characterised mentorship as embodying an obligation to lead the development of the mentor-mentee relationship. In the current study, the mentor was seen as the purposeful generator of the relational dynamic. The mentor-mentee relationship that developed out of this dynamic was understood as pivotal to the achievement of positive outcomes for mentees. The quality of the relationship, rather than the relationship alone, was understood as a key determinant of positive outcomes over time.

The development of quality relational connection between mentor and mentee was also identified in Rhodes' Model of Youth Mentoring (Figure 2.1) as foundational to a mentor's ability to successfully address their mentees' developmental needs and effect positive outcomes. Mentor-mentee relationships that yielded strong positive outcomes were distinguished by the qualities of empathy, trust and mutuality (Rhodes, 2005). Renick, Thomson and Zand's (2010) similarly identified a mentee's deepening trust in their mentor as being the key to the success of mentoring. In the current study, the mentors perceived that if

a mentee identifies a mentor as empathetic and authentic, they are likely to trust the mentor which, in turn, enables qualitative improvement of mentor-mentee relationships. It also found that relational quality is most likely to deepen through social interaction over time. The social interaction enabled the nature of mentor-mentee interactions to progress from superficial social exchange to intimate mutuality.

Mentors need to be role models for mentees.

In the current research the professional mentors clearly regarded their duty as a role model to be highly influential upon mentees' attitudes and behaviours. The social-emotional maturity that they demonstrated through such functions as problem-solving or articulating concerns, were understood to be exemplars of mature thought and behaviour for their mentees. Hamilton and Darling (1989) similarly proposed that mentors are well-placed to demonstrate how mature individuals make decisions about their challenges.

Dialogue between mentor and mentee is the most powerful catalyst for change.

In the current study, substantive relational bonds between mentor and mentee were seen as enabling high quality mentor-mentee dialogue. This is contiguous with findings by Converse and Lignugaris/Kraft (2008) which highlighted the importance of mentors' communication skills to the attainment of positive mentee outcomes. Little research has yet been conducted to identify the specific actions or dynamics that occur in mentoring to result in positive outcomes for mentees. As Pryce and Keller (2011) pointed out, "little is known about what actually occurs during mentor-child interactions or what interpersonal processes contribute to relationship development and maintenance" (p. 230). The work of Keller (2005) and Liang, Spencer, West, and Rappaport (2013) have expanded perspectives on the functioning of the dyadic mentor-mentee relationship as presented in Rhodes' Model of

Youth Mentoring (2005). However, their studies did not contain substantial exploration into the role of conversational engagement in mentor-mentee relationships, particularly as it relates to mentees' achievement of positive outcomes.

In the current study, mentor-mentee dialogue was regarded as the key interpersonal process occurring within mentor-mentee relationships. In their qualitative study of 33 mentor-mentee dyads, Pryce and Keller (2011) also identified that high-quality mentor-mentee dialogue tended to be characterised by substantive mentor-mentee dialogue that included mutual sharing of information regarding the families and personal lives of the mentors and mentees. The conversational space between mentor and mentee was seen to develop over time as a safe haven in which mentees could verbalise these challenges and develop the capacity to resolve them. Substantive mentor-mentee dialogue was seen as the primary means of promoting social-emotional development in mentees, as it enabled mentors to focus directly on aspects of the mentees' social and emotional development, as identified in the Outcomes Framework (OF) (Appendix C). Through such dialogue, mentors guided their mentees towards developing more mature social and emotional capabilities. Such improvements in mentees' social-emotional capabilities were identified as positive outcomes of the mentor-mentee relationship.

The phenomenological constructs discussed in this section express the dimensions of the relational imperative of professional mentoring. The relationship between these dimensions are illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. Within this model the mentor is central to the relational imperative and is demarcated from the other elements by a solid line, indicating the foundational nature of the person. The elements that build out from the mentor are the mentor's personal characteristics, which influence the quality of mentor-mentee relationship, which in turn influences the quality of the mentor-mentee dialogue. The elements around the

mentor are malleable and permeable, as indicated by their demarcation by dotted lines. These elements (i.e. the mentor's personal characteristics and the mentor-mentee dialogue) are malleable in the sense that each of the elements may grow or diminish throughout the course of the mentor-mentee relationship. They are permeable in that each element is apt to influence the other relational elements. For example, the quality of the mentor-mentee dialogue is determined significantly by the quality of their relationship. Likewise, the quality of their relationship is determined by the personal characteristics that the mentor brings to bear in their interactions with their mentee.

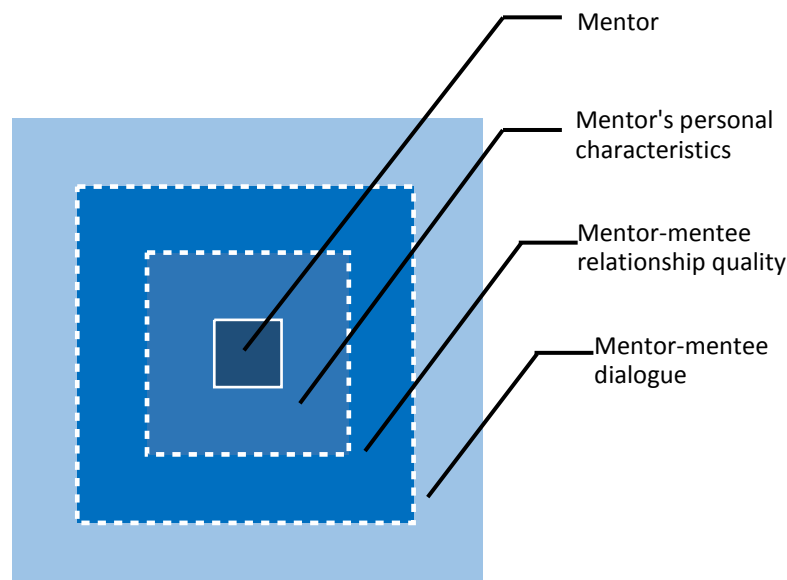


Figure 5.1. Relational elements of mentoring

The organisational imperative.

The term *organisational imperative* refers to the perceived necessity for organisational parameters to define the operation of the formal mentoring program. The two constructs that express dimensions of the organisational imperative, namely transformation to

maturity as the central aim of the mentoring program and the necessity of a structured approach to mentoring align with some previous studies in the field.

Transformation to maturity is the central aim of the mentoring program.

Though in qualitative terms, this construct seems clear, demonstrating the achievement of transformation in a formal mentoring program is problematic. In the current study, maturity was the overarching success criterion and was defined by the Outcomes Framework (OF). The effectiveness of a mentoring program can be determined by the level of transformation that it promotes for mentees. This measure of success amounts to the justification for the program's ongoing existence. Efforts were made by mentors to demonstrate the transformative effects of the program by quantifying mentees' attainment of the outcomes targeted from the OF. These efforts were consistent with Rhodes' (2011) view that effectiveness is generally understood in terms of the strength of outcome attainment. The mechanism employed to evaluate the mentoring program represented both the outcomes targeted for mentees attainment and evaluation instruments, such as questionnaires, used to gauge the attainment of the targeted outcomes.

The current study identified attempts to quantify transformation as being problematic. This difficulty was largely due to uncertainties of the reliability and validity of the evaluation methods employed over time. No extant research could be found that has examined how particular formal mentoring programs evaluate their own effectiveness. Rather, program evaluation has primarily been discussed in the literature as a component of research studies into the effectiveness of mentoring programs in general, which have of themselves been problematic.

A structured approach to mentoring is a necessity.

In the current study, the adoption of a structured approach was intended to compensate for the volunteer mentors' perceived lack of experience or proficiency in employing mentoring practices. The mentoring practices are methods consciously employed by mentors to engage mentees and pursue the attainment of identified outcomes. These practices might include: teaching new skills, such as cooking or repairing bicycles; involving mentees in recreational activities, such as chess or rock-climbing; or inclusive conversational techniques. Dubois et al. (2011) found that the development of mentors' capacity and willingness to develop quality mentoring practices was a significant variable in mentees' attainment of positive outcomes. In the current study, the mentors' engagement with their mentees occurred mostly through a highly structured schedule of planned activities. Mentors were able to independently employ mentoring practices in the one-on-one phase of each session. Though the one-on-one engagement in mentoring practices has been shown to improve relational quality (Rhodes, 2005), such improvement is only likely to accrue with adequate time.

Data from the current study suggests that the duration of mentor-mentee interaction in each mentoring session, may have an effect upon a mentor's choice of mentoring practices and the manner in which they are employed. For instance, if a mentor and mentee have only one hour of one-on-one interaction, the range of activities they can feasibly engage in is limited and, significantly, their opportunity to engage in substantive conversation is curtailed. In the current study, mentors usually had an hour or less of one-on-one time because the two other group sessions were given preference in the allocation of time. The professional mentors

recognised that starving the one-on-one sessions of time resulted in mentor-mentee interactions that were not of high quality.

The assumption that mentors require systematic scaffolding and support resonates with the systemic model of mentoring presented by Keller (2005). Referring to this model, Pryce (2012) suggests that “relationships require systemic support in multiple critical areas, including via the pathway of influence between the program facilitator and the match, as well as between the facilitator and the larger program aims” (p.301). However, Keller’s (2005) systemic model was representative of community-based mentoring and implies “that the overall effect of the mentoring intervention on the child’s behaviour and well-being may be the consequence of establishing a cohesive alliance of three caring adults who collectively support the child’s development” (p.183). The findings of the current study suggest that there may be merit in further investigating the applicability of the systemic model to SBM programs.

The phenomenological constructs discussed in this section express the dimensions of the organisational imperative of professional mentoring. Each of the dimensions is in direct relationship to one of the other dimensions, with one being independent and having a direct and determining effect upon the other, dependent, dimension. The program outcomes operated as an independent dimension upon the dependent evaluation dimension meaning that the degree of specificity in defining outcomes determines the degree of precision required of a program’s evaluation mechanisms. Similarly, as the time dimension acts as the independent dimension upon the dependent mentoring practices dimension meaning that the quantum of time available for one-on-one time determines the range of mentoring practices that a mentor is reasonably able to employ.

Tension between the relational imperative and the organisational imperatives.

The key challenge identified in the current study was mentors having to simultaneously accommodate the demands of the relational and organisational imperatives. The following section discusses the tension that developed in the interaction between the relational and the organisational imperatives.

The posited tension seemed to be generated in mentors' efforts to balance the respective demands of the organisational and the relational imperatives. The mentors regarded authentic and self-sustaining mentor-mentee relationships as central to the attainment of positive outcomes, while they also considered that a formal mentoring program requires the reliability and accountability engendered by a structured approach. While these two imperatives may not be mutually exclusive, decisions made regarding dimensions of the organisational imperative may have significant, and potentially compromising, implications for the relational imperative. Diagram 5.3 depicts the interaction between the relational imperative and the organisational imperative.

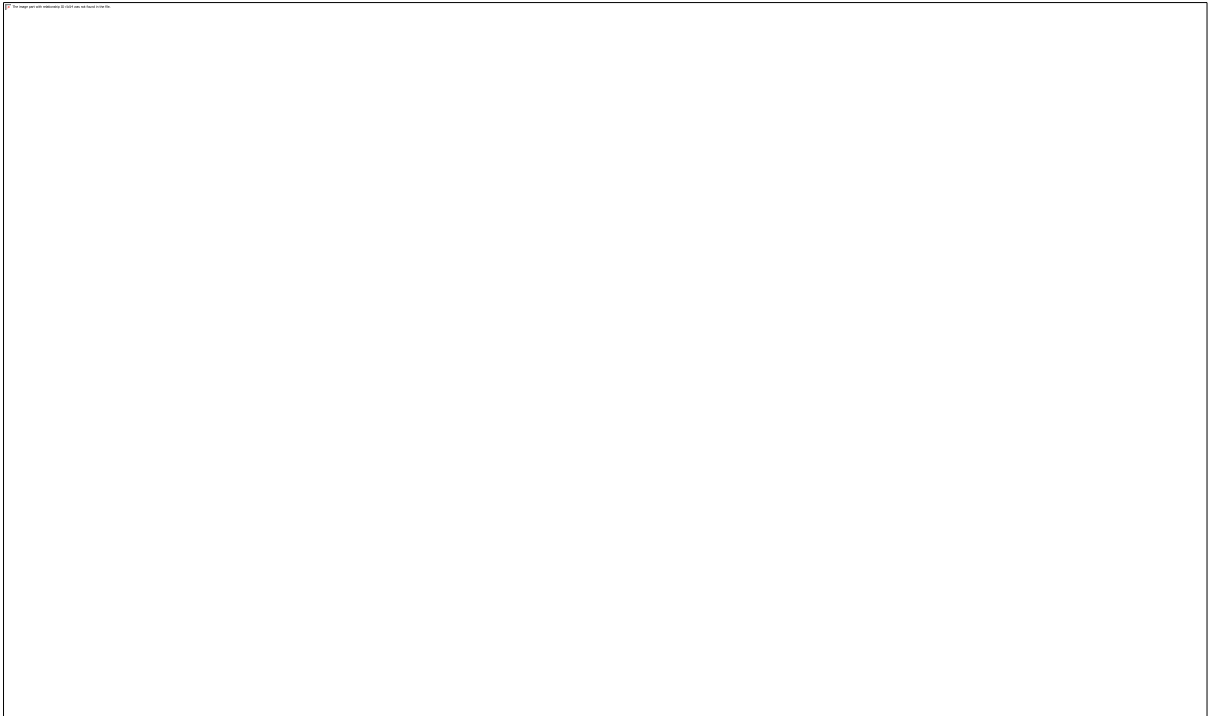


Figure 5.2 The relationship between the relational and organisational imperatives

The tension between the relational and organisational imperatives can be understood in terms of the lived experience of professional mentorship. The lived experience is the space in which the relational and organisational imperatives interact and it encompasses the broadly-defined environment in which mentor-mentee interactions occur. In this space where the organisational and relational imperatives interact, the quality of mentor-mentee relationships are developed and consequent mentor-mentee dialogue is fostered.

The relational imperative is situated within the dimensions of the organisational imperative as a function of the mentor-mentee relationships being conducted within a formal mentor program and, as such, being subject to its defined conditions. The dotted demarcation lines between the relational dimensions are indicative of their permeability to the influences within the relationship but also to the environmental factors present within the lived

experience. The dotted demarcation lines also indicate that, if the relational dimensions are malleable and able to expand, the mentoring field needs to be of adequate proportion to enable and accommodate this relational growth. The scope of the mentoring field was predominantly determined by choices regarding program outcomes and time, the independent dimensions of the organisational imperative. With tightly defined outcomes and minimised one-on-one time between mentor and mentee, it was observed that the scope of the lived experience was similarly minimised. Restricting this scope can be seen to have constrained the expansion of the relational imperative, resulting in the tension posited by this study.

Summary

This study identified the relational and organisational imperatives as key forces operating in formal mentoring programs. The interactions between the relational and the organisational imperatives were identified as producing key dynamics, which played out in the mentoring field. These dynamics were identified as having been produced by the behaviour and interactions of the dimensions of which the imperatives were respectively constituted. The interactions between the relational and organisational imperatives were seen as determining the nature and operation of the formal mentoring program.

Limitations of the Study

The present study contained two key limitations related to the generalisability of its findings. The first imitation was that the research employed purposive sampling and focused on only two professional mentors working in one formal mentoring program. However, being limited to only two participants afforded the researcher an opportunity to study the lived experiences of professional mentors in depth and detail. In keeping with the study's hermeneutic phenomenological approach, the richness of the collected data were of greater importance to

the research than the volume of the data. In this regard, that the data were sourced from only two participants enabled the researcher to invest more time to the hermeneutic analysis of the data than would have been possible if more participants had been recruited. However, if the data had been sourced from participants from a range of different SBM programs, the findings of this research may have been more representative of the lived experience of professional mentors in general, across a broader heterogeneous range of SBM programs.

The second limitation was that the semi-structured interviews and follow-up conversations, which were the principal means of data collection, may have been compromised by self-reporting bias (Spaulding, 2015). The reliability of the data derived from these interviews was dependent upon the degree to which the information provided by the professional mentors was authentic and accurate. Although the professional mentors seemed to express their genuine attitudes and opinions in their respective interviews and follow-up conversations, they may have been influenced by a recognition of bias in the researcher towards one-on-one mentoring, particularly during the interviews. Although the professional mentors were aware that their anonymity was assured, they also understood that data from the interviews would inform conclusions drawn by the researcher. This understanding could have encouraged them to skew their comments towards what they may have understood to be a preferred conception of mentoring, particularly in the follow-up conversations.

Implications of the Study

Addressing the sources of the tension between the relational and organisational imperatives will be important to the ongoing effectiveness of the mentoring program. The findings of this

study suggest possibilities for addressing the identified tension. Implications from the findings were related to a) policy and practice and b) future research.

Policy and practice.

This research has identified adjustments to aspects of the organisational imperative that may contribute to improving the reliability and effectiveness of the mentoring program.

Adjustments in the setting of objectives, mentor training and program evaluation may also provide some direction for ongoing improvement to similar formal mentoring programs.

The data from the current study suggest that, if program outcomes are narrowly-defined, the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship may be compromised. Within the program that was the subject of this study, there was an initial tendency in the program towards a narrow, undifferentiated, top-down approach to identifying and targeting outcomes for mentees. However, as the research progressed, the mentors came to view program outcomes as potentially being more effective if more broadly mandated and subject to interpretation in terms of the needs and priorities of particular mentees. Enabling such scope of interpretation is likely to enable the mentors and mentees to identify which of the program's mandated outcomes may be most appropriately addressed through their relationship. This, in turn, may enable mentor-mentee partnerships greater freedom to shape the substance and course of their dialogue and its capacity to address the mentees' particular needs. This finding has implications for the provision of a range of training opportunities for mentors.

The findings also point to the necessity for training that equips mentors with a range of skills and a repertoire of practices that prepare them appropriately to engage in one-on-one mentoring. Such training would recognise that mentor-mentee relationships of high quality

are essential to achieving positive outcomes. Mentor training might, therefore, assure that each mentor has acquired the essential skill sets identified for effective mentoring, such as establishing relationships, conducting dialogue and undertaking reflexive thinking. The high degree of control initially evident in the program was justified in terms of the variable capability and reliability of volunteer mentors to undertake relationship-building functions. These functions included the initiation of conversations and the reflexive review of mentoring sessions. Rather than assure the mentors' possession of appropriate skills and capacity to employ them, the program design assumed mentors lacked such skills and was structured to compensate for the perceived deficits. The findings of the current research suggest that relationship-building skills and practices are likely to be more effective when applied in a timely, appropriate and proportionate manner particular to each mentee. This would require training programs that support mentors' development of skills and practices essential to establishing and maintaining high quality relationships. This would also have implications for how evaluations are conducted in formal mentoring programs.

While mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring program may be a necessary component of formal mentoring programs, the findings of this study suggest that they may be more effective if incorporated authentically into the mentoring field. In ascertaining the nature and extent of a program's effect, it is important to ensure that methods employed do not compromise the relational imperative. For example, a mentor's authenticity may be stifled by evaluation being employed overtly as an accountability mechanism. Similarly, mentees may not necessarily engage sincerely with evaluation mechanisms that they view as extraneous to the mentoring field. The professional mentors reported that identifying appropriate and effective means of assessing the effectiveness of the program and its mentors had been problematic for two main reasons. First, while gains in particular

outcomes could be identified, it was impossible to isolate participation in the mentoring program as a cause. Second, the mentors were not confident that the quantitative measures employed by the program had provided data of requisite depth and complexity to encompass the subtle interactions that occur within the mentoring field. Both mentors expressed a belief that qualitative forms of data collection, particularly individual and joint reflection conducted by mentors and mentees may be useful in this regard. The uncertainty over how to most appropriately evaluate the efficacy of a mentoring program experience is reflective of a broader challenge identified in the research literature of establishing reliable and meaningful measures of efficacy for mentoring.

Quality training and appropriate supervision and guidance provided to mentors is likely to ensure mentors' capacity to balance the relational and organisational imperatives. Findings of previous studies suggest that such high quality training and ongoing support are important as they contribute directly to the development of mentors' self-efficacy in the role (Herrera et al., 2007; Lakind, Eddy & Zell, 2014; Strapp et al., 2014). Individually and in combination, these elements should equip mentors with an understanding of program objectives, the dispositions and skills to attend to the objectives, and with the knowledge and skills to be able to prioritise and maximise the quality of the relationship with their mentee.

Directions for future research.

The present study, though limited in its scope, indicated the potential value of a larger study incorporating the voices of a more numerous and diverse range of professional mentors. Such a study, incorporating a more representative sample of professional mentors, would provide a more thorough and reliable understanding mentors' lived experiences of formal mentoring programs. The

results of this study would potentially provide more detailed and reliable insight into the functioning of the relational and organisational imperatives within formal mentoring.

Further research is also recommended into a range of issues relating to professional mentoring that were exposed through the current research. First, research is recommended into the content and dynamics of mentor-mentee dialogue in order to better understand the ways in which dialogue is able to promote positive outcomes in mentees. Second, research is recommended into how formal programs evaluate their own effectiveness. Third, research to identify specific practices employed by successful professional mentors should be conducted. Fourth, research into the question of the optimal duration of mentoring sessions should also be conducted. Each of these pieces of research would engender movement towards developing a more precise understanding of how professional mentors produce positive outcomes from their engagement with their mentees. Fifth, despite the importance attached to the role model function of mentoring in the current study, the researcher was unable to identify any research yet conducted that has directly addressed the effect upon mentee outcomes of the role model function within professional mentorship.

Final Statement

A limited understanding of the dynamics that define the operation of SBM programs is currently curtailing their prospective effectiveness. Though SBM has become a popular means of addressing developmental needs of adolescents, much is yet to be understood about how and why SBM is effective. The perspectives of mentors, particularly professional mentors, have not often been considered in regard to developing these understandings. Mentors' direct experience of mentor-mentee interaction within formal mentoring programs presents a rich resource for understanding the dynamics within the mentor-mentee

relationship. The influence of imperatives manifest in formal mentoring programs upon this all-important relationship may also come to be better understood with greater consideration of mentor perspectives.

The findings of the current research reinforce the central importance of the mentor to the mentor-mentee relationship and to the formal mentoring program. The findings reinforce that at the heart of any SBM program is a mentor's capacity to effect transformation in their mentee by establishing, nurturing and maintaining a meaningful relationship. Consequently, selection and training processes that adequately prepare mentors to undertake the role are highlighted as particularly important. The findings of the current research also highlight that the structure and processes of SBM programs must be designed primarily to enhance the capacity of mentors to develop quality relational bonds with their mentees.

The current study has afforded me, as the researcher, invaluable insights into my own practice as a success coach working with young adolescents at risk of disengaging from formal education. In particular, I have come to recognise the relational quality underpinning my work with young people as the prime prerequisite for the successful facilitation of positive social-emotional and academic outcomes. This insight has awoken me to the possibility that the subtle and indirect influences inherent in a trusting, respectful and nurturing relationship may contribute more than I currently acknowledged towards directly targeted efforts to promote transformation in young people.

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Appendix A.

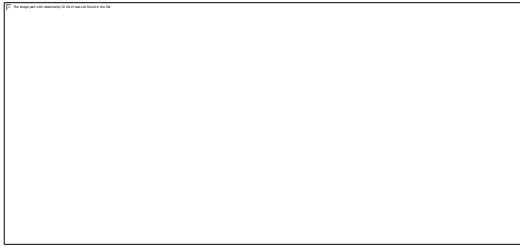
Exemplar of Daily Journals		
DAY 1	Activities	Reflections
Prior to school-day commencement	<p>Meet with Student A’s Maths and English teachers</p> <p>Meet with Deputy Principal</p> <p>Morning check-in</p>	<p>Discussed behaviour management strategies. Focus on reward contingencies to reinforce positive behaviours. “Smiley” stickers seem to be working. A values them, especially when combined with verbal praise.</p> <p>Discussed progress and challenges from my caseload over the past week. A strong theme emerging from the discussion was the need to support well-being generally across the student population. If....., then....</p> <p>Student J seemed quite unsettled this morning, didn’t really participate in discussion. I’ve scheduled myself to check in on her in Period 1. With other students – K,L,M & N – productive discussion about challenges ahead for the day and strategies for dealing with them. An ongoing theme in these discussions is “fairness”. It seems...</p>

Morning Session	Progress meeting with: Student B Student C	Moving strongly towards his goal of passing Maths. May need to schedule a couple of tutoring sessions before assessment in a fortnight's time. He's got the key concepts but....
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	Intervene with Student D	Tired and listless today. Need to call his Mum to discuss his current medication and whether it's effecting his sleep patterns. Progress towards his goal is inconsistent at the moment. What I think I'm seeing is.... "Red card" for refusing to go to the buddy classroom. Came out of the classroom when I arrived and wanted to 'download' about the teacher. We eventually got around to talking about the behaviour in terms of the build up and trigger. Student D's understanding of the incident is...
First Break	Conversations with: Student Z Student Y	
Middle Session	Assist in Year 9 English class	

Second Break	Phone call to Student B's parent	
Afternoon Session	Progress meeting: Student W Student X	
After school day completion	Curriculum Committee meeting	

Comments



GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Dear Dr Katherine Main

I write in relation to your application for ethical clearance for your project "The construction of self-efficacy in Student Success Coaches and its influence upon their practice" (GU Ref No: 2016/570). The research ethics reviewers resolved to grant your application a clearance status of "Fully Approved".

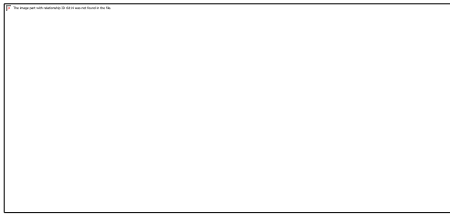
This is to confirm receipt of the remaining required information, assurances or amendments to this protocol.

Consequently, I reconfirm my earlier advice that you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

The standard conditions of approval attached to our previous correspondence about this protocol continue to apply.

Regards,

Kim Madison
Human Research Ethics and Integrity
Office for Research
Bray Centre, Nathan Campus
Griffith University ph: [+61 \(0\)7
373 58043](tel:+610737358043) fax: [+61 \(07\) 373
57994](tel:+610737357994) email:
k.madison@griffith.edu.au



**The construction of self-efficacy in professional mentors
and its influence upon their practice.**

Co- Investigator	Co-Investigator	Student Investigator Mr
Dr Katherine Main School of Education and Professional Studies Phone: (07) 3382 1097 k.main@griffith.edu.au	Dr Loraine McKay School of Education and Professional Studies Phone: (07) 373 55682 loraine.mckay@griffith.edu.au	Sean McNeven School of Education and Professional Studies Phone: 0422 605 881 sean.mcneven@griffith.edu.au

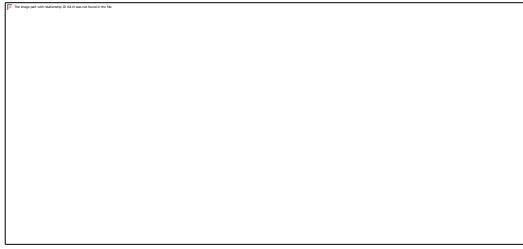
Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to identify, detail and describe three key understandings about the role of Student Success Coach:

- How you construct self-efficacy within your role
- What inputs are required to generate student successes
- How the first two understandings guide how you think about your role and work within your role

Your completion of each of the 5 journal entries will be of great assistance in developing these understanding by providing an accurate, thoughtful and comprehensive depiction of the work you do.

Thank you for your participation in this activity



Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate in a research project which aims to gain a deeper understanding of the role of a mentor.

Who is involved in the research project?

Mr Sean McNeven is conducting the research (GU ref no: 2016/570) as a candidate for a Masters in Educational and Professional Studies. Dr Katherine Main and Dr Loraine McKay are the research supervisors.

Why is it being conducted?

The aim of this study is to develop three key understandings: what it means for professional mentors to be effective within the role; what inputs are required to generate student successes; and how the first two understandings guide decision-making within the role.

Why have you been approached?

The target participant pool is those who have been working as a professional mentor for at least 12 months. The study is using a targeted recruitment and you are being approached because of your experience in this role.

If I agree to participate, what will be required of me?

Your participation will involve a small range of activities over a 10 week period:

- completing a journal over the course of a working week (approximately 30 minutes per week)
- a one-on-one semi-structured interview (approximately one and a half hours) • a one-on-one follow-up conversation (approximately one hour)

What are the risks or disadvantages associate with participation?

There are no foreseeable risks associated with your participation in the project.

Whom should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about the research project, please contact one the people below:

Chief Investigator Dr Katherine Main School of Education and Professional Studies Phone: (07) 3382 1097 k.main@griffith.edu.au	Co-Investigator Dr Loraine McKay School of Education and Professional Studies Phone: (07) loraine.mckay@griffith.edu.au	Student Investigator Mr Sean McNeven School of Education and Professional Studies Phone: 0422 605 881 sean.mcneven@griffith.edu.au
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What should I do if I agree to participate?

If you are willing to participate in this research project, please contact Sean McNeven by replying to this email or via phone.

Thank you.

Appendix D



Appendix E

Holly currently works as a professional mentor in the capacity of mentoring co-ordinator with a school-based mentoring program that operates at a series of high school campuses in SouthEast Queensland for a two-hour session each week. Each session is staffed by volunteer mentors, all of whom are final-year Social Work or Psychology students. Their functioning and the structure of each session is directed by a mentoring co-ordinator. The format of each session involves the mentors and mentees interacting as a large group of up to ten mentors and ten mentees and is divided into 3 general phases: in phase 1, the group engages in activities and follow-up debriefing discussions; in phase 2, the group cooperates to prepare lunch and then sit together to eat; and in phase 3, the group divides into one-on-one mentor-mentee groups for more in-depth conversations and associated activities.

Holly was first a volunteer mentor with the program. She joined after responding to an invitation email sent out to university students by the program co-ordinator. Holly explains that her decision to become a volunteer mentor was based on her direct experience of the benefits of mentoring. As a high school student, her music teacher was a source of moral support and guidance. Holly credits her music teacher with making it possible for her to become a musician by encouraging her not to be concerned about her lack of classical training and by identifying Holly's "unique musical style." Consequently, Holly felt compelled, when the opportunity to join a formal mentoring program arose, to join in order to provide similar encouragement and support to other young people. Holly identifies in herself the quality of altruism, explaining it as wanting to "assist other people" and "create some sort of change in people's lives". Holly identifies that a critical function of a mentor is to be a role model. In particular, she believes that this involves modelling and encouraging mentees to adopt and present "correct" or "adult" behaviours. This function of mentoring seems to be

central to Holly's conception of the role, with mentoring understood as having the potential to promote social and emotional maturation.

The objectives of the school-based mentoring program are formally mandated in an outcomes framework, which delineates the range of social and emotional capabilities which mentors will undertake to promote through their participation in the program. The overarching objective is for all mentees to be able to demonstrate each of these capabilities. Holly expressed some degree of frustration with the amount of capabilities that need to be addressed and seems to feel that there are too many targets in play, that there are "too many outcomes".

Taken as a whole, though, Holly says that the objectives are each an aspect of the mentees' developing maturity. She identifies "maturity" as an individual's capacity to independently and reliably exercise a range of pro-social behaviours such that they are able to be actively engaged in sessions, interact politely and constructively with others, and to express empathy and appreciation, and to exhibit improving self-esteem. She considers these things to be the "endgame" of mentoring, as they are markers of a mentee's capability of forming mature, functional relationships. Seeing such "transformation" is, for Holly, the prime justification for being involved as a mentor. The capabilities which constitute the outcomes framework serve as a formal, delineated structure of the social-emotional elements that characterise such transformation.

Holly explains that the setting of goals is "strengths-based", meaning that the program seeks to build on mentees' identified strengths rather than identifying and "correcting" deficits. It seems, though, that the goals are identified for the group rather than for individuals; and that goals are set by the mentors without any significant input from mentees. Holly explained that

having well-defined parameters in place is particularly important to successful pursuit of identified goals. For instance, each session is carefully planned, particularly the group phase, to promote engagement and provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to focus on exercising and discussing particular capabilities. Further, Holly expressed the importance of mapping out the program of sessions for the entire year. She described it as “creating structure around ambiguity”. By this she meant that without the outcomes framework, goalsetting and planned activity-based sessions which set the program’s parameters, the interactions between mentors and mentees would probably not be as purposeful, growth-oriented and meaningful as she believes they are with the outcomes framework as the organising principal.

Holly insists, though, that even with these parameters in place, there is still significant flexibility as to how mentors and mentees choose to interact and develop their particular relationship. In fact, she says that while it’s vital to set the parameters, ensuring that the purpose and particular goals remain in clear sight, there needs to be the flexibility to be able to respond to the particular needs of mentees. In this regard, Holly is keen for mentors and mentees to have more one-on-one time, in order for them to be more ownership of, and accountability for, the development of the relationship. This is particularly important, she says, in that it will allow mentors to make mistakes and develop more acute judgement in the development of relationships. Ultimately, she says, statistics around the outcomes framework don’t necessarily satisfy as markers of success. Rather, it’s seeing a positive relationship develop over time and the sense that the mentee is experiencing positive change that is far more important.

Holly considers the development of positive mentor-mentee relationships as being foundational to the success of any mentoring experience. She says that the establishment of a

solid relationship between mentor and mentee is the primary concern, as much of the benefit of being involved in a mentoring program derive from the relationship. Holly agrees that achieving a solid mentor-mentee relationship can require the performance of a tricky balancing act from the mentor. She describes it as achieving a balance between authenticity and purpose. She explains that developing such relationships requires “getting on their [the mentees’] level”. This approach values the capacity of mentors to establish empathy for and rapport with mentees. It appears that this is generally achieved through purposeful and cooperative interaction in challenge-based activities and the consequent establishment of dialogue. It seems that, at least in the initial phases of the mentoring relationship that this could be a one-way transaction in that it is the mentor’s obligation to establish a platform for an effective relationship. In fact, Holly identifies this as the initial imperative of the mentor’s role. As such, Holly explains that she “can’t have a bad day” because she is responsible for “keeping things positive”. In this regard, she believes that mentoring must be conducted in a “fair and supportive” environment, characterised by harmonious activity and interactions in which all mentors and mentees feel valued and enriched.

The importance of keeping things positive is evident when Holly talks about how she has responded to doubts and disappointments she has experienced in mentoring. At some point, she says, each mentor will wonder if their work is having any positive impact upon their mentees. She says that even when you observe a “transformation” occurring, you can never be certain that it’s attributable to your input as mentor. She says that feedback, both direct and indirect, is very important to maintaining self-assurance. She related how, having worked with a young person for a year, she had some sense that he had made some transformation, but was later told that he had made highly significant improvements in school attendance and academic outcomes. This feedback gave her a great boost to her self-confidence and her

sense of efficacy as a mentor. Indirect feedback is also important, she explains, such as seeing that participants in a mentoring session are happy at the end of it because the session “has flowed and gone smoothly”.

Holly explains that doubts about one’s effectiveness as a mentor – and of mentoring in general - are usually due to lack of experience, in as much as the positive effects of mentoring become evident over time. Therefore, a mentor needs to be patient in the understanding that mentees will benefit but it will usually take an extended period of time for this to develop and manifest. Holly explains that she uses this line of thinking to respond to doubt as it allows her to process doubt rationally and not allow it to influence her negatively. This is evident when she talks about dealing with disappointments or setbacks in the mentoring process. She explains that it’s to be expected that, in terms of the development of social and emotional capabilities, mentees will “move backwards”. She sees this as part of the mentoring process. In fact, she insists that the disruption caused by this backward movement affords “some degree of learning” and serves to check complacency and regather efforts to move towards the identified goals.

Supportive of this rational response to doubt is academic research, to which Holly refers. She considers that the extant body of research “overwhelmingly” validates mentoring as an effective intervention to promote the healthy social and emotional development of young people. Also significant for Holly in countering doubt, is the direct positive feedback she receives orally from mentees. This seems to be especially strong in validating the value of a mentor’s work. As intimated by Holly, though, such feedback is most often received some time into the mentoring relationship, highlighting why it has been important for her to be able to rationalise her way through disappointment and doubt.

For Holly, the establishment of a positive group dynamic is “everything”. The matching of mentors and mentees and the development of their relationships occurs within a group context and is facilitated by games and activities. These activities usually require problemsolving, cooperation and/or competition. They enable mentors and mentees to interact in a spirit of fun and play, which enables mutuality and rapport to develop between individuals. The value Holly places upon a successful group dynamic is perhaps evident in the many unpaid hours she has invested in planning the structure and content of the group phases of each mentoring session. It seems that the responsibility for establishing the conditions in which relationships can develop and flourish may be understood as the predominant concern for Holly in her role. She describes it as creating “some kind of rhythm”.

The games and activities component of the mentoring experience seems a means to establishing this rhythm and contribute towards achieving significant ends. Holly explains that the structured group environment enables the development of relationships between mentors and mentees. The interaction that comes with the games and activities promotes connection and dialogue, which are the starting points for the development of relationships. It is this foundation, developed between particular mentors and mentees during group activities, which forms the basis on which the mentor-mentee relationships are developed. For instance, mentees choose which mentor they’d prefer to spend one-on-one time with on the basis of the interactions that occur during group activities. Holly also identifies group time as the setting in which mentors have the opportunity to model and encourage “mature” behaviour. An important function of the mentors seems to be in helping mentees to recognise and aspire to mature standards of behaviour and modes of interaction. The games and activities also seem to serve the purpose of promoting learning around particular developmental objectives, such

as leadership or grit or communication. The games and activities are specifically designed and targeted to assist mentees in understanding and developing such particular developmental outcomes.

Ultimately, though, she says that the most important part of the mentoring experience is the on-on-one time engagement between mentor and mentee. This is, complementary to participation in group activities, where the mentor leads the development of the relationship. The mentor needs to capitalise on the rapport developed in group time to develop “common ground”, deepening the relationship and becoming someone to whom the mentee can “open up”. The social rapport that is developed is the “foot in the door” that gives the mentor the opportunity to take the conversation into exploration of more significant social and emotional topics. Holly says that the mentor needs to be able to share their experiences openly and to demonstrate a facility to reflect and learn from these experiences. This, she says, helps mentees to open up and to reflect, learn and develop. Achieving this conversational flow requires confidence, resilience and humour. Maintaining the relationship requires stability and consistency from the mentor. Ideally, the mentor-mentee relationship develops as a collaboration with a “sense of direction” and purpose.

For Holly, therefore, the positive effects of mentoring accrue through the mentee’s active involvement during mentoring sessions. Consequently, the key capability for any mentor is to be able to promote and maintain this involvement. Out of this involvement, the mentor-mentee connections develop, dialogue ensues and the mentee has the potential to experience social-emotional growth.

Appendix F

Zac admits to coming to mentoring almost by “accident”. He was interested in doing some kind of community work, such as visiting people in hospitals, but was not sure what avenue to take. A friend was mentoring young people and suggested he sign up as a mentor. He wasn’t interested though as he had no desire to work with young people. It was not until he was completing his Psychology undergraduate degree and he realised that mentoring could be a useful means of building up his CV, that he signed up as a mentor with a school-based mentoring program. Zac highlights the apparently self-serving nature of his entry into the mentoring role.

His first experience of mentoring was at a high school in Brisbane’s south-west. He worked with mentees who had been selected for participation in the program due to their negative social and learning behaviours. He says that the young people he and the other mentors worked with could be quite intimidating. He explains that the other mentors were older adults in their 60’s who “didn’t really engage” with the mentees, using it instead as an opportunity for their own social interactions. Despite the earlier reservations which had held him back from trying mentoring sooner, he found that he greatly enjoyed working with the young people, despite the challenges. He acknowledges that there were “a few headaches” but he felt compelled to keep going back as it was “the right thing to do”. He found that it became a habit and he rarely missed a weekly mentoring session, even when other pressures, such as university assessments, demanded his time. He found that he was having fun, particularly getting the young people participating in games and activities. He also found that he “felt like he was doing something”, that he was genuinely helping the young people he worked with.

Zac says that developing successful relationships with young people in the mentoring program was challenging. He says that it took four to five months of work to develop a “good relationship”. He explains that part of the difficulty in his context was the “lack of structure and support within the school” necessary to facilitate the program’s success. However, he says that the keys to developing successful relationships which led to positive outcomes for young people were: the mentor’s commitment to their role; their genuine and “intrinsic motivation to support a young person”; and “a willingness to learn” and be “collaborative” within the relationship. Overarching all of these characteristics is “confidence” in interacting with young people. Zac defines confidence as the ability to regulate your emotional state such that you are able to respond calmly, adaptively and appropriately to situations as they present themselves. In this regard, he says that theoretical knowledge is only as useful as your capacity to synthesise and apply it. Zac insists that confidence can be learnt and developed as a facet of emotional intelligence. This occurs as the mentor-mentee relationship develop, and often through making mistakes and learning from them

The capacity to develop a positive relationship with a young person is pivotal to Zac’s understanding of what it takes to be a successful mentor. He says that in his experience as a mentor and as a coordinator of mentors, the most important learning is that the mission is not to help or fix the young person. Zac believes that the mentor’s role is not to provide advice or guidance. He said he initially made the mistake of believing that his purpose as a mentor was to “turn this kid’s life around” by guiding mentees onto the right path. The net result of this approach, he explains, is that the mentees disengage, stop attending sessions and the relationship dies in the early stages. Zac characterises the mentor’s role as that of a

“professional friend”. As in any friendship, there are times when assertiveness is appropriate but the interactions between mentor and mentee are based on a mutual understanding of equal status. Zac stresses that there should be no power differential in the relationship owing to the importance of collaborative interaction between mentor and mentee. However, he does add that, in a successful relationship, a mentee will “look up to” their mentor and “soak up” their positive influence. Ideally, if the relationship were to continue to develop autonomously over several years, a mentor would become a social and moral anchor to the mentee. Zac recognises this as a “big commitment” as it means being a significant influence in another person’s life.

Of very high importance to the success of the mentoring relationship, according to Zac, is that mentors have an understanding of the dynamics of the relationship. Ideally, what eventually develops between mentor and mentee is a “warm, trusting, robust relationship”. Trust between mentor and mentee is identified as being particularly important. Authenticity, according to Zac, is fundamental to the development of such a relationship. He identifies it as “genuine-ness” or “being yourself”. He recognises this quality in a number of mentors, including himself, who have maintained relationships with mentees over two or more years and yielded “fantastic results” for the mentees. He says that mentoring relationships which lack this quality won’t be successful as the mentor “puts the barriers up”. By this he means that the mentor is focused on “fixing” the mentee so they don’t share any of themselves with the young person. In such circumstances, rather than establishing a relationship based mutuality, the mentor is playing the role of “fixer”. This can stop the mentor being “truly present” in their interactions with mentees. Zac stresses that authentic engagement in a mentoring relationship depends on the mentor’s willingness to regard the mentee as an equal partner and that the mentor and mentee are equally capable of learning from each other. As such, a mentor is a role model, showing rather than telling their mentee how to engage

appropriately with others. He says that, within reason, this requires that mentors share their flaws, though without being appearing vulnerable and leaving themselves open to being taken advantage of. This requires the exercise of judgement as to what – and to what extent - the mentor can share.

The exercise of such judgement seems an important component of the skills set that mentors require to be able to work successfully with young people. Foremost amongst the other skills that Zac identifies are self-reflection, planning and organisation and communication. Self-reflection is especially important in being able to recognise the “wins” and “weaknesses” that have been experienced during a mentoring session. This in turn enables the mentor to appropriately adjust their strategies, if necessary, in response. This self-reflection occurs explicitly when mentors and their coordinator debrief as group at the end of a mentoring session. This relates to planning in that when setbacks occur mentors should “go back to [their] planning”. Zac explains that each mentoring session requires significant pre-planning in order that there is a meaningful structure within which the mentor-mentee interactions can occur. The planning particularly relates to the games and activities that are the focus of the opening phase of each mentoring session. These games and activities serve as the focus of the dialogue that occurs during the debriefing at the end of the games and activities.

Therefore, active mentor-mentee engagement in this phase is pivotal to the success of the session because without engagement there can be no significant dialogue and without dialogue, there is no learning. Intrinsicly, therefore, effective communication is of great importance to the mentor-mentee relationship. In particular, Zac identifies being able to have a natural, flowing conversation with a young person – often focused on the young person’s interests - and to read their body language as being key.

Zac identifies that, while the group activity phase of session is important and useful, the primacy of the one-on-one interaction between mentor and mentee should always be understood. It should be that during this time is when mentees can truly be themselves. This affords the mentees “comfort and room to explore themselves” through open and honest dialogue, to develop a connection with their mentor with “no fear” of perceived weaknesses being “targeted”. In such an environment, engendered by mutual trust and respect, the mentee can get “past the barriers” to experience “conversational learning” with the mentor. The ideal state for a mentor to arrive at, according to Zac, in relation to their interaction with mentees is that of autonomy. He explains that in this state, a mentor is capable of making independently making decisions about how interactions will be conducted. This includes the structure of each session, the matching of mentors and mentees and the intentional scaffolding of the development of mentor-mentee relationships. As it stands, the mentoring session are tightly defined by parameters set by the organisation that has responsibility for the school-based mentoring program. The purpose of this is to create a stable and purposeful environment in which group cohesion can be nurtured and the mentor-mentee relationships can develop. Zac explains that, though quite tightly defined, within these parameters, there is plenty of room for creativity, choice and play. In this regard, he expresses some frustration with mentors who engage with mentoring as “passengers” by not taking the initiative to enhance their relationships with their mentees.

Ultimately, Zac considers that the purpose of mentoring is to assist mentees to develop social and emotional capabilities. These capabilities are defined and mandated by the mentoring program. They include “self-esteem, grit and determination, empathy, autonomy, control, teamwork, communication and leadership skills”. In pursuit of these capabilities, the coordinator of the mentoring group sets particular goals for the year and for each mentoring

session. These sessions are designed and planned for coherent and cohesive pursuit of the goals. Zac explains that, although this engenders quite particular direction for the mentors, they have scope to operate with some amount of autonomy with regard to the goals, in their one-on-one time. Zac insists that, although the mentoring context has been set up as a tightly defined space, there is room for the mentors and mentees to play freely within that space. It seems that Zac believes it would be successful if mentors exhibited certain characteristics and traits. Principally, these seem to be: authenticity and open-ness; commitment and reliability; initiative and a willingness to collaborate.

1. The aim of the mentoring relationship is to bring about transformation by promoting the growth of social and emotional maturity.

Zac and Holly both expressed a conviction that their role as mentors was to foster positive change in young peoples' lives. Holly said that what she enjoys most about mentoring is

...seeing some sort of transformation...or development in that young person

Similarly, Zac expressed his belief that

...change is happening through that relationship.

Both insisted that a mentor's belief in the transformative potential of mentoring and a genuine commitment to facilitating it were vital to achieving positive outcomes. Holly identified people who don't possess such commitment as

volunteers who come in with this kind of pseudo altruistic kind of thing about them.

You know it's like they want to help people but when it gets to actually doing some work then "No I'm out" sort of thing....But I guess they're mixed in with people who are there just to tick a box to get the experience, to get onto something better.

Zac explained that in the process of recruiting new mentors, they look for candidates of whom they can say

this person's genuine and they really have that intrinsic motivation to want to support a young person, and through that they're going to make that commitment.

Zac and Holly regarded a mentor's motivation to promote and facilitate positive transformation in their mentee as instrumental to such transformation. Zac and Holly's

program was particularly focused on improving in the quality of mentees' social and emotional capabilities in order to promote a transformation to maturity.

2. Establishment and maintenance of the mentor-mentee relationship is the mentor's highest priority.

For a mentor to effect the achievement of such transformation in mentees' social and emotional maturity requires a strong bond between mentor and mentee. In fact, Holly recalled that, in her early mentoring days, when she was learning the job and developing her skills, she prioritised the relationship as the one thing she had to get right. She said,

I wasn't really focused on how [mentoring] was going to impact upon [the mentee's] life. I was more focused on establishing this good relationship...I definitely remember the relationship quality being a more important outcome.

Having developed as a professional mentor over several years, she continued to identify the strong relational bond between mentor and mentee as being of utmost importance in achieving the transformative mission of mentoring:

The change [in the quality of mentees' social and emotional engagement] is most attributed to the relationship regardless of the content that the relationship is built around...the change is happening through the relationship.

Similarly, Zac said that, although the program agenda was important,

I'm positive this is what the research finds, that...the change is most attributed to the relationship.

Both Zac and Holly were also quite clear that, to work successfully towards mentees' social and emotional development, a mentor must understand the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship. Zac explained it in these terms:

The relationship is collaborative with that young person, and I think through that, if you take that approach, that's what's going to keep the young person committed to you, and also you committed to the young person. Yes, you are - you know, you're the wiser figure in that sense, and you're a professional friend.

Holly expressed it in these terms:

It's partly some sort of a friendship, but there's - it's sort of an adolescent having a friendship with an adult. So there's this adult perspective in it, which is to help them develop, which - I think that came into it. Like while the relationship I think was enjoyable for that mentee and they were getting some enjoyment out of it, it was also helpful to their progression.

Significantly, Zac and Holly both insisted that the relationship should be collaborative. Holly said,

My ideal sense of the relationship is a collaboration.

Zac framed the mentor-mentee relationship these terms:

you and the young person, you're learning together.

3. Dialogue between mentor and mentee is the most powerful catalyst for change

Holly and Zac believed that substantive dialogue between mentors and mentees was the primary source of a mentee's transformation. Zac said that *the research that we've found is that most of the learning from the young person is coming from just that social learning...you know, having those conversations with mentors....*[Being able to engage mentees in dialogue] *is an essential thing for a mentor.*

Holly referred to positive change occurring in mentees as a result of the mentors

leading that conversation. You're not waiting - I think with most of the young people I'd try and build rapport with, I don't wait to see them make an effort with me. I just - I make it clear that I want a connection with them, or I want to know about them.

While conversational engagement was initially superficial, the mentors believed that as a relationship developed, the content of the dialogue deepened and, in doing so, addressed substantive issues of the mentee's personal experience and social-emotional development.

Zac described this process in these terms:

Well, we'll follow that - as we were talking about - that scaffolding, sort of structured approach. Start off with really fun, easy conversation topics. We'll do a speed dating exercise where for a minute - every minute they've got to swap partners and stuff, and they have to talk about where's your most ideal holiday destination or something like that.

Then we'll move from those types of activities into more trust-building activities, where we'll start talking about what are you - where do you want to be in five years' time? If you could wake up tomorrow and your dream had come true, what would that be? Then we'll get the mentor, with the young person, to unpack that.

Then a few weeks later there will be - assuming that they've been matched with that young person - then they'll actually be able to start working with them on a deeper level, such as exploring their strengths.

Holly characterised the role of the mentor in the dialogue as primarily as an empathetic and attentive interlocutor and source of advice.

[During one-on-one time], mentees opening up about things that have happened in their past or in their life or things they're finding challenging at school, and you know, they can speak to this mentor about it and get advice or just have someone who's willing to listen and have a non-judgemental manner.

Such engagement was possible only if the relationship between mentor and mentee had been sufficiently nurtured and if the mentee had developed trust in the mentor. As Zac explained, trust was essential because successful mentoring demands

a personal, intimate connection with another person where there's no fear of others – particularly peers – picking up your weaknesses and then using that to your disadvantage...That person can be a lot more comfortable and explore themselves and explore the topics that we're trying to push...There are lots of barriers to getting there...but that's where the conversational learning takes place.

Therefore, the level of mentor-mentee dialogue required to successfully promote transformation necessitates a relational depth characterised particularly by the mentee's trust in their mentor.

4. Particular personal characteristics are necessary to be a successful professional mentor, owing the challenging nature of the role.

Holly and Zac indicated that for a mentor must bring a particular range of characteristics to their engagement with their mentee in order to establishing a quality relationship. Characteristics of particular significance were empathy and authenticity. Empathy was regarded as deeply important because making a personal connection with a mentee necessitates being able to genuinely identify with them. In their initial interviews,

Holly and Zac clearly indicated that being able to identify with their mentees was a key aspect of their early success as mentors. For Zac, his early motivation was in

Just knowing that okay, I'm actually doing something to help these young people out here.

In Holly's case, her desire to work as a mentor came from her direct, personal experience:

Because I felt like I had a mentor during high school. I felt that that really - yeah I think that having that sort of role model of someone who you could relate to was really important for me going through high school.

Likewise, authenticity was regarded by both mentors as a driver of a mentor's successful engagement with a mentee. Zac and Holly expressed their understanding of authenticity as the mentor's projection of a genuine interest in the mentee and a desire for genuine relational connection with them. While Holly's appreciation of authenticity was implicit, Zac's was explicit. In his discussion of authenticity, he identified it as being expressed in a mentor's ability to be fully engaged with their mentee. He said,

you just need to be there. You need to be present. You shouldn't be thinking about what you're going to say next.

In referring to a mentor he regarded as particularly effective, Zac said that he

just went into it as himself. Presented himself, you know, not behind a mentoring mask or anything like that.

While a person's capacity for empathy and authenticity may incline them to become involved in mentoring, Zac and Holly indicated that the characteristics of resilience,

reflexivity and autonomy would enable them to engage with their mentee over the long term. Both recalled that, initially, they found mentoring a challenging undertaking because they inevitably made mistakes, had plans fall apart and had to cope with mentees' difficult behaviour. Therefore they came to value the capacity to 'bounce back'. Holly remarked that

if they [strategies] don't work, it's not the end of the world. You may take two steps backwards, but go back to your planning and involved the other person in that, and then come up with a solution yourselves.

She and Zac regarded mistakes or failures as opportunities for learning and growth. Therefore, they seemed to see that a mentor's resilience needed to be matched by their capacity for reflexivity.

Zac insisted that

if you fail, the most important thing is you've gotta learn quickly from it. And really that's why we try and do the debriefs...at the end of every single session.

In this regard, he considered that one of the most important attributes of a mentor

is self-awareness, you know being willing to really think about and examine your own actions and learn quickly from failure.

To this end, reflexivity was seen as important and to be encouraged. However, Zac was sceptical about volunteer mentors' propensity to voluntarily engage in it, remarking:

[1]et's be honest, no one would do it [unless they were directed to].

Consequently, he explained that lead mentors convened a debriefing with volunteer mentors at the conclusion of each mentoring session to provide directed and scaffolded reflection upon each mentoring session.

Nevertheless, both Zac and Holly regarded autonomy as an important characteristic of an effective mentor. In particular, they believed that a mentor needed to take ownership of the relationship with their mentee. They expressed some degree of frustration with mentors who rely upon their supervisors to resolve complications and setbacks. Zac said that mentors need to be autonomous in that they should

take control of the situation. Make decisions independently. We'll tell them [the mentors] at the start, you don't always have to come to us [supervisors]. You and the young person, you're learning together. Make decisions together. If they don't work, it's not the end of the world. You may take two steps backwards, but go back to your planning and involved the other person in that, and then come up with a solution yourselves.

In combination, the characteristics of empathy, authenticity, resilience, reflexivity and autonomy seem to empower a mentor with the overwhelmingly important characteristic of commitment. Unless the mentor is prepared to stay the distance, a mentoring relationship will not develop and endure. As Zac put it,

It doesn't matter who you are or your personal attributes...if you make a conscious effort to stick with it, and to really go through that self-development process.

Holly agreed that a mentor's capacity to commit consistently over an extended period of time is pivotal to the relationship producing positive outcomes for the mentee. She said,

I think for the young people that I've seen who've really shown some transformation, they've had...a really long, kind of consistent relationship.

Therefore, they believed that a mentor who is able to consistently exhibit the characteristics of empathy, authenticity, resilience, reflexivity and autonomy is more likely to engage with their mentee over the long-term, and is therefore more likely to be successful in the transformative goals of mentoring.

5. Mentors should be role models for mentees

Along with conversational engagement, Zac and Holly believed that mentors influenced the transformation of mentees by modelling social and emotional maturity. Holly saw being a role model as

presenting yourself as a positive role model. So you know leading by example and within that then promoting positive messages and behaviours to young people.

Zac believed that mentors could particularly influence social maturity, saying

[y]ou know the biggest thing is the mentors modelling the correct behaviours.

In this mode, role modelling was a passive function, in which mentors behaved in their accustomed mature manner for mentees to observe and absorb these behaviours. However, mentors also saw role modelling as having an active mode, in which the mentor shared narratives and insights from their own life experiences with their mentees. Holly explained,

While they're not selling they're whole life story... [the mentor is] openly reflecting on failures they've had in their life that may relate to where that young person's at, sharing and showing that it's a learning experience. The open-ness is really key to developing [the relationship].

Zac agreed, saying *when you're in a situation where it's ...a mentor-mentee relationship, then you would assume that the young person is going to be looking up to that mentor... You know, yes [the relationship] is not really meant to be an imbalance, but*

[mentees] are still going to be looking up to [mentors], and soaking up the stuff that they're saying.

In this sense, the mentors advocated for the use of personal narrative to model coping skills. As the above quotes suggest, the use of these narratives also contributed depth and efficacy to conversational engagement between mentors and mentees.

6. A structured approach can focus mentors' sense of purpose, scaffold mentor-mentee relational development and promote growth of mentees' social skills.

While Zac and Holly believed in the transformative potential of mentor-mentee relationships, they also shared a belief in controlling for such relationships' potential limitations and vulnerabilities. This was because they understood that, by its nature and intent, a mentoring relationship is a very particular type of friendship which serves a particular purpose, such as facilitating social-emotional development. Zac explained the relationship as

a professional friendship in that you have to establish those parameters at the start.

We will meet at this time every week, under [the mentoring organisation's] guidelines or the school guidelines. The relationship will go until x. This is what's expected of me, this is what I expect of you. Just establish those things.

When Holly reflected on the nature of the relationship, she said

I wouldn't say it's solely friendship, because that would mean there's no sort of structure or development necessarily.

Outside a formal mentoring context, a friendship may develop such that one of the pair adopts the role of mentor - nurturing, guiding and supporting the development of the other; however,

Zac and Holly did not believe that the opposite can be true. Rather, their opinion seemed to be that a mentoring relationship cannot be allowed to develop serendipitously because to do so would be to leave the achievement of identified outcomes to chance. Holly explained that

It's definitely important to have a framework...and having a focus to each session...does help by giving it more purpose in what they're trying to do and what conversations [the mentors] are trying to bring up.

Consequently, mentors advocated for controlling the conditions in which mentoring relationships developed. Holly referred to this as 'structure'. Structure was seen by both mentors as essential to ensuring the best likelihood of a mentoring relationship developing successfully and fulfilling the mandated objectives of the program. Holly identified that

what I've needed to do is create structure around things that are ambiguous because otherwise you can lose direction and when it's a year-long of a program you can lose sight of the - you know all the outcomes... you just don't feel like you're achieving anything. Then you sort of - that's where you start to disengage as a mentor I guess.

Zac and Holly considered it necessary to orchestrate the development of mentor-mentee relationships across the span of the mentoring program, maintaining order and maintaining the momentum of mentor-mentee engagement in each session, as they sought to move the level of their engagement from the purely social to the more substantive. It seemed that in doing this, they were controlling for what they perceived to be limitations in volunteer mentors' expertise, motivation and experience.

Initially, Zac and Holly seemed to regard structure as the key operative feature of the mentoring program. However, in the course of the interviews, they reconsidered this position. In the follow-up interviews, both expressed the view that structure must serve the

relationship as the prime concern. That is, in instances in which structural elements are considered an impediment or threat to this growth, structure is to be foregone in order to maintain the integrity and development of the mentor-mentee relationship. Holly said,

I mean, if you focus only on being structured and achieving each outcome you kind of miss some of the improvised, really kind of intimate moments that you might not achieve if you structure the hell out of everything.

Because I mean if you get up there and you're a structured person and you say - if you don't have any personality to you then nobody's going to sort of aspire to be a part of whatever you're trying to sell.

Similarly, Zac expressed his view that a mentor should avoid being overly bound by a program's structure:

If you're interacting with your mentee, and you're picking up that they're not engaged today for whatever reason, don't try and push them into doing something that they don't want to do. Because then it's gonna have a negative effect.

Consequently, both Zac and Holly arrived at a position in which they saw that the need for formal mentoring to be defined by parameters and structure needed to be balanced against the primary importance of the quality of mentor-mentee relationships.