MONASH University

A mixed-methods evaluation of an Australian school-based mentoring program

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Abstract

Youth mentoring is a widespread intervention that has gained popularity in Australia over the past decade. Although there is support for the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of youth mentoring as an intervention, much of this evidence originates in USA, and is based on a relationship model of mentoring. The effectiveness of this model for shorter, school-based mentoring programs (SBM) in other contexts has been questioned, and the evidence for SBM remains mixed. The overall aims of this mixed-methods study were:

a) To research whether a USA developed, relationship-based model of mentoring is applicable in a time-limited, Australian high school setting.
b) To examine whether a mentoring program that adheres to best-practice standards can achieve effect sizes that are stronger than previously evidenced in the research.
c) To facilitate further understanding of the processes that influence mentees' experiences of mentoring, and how these experience impacts both the mentoring relationship and the outcomes.

In the first phase of research, a pre-test post-test design was used (N = 293) which found that, as expected, mentees experienced positive outcomes in social-emotional wellbeing measures, academic self-confidence, grades and relationships with peers. However, no significant outcomes were experienced in school attendance or relationships with family. Effect sizes remained in the small-medium range, which is consistent with previous research, despite nearly all best-practice recommendations being in place. Contrary to expectations, there were no strong associations between mentee adjustment and relationship quality. These results raised a question about the applicability of a relationship-based model of mentoring in a school environment.

In the second phase of research, semi-structured interviews with mentees and mentors (N = 21) were examined using thematic analysis, and collectively found the mentoring relationship *was* important in influencing outcomes. However, several pre-conditions needed to be in place for a positive relationship to develop. Further, in order for the relationship to become effective, qualities such as consistency, connection, fun, encouragement and reciprocity were needed to progress from pre-trust to trust. Only in the 'trust' phase did relationships become active, skill-based and lead to positive outcomes.

Taken together, these findings are promising in their ability to increase the effectiveness of an Australian school-based mentoring program by furthering knowledge of the processes that lead to effective mentoring relationships in this context. They also support a revised model for in-school mentoring to be tested in future research.

Implications for the way school-based programs measure both outcomes and relationship quality are discussed, and recommendations for practice are put forward. In addition, suggestions for practitioners or scholars wanting to adopt a research-practitioner approach are proposed.

Declaration

This thesis is an original work of my research and contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. Excluding references and appendices, this thesis is less than 80,000 words in length.

Signature:

Print Name: Carol Sandiford

Date: 28th October 2020

Acknowledgements

As it takes a village to raise a child, so is it with writing a PhD thesis.

Maddie, I dedicate this thesis to you. You were undoubtedly my inspiration for making it across the finish line, as well as my biggest cheerleader, and the light of my life.

I also dedicate this work to all young people growing up in Australia who doubt their future pathways. My own path was anything but smooth; I dropped out of school at the age of fourteen, a disengaged 'at-risk' youth. Here is proof that there is more than one route to success – whatever that is for you personally. Get yourself a mentor and follow your dreams!

Thank you to my wonderful family, friends and university mates who all helped me in different ways. Graeme, for always supporting me in whatever path I have chosen. Special thanks to Lindsey, Jen, Katy, Laura, Karen and my run-buddies Marg and Fi. For listening, proof-reading, reflecting, encouraging, and putting up with me. And of course, the fabulous Theadora, whose hours of work and cross-Atlantic phone sessions added so much depth to my analysis and happiness to my heart. Thanks also to my mum and dad, always, for everything. I love you all so, so much.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1 - A reflection on motivation and orientation for this narrative of enquiry

As a young adult, I joined the Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program in Adelaide and was matched with an extraordinary 11-year-old girl with whom I enjoyed an immediate and lasting connection. My relationship with Tammy spanned three decades and was life-changing for us both. This experience sparked a lifelong interest in psychology and eventually led to my first ever 'heart' job at the age of 40, charged with the implementation of a mentoring program for young mothers in Melbourne's north-western suburbs.

This story is relevant here, because of the opportunity that became available to me to undertake a PhD thesis when completing my Master of Psychology degree. I was drawn to this opportunity primarily because I wanted to facilitate changes for young people at a more systemic level than would be afforded to me as a clinical practitioner. Anecdotally, through my experience with Tammy, I believed mentoring to be an extremely powerful intervention with the ability to change young lives for the better. The evidence, however, suggested differently. Despite the influx of mentoring programs over the past 20 years (and the funding necessary to run them), mentoring interventions consistently demonstrate a small effect size at best, despite an abundance of research and related recommendations to practice (Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; DuBois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn, & Valentine, 2011; Raposa et al., 2019).

The passion I had for my role as a Program Counsellor at a youth mentoring organisation, and the somewhat lukewarm evidence that appeared to plague the mentoring industry, were both instrumental in the creation of my research intent. I knew that if I was to be able to make the commitment and sacrifice required to complete an undertaking the size of a PhD, it would need to be one that had useful application in practice. It was somewhat fortunate that the degree I was undertaking – the practitioner training degree Master of

Educational and Developmental Psychology - is located not in a psychology department but in the Faculty of Education at Monash University. This has afforded me some licence to be creative with the structure of this thesis and allowed me to write more in the genre of an educational thesis, albeit written by a psychologist. And so, I have taken this as an opportunity to innovate with an unorthodox approach for my discipline, which is to write the story of my journey as a research-practitioner undertaking an evaluation of a school-based mentoring program in Australia. To that end, this thesis has become not just an exploration of mentoring, but also an exploration of the process that I have undertaken as a scientist-practitioner, and in the process, an evaluation of both. In this, I have sought to have the research process I have adopted reflect the spirit and intent of the combined degree designed to produce research informed and active practitioners.

I became aware of the research-practice gap in youth mentoring very early on in my PhD journey, and it both alarmed and excited me. Alarmed, because if I looked closely at the results, they did not paint a very robust picture of the impact that youth mentoring had (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019). Not only was there the issue of the stubbornly small effect size mentioned earlier, but some research showed that poor quality mentoring could leave a young person worse off than having no intervention (Grossman, Chan, Schwartz, & Rhodes, 2012; Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, Feldman, & McMaken, 2007; Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014).

As an ethical practitioner, “do no harm” was paramount, and I felt a duty of care not only to the young people who were the beneficiaries of the program run by my employer, but also to those in other mentoring programs. On the other hand, I was excited because I was working for a mentoring organisation whose CEO and staff prided themselves on conducting ‘best practice’ youth mentoring programs and who had implemented almost all the recommendations that DuBois and his colleagues found to predict better outcomes for young

people (Raise Foundation, 2015). I saw an opportunity to test the research-to-practice recommendations that had been made by top researchers in the field and explore the impact of youth mentoring in an Australian setting, with a best-practice model as evidenced by current research.

The Research-Practitioner

As will be described elsewhere in this thesis (see p.62), I did not plan from the outset to use a research-practitioner framework. However, like many others who have been on this journey before me, there were times when I felt disillusioned, incompetent, disconnected, and just too busy with 'real life' to complete this PhD. It was at one of these junctures when a simple question asked by my supervisor gave me the grounding and focus that I needed to continue. This question was 'what is it you want to achieve with this research?'. The answer to this question provided me with crucial information both about my motivation, but also with the direction I needed for the research to be worthwhile in my own view.

My approach thus far had stemmed from a theoretical, academic perspective, which makes perfect sense, being a PhD undertaken in a university setting. However, this perspective often felt limiting. I was grappling to find my place and sense of belonging in the literature, and it appeared impossible. So much had already been done in my field, and anything I could add felt insignificant, inconsequential. If this was so, how then could I make the sacrifices to my life, to my family, that are required to complete a project of this size? The answer to this came with the answer to my supervisor's simple question. In a very practical and focussed sense, what I wanted to achieve through this research is to improve the work that Raise Foundation is doing to support young people in Australia through their school-based mentoring programs. However, this did not feel big enough, or broad enough.

It felt too personal, perhaps even selfish - but it excited and motivated me in a way that I had not felt for some time.

I began to think of what might be possible if I could be unashamed about this desire and could bring my strengths as a practitioner to the forefront of my research. Shaw and Lunt (2018) describe practitioner-research as research that is conducted with the aim of *improving effectiveness* or *deepening understanding of practice*, and this is something that greatly appealed. I turned to the literature about practitioner research to explore how I could, in a robust, scientific, and evidence-based way, focus my research on very practical aims and benefits at a local level. This framework formed the basis of this research, and is discussed in detail in the Methodology chapter (see p.62).

Thus, armed as both a researcher and professional in the youth mentoring field, I wanted to question and test some of the assumptions that the youth mentoring industry in Australia had made. First, that the vast body of existing youth mentoring research was relevant and could be generalised to Australian youth. The majority of research has been undertaken in the USA, and much of it centres on the programs of a single provider - Big Brother Big Sister USA. Second, I wanted to question the assumption that mentoring was an effective intervention warranting significant investment of time and money. It puzzled me that significant amounts of funding continued to be invested into mentoring in the USA and other countries such as UK and Canada, despite research stubbornly showing only modest improvements. Third, I wanted to take this research beyond survey-based evaluation to try to answer what I saw as more important questions – such as 'what are the processes and mechanisms of mentoring that lead to improved outcomes?' and 'for whom, and under what circumstances, is mentoring most effective?' I had some lingering doubts about the effectiveness of survey-based evaluations, particularly with adolescents (Wright & Ogbuehi, 2014). I recognised that survey results at best could only tell us what we already knew to

ask, and I wanted to find out more about what the experience of having a mentor was like for young people in Australia in their own voice. I wanted to understand more about the processes of change and hoped to shed some light on why mentoring 'worked' for some young people but was ineffective for others.

The Research Questions

It was through these initial questions and interests that my research intent was developed. The enquiring nature of the questions means that the exercise is largely exploratory and thus the methodology dominantly qualitative. The over-arching research question became:

"How do participants in a six-month youth mentoring program in an Australian high school setting experience the program, and what do their experiences tell us about perceived outcomes?".

The first stage of this research was designed to measure outcomes experienced by participants in the program. Specifically, the research questions for this quantitative study became:

1. Does participation in Raise Foundation's In-School Mentoring Opportunity (Ismo) mentoring program result in improved outcomes for young people, specifically:
    a. Improved social-emotional outcomes
    b. Improved school engagement
    c. Improved relationships with others
2. How does the quality of the mentoring relationship influence these outcomes?

The next stage of the research is from the mentee's perspective and aims to explore and explain how mentees experience the Ismo program, and how their experience can influence the mentoring relationship, specifically:

3. What attributes are perceived as influencing young people's experience of a six-month school-based mentoring program in Australia?
4. How are these attributes perceived as influencing the mentoring relationship, and the outcomes experienced by young people?

The third and final stage of the research is from the mentor's perspective, and aims to increase understanding of the mentor's role, specifically:

5. What are the different attributes of mentors that are perceived to influence the mentoring relationship?

Through the process of writing this thesis, my interest in the research-practitioner framework led to a final, secondary research question. The justification for the research-practitioner approach is introduced in the methodology chapter, and the success or otherwise of this approach will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis specifically:

6. Can a research-practitioner framework help to reduce the research-practice gap in the context of youth intervention programs?

Thesis Structure

One of the challenges of the thesis design was whether to privilege quantitative or qualitative data. Initially the design was conceived of as an explanatory sequential mixed methods design privileging quantitative data. However, given the enquiring nature of my questions and then working within the confines of school timetables and the whims of adolescents it soon became evident I needed to undertake the qualitative interviews *before* I

was able to analyse the quantitative data. Then, as I began to talk with students and their mentors about their experiences of mentoring, I realised that the richness and depth of information that I was hearing far surpassed that which I could learn from survey results. In the words of one of my participants at the end of an interview:

> *Int: Has it been ok [the interview]?*
>
> *Amy: Yeah, I liked it! We can do more of it!*
>
> *Int: I liked it too.*
>
> *Amy: Yeah, because normally we just do those surveys where you tick the box on the forms. They go for so long and then I just kind of give up and go 'maybe' or just tick one column because I'm over it….*

And thus, my beautifully neat survey design became more complex with concurrent data collection shifted from privileging numbers to privileging the words of my participants. The survey data - born from theory - provided the bones, the skeleton from which I explored. It informed the questions to my semi-structured interviews. The interviews themselves filled in those bones and made them living, breathing creatures, in all their messy glory. The words of my participants added characteristics and features that I had not imagined or dreamed of and helped to explain some of those more curious bone structures.

This thesis is structured in a way that intends to bring the reader along on a journey, a narrative of discovery to understand what it is like for a young person to accept an unknown stranger into their lives, primarily for the purpose of talking about themselves.

The story begins with a review of the current literature to bring context to the research questions and explore the vast breadth of excellent research that has been conducted on the youth mentoring field, highlighting notable gaps. Next, the methodology of the research is explained, before introducing the quantitative component of the study – the bones of the

skeleton pieced together through information gleaned both from previous research and the surveys themselves which were meticulously designed and painstakingly answered by my participants at the beginning and the end of their participation in the program, to measure change. Two qualitative studies follow, one from the perspective of the mentees, and the other from the perspective of the mentors. It is here that those skeletons are turned into living breathing creatures with characteristics I never even knew existed, through the words and descriptions of my participants. Finally, I bring them both together in an integrated discussion to show that together they are more than the sum of their parts. The thesis ends with a reflective conclusion and summary of the outcomes to complete the story.

Although the knowledge gleaned from each phase of the research has a cumulative effect, one phase does not inform the next. Rather, each looks at the same phenomenon but from a different perspective. Together they aim to explore the complexity of the interactional relationship between two people, with an overarching focus on the mentee, their experience, and their outcomes.

The next chapter introduces the reader to the mentoring literature to lay the foundation for the research studies.

Chapter 2 – Current State of Youth Mentoring

The intent of this chapter is to provide background understanding of the youth mentoring literature and a rationale for the formulation of the research questions. In the process, it will examine theoretical underpinning frameworks that help to explain how mentoring can impact adolescent development. Specifically, this review will:

1. Define the research problem and provide a rationale for why the research is important.
2. Briefly explain mentoring from both an historical and modern-day perspective.
3. Introduce and define the concept of mentoring in the context of this research as a relationship-based intervention that may support positive adolescent development.
4. Explore the developmental challenges and tasks of adolescence, focussing on the role that trusted adults play during this phase of significant change and growth.
5. Explain the theoretical model of mentoring proposed for the research and discuss the mentoring relationship – that somewhat elusive but all-important feature of the theoretical model.
6. Review the current evidence base for youth mentoring both in Australia and internationally with a focus on school-based mentoring programs.
7. Consider whether mentoring can be an effective intervention for young people in Australian high school settings.

Search Methods & Tools

After development of the research questions, key words, terms and phrases were identified. Themes were developed that could be linked using the Boolean operator 'AND'. As the research questions were interested in mentoring in an Australian context, for the themes "youth" and "mentoring", a secondary search including Australia as a key search term was conducted. PsychInfo database and the Monash University library search engine were

used to conduct an extensive review of the current literature in 2015, 2017 and finally 2020. Google Scholar was also used to find relevant reports or grey literature not picked up in the database search.

Table 1

Themes of the Literature Review with Keyword/Search String

Theme	Keyword/Search string
Youth	(youth OR "young person" OR adolescen* OR child OR teen* OR protégé)
Mentoring	(mentor* OR "trusted adult" AND (school OR community))
Adolescent Development	(development OR "positive development")
Relationships	(relationship OR "relational theory")
Geographical setting	Australia

The Problem

A significant number of young people in Australia are struggling. Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data shows that the youth unemployment rate is 13% - more than double that of the general population (ABS, 2018). Ten per cent of young Australians remain disengaged from education, training and employment (R. Reeve et al., 2016) and Mission Australia's 2017 Report shows that for the first time, mental health (defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2004) as "a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community"), is the number one issue concerning young people in Australia (Bullot, Cave, Fildes, Hall, & Plummer, 2017).

Clinical interventions are both expensive and time-consuming (Assess Economics, 2009) and there are many barriers that prevent young people from accessing formal support

(Haavik, Joa, Hatloy, Stain, & Langeveld, 2017). Cost-effective, scalable, and accessible solutions are urgently needed to provide young people with increased support in navigating adolescence and overcoming hurdles which might impede their progression to positive trajectories.

A growing body of research provides evidence that mentoring relationships for young people can cost effectively serve to build protective qualities and strengthen significant psychological attributes that are linked to positive outcomes in domains such as resilience, self-concept, behaviour and academic achievement (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Montañez, Berger-Jenkins, Rodriguez, McCord, & Meyer, 2015; Rhodes, Grossman, & Roffman, 2002). This evidence suggests that scaling up quality, evidence-based youth mentoring programs may offer a promising and much needed contribution in support of young Australians. However, despite this promise and a substantial body of research, the evidence to date is marred by inconsistencies in results and small effects that diminish with time (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011). In a meta-analysis encompassing 73 independent evaluations of youth mentoring programs, DuBois (2011) found that there are several program practices that mentoring programs can implement which incrementally increase effect size. However, these suggestions have seldom been implemented in full, leaving a research-practice gap that is yet to be filled.

In addition to the gap between research and practice, while the evidence shows that best practice mentoring works, we know less about *how* it works for *whom* it works, and under what circumstances it is most effective. The research intent for this thesis is encapsulated in qualitative and quantitative research questions formulated to explore and examine both the efficacy of school-based mentoring programs and the processes through which efficacies are achieved.

The research questions are described in the previous chapter (see p.5), with the aim of exploring and answering this over-arching question:

"How do participants in a six-month youth mentoring program in an Australian high school setting experience the program, and what do their experiences tell us about perceived outcomes?".

Rationale for Mentoring

In the past, communities have provided natural mentors for young people through a number of roles that adults play – such as extended family members, neighbours, church leaders, sport coaches etc. Major changes in the family structures, employment, and a shift away from cohesive community environments have dramatically reduced young people's access to caring adults (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). In addition, there is disparity in young people's access to trusted adults, with the more risk factors facing a young person, the less likely they are to have a supportive adult in their lives (Raposa, Erickson, Hagler, & Rhodes, 2018; Ungar, 2013). Youth mentoring programs are one promising way of addressing this disparity (DuBois & Karcher, 2005; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Rhodes, 2002).

The presence of an older, more experienced person who can provide support and guidance is important at all stages of development (Meltzer, Muir, & Craig; Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013). However, adolescence has its own unique challenges and is often a particularly difficult time for many young people as they face many challenges socially, emotionally, and academically.

Alongside these challenges come major biological influences and changes that can cause a great deal of stress for young people as they attempt to find their new place in the world. In Australia, research shows that more than 25% of young people aged between 16

and 24 experiences a mental disorder (Slade, Johnston, Oakley Browne, Andrews, & Whiteford, 2009). High levels of emotional and behavioural problems are associated with suicide ideation and behaviour, low self-esteem, higher difficulties at school and increased risk behaviour in young people (Sawyer et al., 2001).

Government policy has acknowledged these challenges for youth and created initiatives such as KidsMatter (an early intervention program designed for implementation in preschools, long day care and primary schools) and Headspace (information, support and advice for young people 12-25 years old). However, evidence shows over 60% of young people are not comfortable seeking support from professional services (Ivancic, Perrens, Fildes, Perry, & Christensen, 2014). Barriers to seeking services include that young people prefer to manage the problem themselves, or do not believe that anyone is able to help them. Many are unsure where to get help from or feel that there is stigma associated to seeking support (Ivancic et al., 2014; Sawyer et al., 2001). In addition, according to the Youth Mental Health Report, school counsellors report that a growing group of young people are not unwell enough to access external mental health services such as Headspace, but still require help and assistance to build resilience and decrease the risk of developing mental health problems in the future (Ivancic et al., 2014).

Despite these barriers, one of the places where young people frequently utilize services is in the school environment (Ivancic et al., 2014). Recommendations from the Youth Mental Health Report include targeting mental health in schools through early intervention programs that focus on resilience. Thus, it is important that there are adequate school-based services for adolescents with emotional and behavioural problems, as many are unlikely to seek support outside of this environment. In-school mentoring programs have the potential to provide support to youth - both those who are currently experiencing, and those at risk of experiencing emotional and behavioural problems.

Definition of Mentoring

Before proceeding, it is important to consider a definition of mentoring for this research. Many texts on mentoring begin by citing Homer's Odyssey and telling the story of Mentor, who is entrusted to serve as teacher and advisor to Odysseus' son, Telemachus when Odysseus is called away to war. This story is often misrepresented; in fact, Mentor failed in his duties, and the household quickly fell into disarray putting Telemachus in danger. It was the goddess Athena, disguised as Mentor who intervened to guide, encourage and support Telemachus. Without Athena's intervention, Telemachus would almost certainly have met a less than desirable end. Perhaps interventions based on providing a trusted adult for youth should be known as 'Athena-ing' programs, however it was the name Mentor that stuck and has been used throughout history and to the current day to describe a more experienced, wiser person who provides support and guidance to a less experienced person.

The three major areas of mentoring research are workplace or career mentoring, academic mentoring and youth mentoring (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & Dubois, 2008). Career mentoring is where a more senior and experienced person provides career-related support and psychosocial support to a more junior or less experienced person, usually with the intention of advancing them in the workplace (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz, & Lima, 2004). Academic mentoring is generally found in educational settings where a faculty member supports a student in learning and development as well as psychosocial support (Eby et al., 2008). Within the youth mentoring research there are several streams including group mentoring, e-mentoring, peer mentoring, natural mentoring, community mentoring and school-based mentoring. The focus of this research is on formal *youth* mentoring, with a narrowing in to focus on school-based mentoring.

As is common in the social sciences, researchers do not agree on a single definition of youth mentoring, and debate in the literature is rife. In a practical sense, mentoring programs

have moulded and adapted both academic definitions to suit the purpose of their own program. A full discussion is beyond the scope of this document, however for the purpose of examining and answering the overarching research question, the following definition of mentoring is proposed.

Brooker (2011) reviewed and refined definitions from the youth mentoring literature and proposed a definition of youth mentoring as:

> "A formal youth mentoring program is one in which a young person (mentee) is paired with a non-parental, older, more experienced person (mentor) with the expectation that a close relationship characterised by trust develops; within which the mentor can offer support and guidance to their mentee, and share companionship, with the intention of fostering the mentee's growth and development *over a period of at least six months*." (p.22, author's own note in italics).

The addition of time has been included as Brooker's definition lacks explicit acknowledgement of the influence of *length* of mentoring which has been shown to be important in the literature (DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman et al., 2012). Whilst there is some disagreement on the length of time required to influence positive outcomes, with some researchers suggesting that a true mentoring relationship needs to be 12 months or more; the minimum requirement for an effective mentoring relationship is generally agreed to be six months (Grossman et al., 2012).

Brooker's definition includes three core elements that are seen to be important. The mentor has greater experience than the protégé; the mentor offers guidance or instruction to facilitate personal growth for the protégé; and that there is an emotional bond or relationship between the mentor and the protégé (DuBois & Karcher, 2006, Julian & Li, 2012). It also

places a strong emphasis on the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (protégé) (De Bois et al, 2011; Pryce & Keller, 2012; Pryce, 2012; Rhodes, 2005; Spencer, 2007).

Adolescent Developmental Challenges and Mentoring

Theoretical models of youth mentoring look to adolescent developmental theories in order to understand and explain the role that mentoring can play for adolescent youth (Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). To that end, a brief exploration of various research-based theories of adolescent development is warranted.

Adolescence is a critical stage of development that is characterised by significant change. Changes in the brain; increased hormonal activity; social, emotional and cognitive change and exploring an identity beyond the family are all part of healthy adolescent development (Bergin, 2019). Developmental scientists, compiling developmental observations, have created numerous theories to help us understand some of these complexities and a brief overview is provided with a focus on the role that developmental relationships may play in providing additional support to adolescent youth.

As we move through this overview, I ask the reader to be aware that one of the key similarities between the different theories of adolescent development is the assumption that a young person has available at least one consistent, trusted adult who has the time, knowledge, ability and capacity to be a supportive guide during this time of intense growth and change. Modern life and social injustice can often mean that this is not the case, and there is evidence to suggest that the more risk factors a young person has present in their lives, the less likely they are to have the support of a consistent and trusted role model (Raposa et al., 2018). This means that our most vulnerable youth may miss out on vital opportunities that facilitate positive developmental trajectories. Formal mentoring programs offer one effective way to

fill this gap and provide all young people with adult role models who give them the opportunity to practice these important developmental skills.

Adolescence and Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget (1958) developed a reasonably well accepted and validated theory of cognitive development that has four stages. According to Piaget, in adolescence young people move from being restricted by concrete thinking and gain the ability to think about things in a more abstract way. He named this stage the formal operational stage (Rice & Dolgin, 2005). Formal operation describes a person's ability to think outside their direct experience and represent in their mind something they have never seen or been through (Rice & Dolgin, 2005). For example, by listening to the news someone in the formal operations stage would be able to understand and empathise with what it would be like to experience a natural disaster and understand the related concepts of poverty and homelessness even though they have not experienced them personally.

Piaget postulated that youth entered the stage of formal operations around the age of 11 years old, however critiques of Piaget argue that there are no structured stages that a person progresses through, and that many other things such as environment, access to education, medical conditions and trauma can impact cognitive development (Driver, 1978; Lourenço, 2016). Some researchers suggest that in the absence of an environment where this type of abstract reasoning can be practiced frequently, or needed on a regular basis, these skills may never develop (Lehman & Nisbett, 1990). Despite these critiques, mainly from those with an emphasis on environmental influences, Piaget's contribution to developmental theories was significant in that he established a framework describing the different cognitive changes that occur during the lifespan. However cognitive changes alone have not been found to improve development, and there is general agreement that there is a need for

constant opportunity to practice these skills before proficiency is achieved (Bronfenbrenner, 1996).

Piaget acknowledged that social interaction was important for development at all stages and believed that peer interaction played a major role. Len Vygotstky (1978) agreed with Piaget that social interaction is crucial for cognitive development, however he argued that that learning always occurs in conjunction with a more experienced and skilled person (Bodrova, 1997). Vygotsky believed that learning comes *prior* to development, and that language is the main tool of thought. He considered that children internalise the conversations that they have with more experienced people about things that are meaningful to them and transform these conversations into self-talk (Bodrova, 1997).

For example, a mentor may have a conversation with an adolescent about the nature of friendships during which the mentor reflects on the strengths and qualities they see in their mentee. The young person then internalises this story and begins to see *themselves* as 'a good friend'. In addition, Vygotsky believed that adults played a key role in children's learning by providing the educational 'scaffolding' on which children can climb. Vygotsky described the distance between what a child can do on their own and what they can do with adult help as the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). The theories Vygotsky has conceptualised and proposed have been highly influential in the field of education (Daniels, 2001) and have key relevance in the development of mentoring programs where mentors are able to provide individual guidance and support to a younger person to 'scaffold' them to a level they would be unable to achieve on their own (Berk, 2008).

Eisenberg, Carlo, Murphy & Van Court (1995) believe that adolescent cognitive development is also a precursor for adult moral development, and that during adolescence young people make meaning by being able to have room to express themselves, to self-reflect

by asking questions that help them make sense of what they are thinking and feeling. These are important tasks for an adolescent in developing a sense of identity that will take them through to adulthood.

Adolescence and Identity Development

In Plato's *Philebus*, Socrates suggested that it was pointless and 'ridiculous' to try and understand complex external concepts before knowing oneself (Dimas, 2019). According to Erik Erikson (1968) in early to mid-adolescence young people must resolve the crisis of identity vs role confusion. While Erikson's theory has sometimes been criticised for taking an overly negative view of adolescence, it has been instrumental in understanding developmental transitions, and promoted his belief that successful identity development is essential to building a strong self-concept and becoming an emotionally mature adult. This task can be challenging as youth struggle to find a balance between their true self and fitting in with their peers. According to Harter (2006) self-awareness is heightened during adolescence meaning a young person starts to understand that they may be viewed differently by different people – for example teachers, parents and friends. The differentiating information received (for example, the glowing report card from school "you are so smart" versus the friendship difficulties being experienced "you are awkward and ridiculous") makes for a complex task. Not only does a young person need to understand these different perspectives of themselves, but they must also try to figure out which perspectives they want to identify with and internalise as their own. An older, more experienced person who has some separation from these judgements and expectations may be a useful sounding board for a young person to reflect and assess what external messages are meaningful and helpful for them – and which to discard. Simply having conversations with adolescents has been shown

to help boost their identity as well as increase their cognitive and moral development (Gentry & Campbell, 2002).

Harter (2006) operationalises self-esteem as being how you feel about your self-concept. A low self-esteem comes from a gap between self-concept and how you believe you 'should' be (Harter, 1990). Low self-esteem has links with many negative outcomes such as depression and eating disorders (Harter & Marold, 1994), whereas higher self-esteem is linked to better school performance, a higher sense of mastery, fewer risk-taking behaviours and fewer mental health problems (Dumont & Provost, 1999; Erol & Orth, 2011; Masselink, Van Roekel, & Oldehinkel, 2018). Self-esteem is influenced by many things, including development (physical and cognitive), peer acceptance, relationships and environmental factors (Harter, 2012b; Masselink et al., 2018). When adolescents experience complex and co-morbid problems they are at risk of developing low-self-esteem (Orth, Robins, & Roberts, 2008; Rieger, Göllner, Trautwein, & Roberts, 2016). Providing opportunities such as mentoring to young people may reduce the likelihood and magnitude of these problems. Given that many children who have positive feelings of self-worth in late childhood experience a decline in self-esteem during adolescence, and those whose feelings of self-worth were low remain so (Dubois & Tevendale, 1999), mentoring support may be particularly beneficial during this phase of development.

Mentoring and Adolescent Development

These developmental theories suggest adolescence is a crucial stage for young people's positive development and that the presence of a caring, trusted adult to support a young person to successfully navigate important developmental tasks is paramount. Ideally, young people would have access to these relationships and rich developmental resources within their own homes and communities, however this is not always the case (Raposa et al., 2018). Where parents or caregivers do not have the capacity to provide sufficient support,

role models can have protective effects on negative externalising and internalising behaviours (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009). A social-ecological model can help to explain how an intervention such as mentoring may work to provide support to young people.

The Role of Interpersonal Relationships in Adolescent Development

The ecological approach proposed by Brofenbrenner has furthered understanding of the interactions between a young person and their environment both within and outside of the family. This approach also helps us understand how the role of a trusted adult, or mentor, can have an impact that reaches far beyond the mentor-mentee relationship. In order to further understand the potential impact of the mentee-mentor relationship, it is important to consider the role of interpersonal relationships more generally in adolescent development.

The quality of interpersonal relationships is very important for youth, with high quality relationships supporting positive development (Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2020), academic engagement (Kiuru et al., 2020) and better peer relationships (Cohn, Patterson, & Christopoulos, 1991). On the other hand, young people who do not have positive, supportive relationships are at risk of poor academic, social, behavioural and mental and physical health outcomes (Cohen et al., 2015; Criss, Shaw, Moilanen, Hitchings, & Ingoldsby, 2009). During adolescence, relationships with parents and care-givers go through significant change, as young people spend less time at home, and more time with friendship groups (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006), seeking autonomy and independence (Branje, Hale, Frijns, & Meeus, 2010). Despite a strong developmental need for independence and a strengthening of peer relationships, family are still very important to young people at this age (Smetana et al., 2006). Friendships and same-age relationships do not replace the need for adult support, rather young people are looking beyond their traditional familial relationships to increase their networks to both peers and other non-related adults (Osher et al., 2020; Spencer, 2002).

Rather than seeking autonomy, Brown & Gilligan (19920 suggest that adolescents are seeking to understand who they are in relation to the other important people in their lives. This can be a difficult task, particularly in the transition from primary to high school where there is a poor fit between a young person's need for independence and social acceptance and the more authoritarian environment of high school (Osher et al., 2020). Mentoring may be able to help young people navigate this task while staying connected to their developing identity and maintaining important connections with family and peers.

These considerations of a few of the recognised developmental models and theories serve the purpose of highlighting the importance of trusted adults in a young person's life. However, research shows that these 'natural mentors' are not equally distributed, and the more risk factors facing a young person, the less likely they are to have access to a natural mentor (Raposa et al., 2018).

At Risk Youth

What are the risk factors for young people, and how do we define an 'at-risk' individual? The term 'at-risk' has become a general term used to describe young people who are experiencing difficulties or adversity – whether this is in relation to environmental factors such as low socio-economic status, interpersonal characteristics such as parental mental illness or individual differences such as attention deficits. Seldom is an explanation given for what a young person is 'at-risk' of; a broad definition is offered by (Fraser & Terzian, 2005) who state that "Broadly defined, the term *risk factor* relates to any event, condition or experience that increases the probability that a problem will be formed, maintained, or exacerbated (p.5)". This definition acknowledges the additive impact of more than one risk factor. Fraser, Richman and Galisky (1999) argue that cumulative risk may be more impactful than situational or 'problem-specific' risk. It is important to note, however that the

presence of one or multiple risk factors do not necessarily lead to an outcome; rather there is an increased likelihood or probability that a problem will occur. This framework provides an opportunity for identifying and intervening early before issues arise and ensuring there are sufficient *protective* factors in place to mitigate the cumulative impact of risk factors.

Protective Factors

Resilience literature has grown out of a dissatisfaction with the deficit model inherent in risk literature with a shift towards a strengths-based approach focused on identifying protective factors that shield youth from poor developmental outcomes (Forrest-Bank, Nicotera, Anthony, & Jenson, 2015; Fraser et al., 1999; Jenson & Fraser, 2016). Fraser & Terzian (2005, p.5) define protective factors as "individual or environmental factors that minimise the impact of risk" and propose three ways that protective factors operate (1) reduce or buffer the impact of risk in a child's life; (2) interrupt a chain of risk factors that may be present) and (3) prevent or block the onset of a risk factor.

The literature has long demonstrated that a supportive relationship with a trusted adult provides significant psychological protection. Using a social-ecological framework, (Ungar, 2013) takes this further and argues that while a relationship with a trusted adult has the potential to provide benefit for all young people whether they are at risk or not, the same relationship (or protective factor) will have a much greater impact for a child experiencing risk factors such as poverty or family conflict, as their environment may not provide them with the resources to cope with adversity. Unger suggests that a better resourced environment means that individual differences play a greater role in developmental outcomes because in these resource-rich environments a young person has many opportunities for their unique strengths to be noticed (Ungar, 2013). However, when there are multiple risk-factors present, there is a need for explicit and effective protective factors such as a caring relationship with a trusted adult, to counteract the negative effects of an adverse environment.

Without this relationship, the potential for successful development is either not reached, or manifests in maladaptive behaviours (Ungar, 2013). Figure 1 shows the risk and protective factors that may influence developmental outcomes for young people within a social-ecological framework (Jenson & Fraser, 2016).

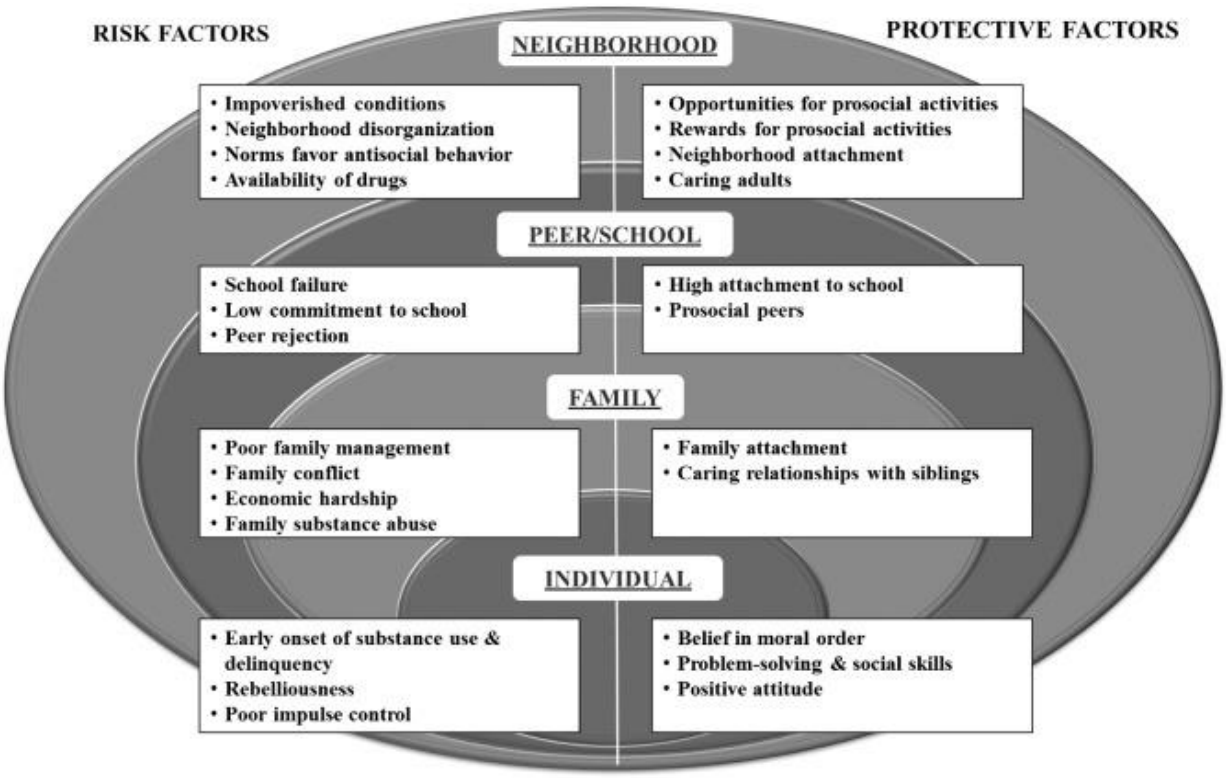

Figure 1. Risk and protective factors in the context of child and adolescent social ecology. Reprinted from "Social policy for children and families: a risk and resilience perspective" by Jenson & Fraser, 2016.

Ungar's (2013) suggestion that a caring relationship with a trusted adult is especially important in the presence of multiple or cumulative risk factors can help to explain the role that a mentor can play in the absence of a 'resource rich' environment. In a youth mentoring context, a mentoring program can provide opportunities and rewards for prosocial activities, help to connect youth to their communities and, by their very nature, provides a caring adult to support. School-based mentoring programs have been shown to increase school

engagement and build networks within the school environment and can have a positive impact on family relationships. The relationship between a mentor and a protégé often focusses on teaching and practicing skills such as goal setting, problem solving and social skills. Figure 2 shows how a youth mentoring program works under a social-ecological framework, whereby mentors work with young people to increase individual capacity, and facilitate connections within the school environment (proximal to the mentor in a school-based mentoring environment), home environment and wider community environment (distal to the mentor). The mentor acts as the mentee's *meso-system*, strengthening and developing links between micro-systems. This can be either directly (for example, setting goals with mentee to reduce absenteeism) or indirectly through reciprocal interplay between micro-systems (reduced absenteeism results in increased school engagement, which has an impact on family relationships).

Figure 2. A social-ecological framework for youth mentoring

An ecological lens

Uri Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) provides an explanation for how mentoring relationships can promote growth in social-emotional development; and how that growth can influence change beyond the mentee-mentor relationship. Brofenbrenner proposed that in order to successfully navigate the complexities of life and develop emotionally, socially, morally and intellectually, children need to experience and participate in progressively more complex activities with the support of one or more people with whom they can form a strong emotional and reciprocal attachment. Bronfenbrenner rejected the idea that behaviour exists solely within a child and argued that a child's behaviour reflects the different ecological systems within which they are situated, and their interactions with each other.

There are four different layers to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. The first and closest layer to the child is the micro-system, which is the immediate environment and interactions of the child, for example their interactions with their parents or caregivers, teachers and friends. How these groups or individuals interact with the child impacts development; likewise, how the child reacts to these people influences the way that they treat the child in return. Next is the meso-system which describes the interactions between these connections. For example, how a child's parents interact with their teacher could have either a positive or negative impact on their development and experience of school. The exo-system is the impact of the indirect environment of the child – the child is not part of this environment but is still impacted by it. For example, a parent who is experiencing bullying in the workplace may suffer from stress, depression or anxiety which could impact their interactions with the child at home. The macro-system is the cultural, political and economic systems that influence a child's development. For example, children who grow up in war-

torn countries will experience differences in their development compared to their counterparts growing up in a peaceful environment.

It seems unlikely that a mentor would be able to influence the exo or macro system of a young person's environment. A skilled mentor could, however, help a young person navigate their changing relationships with parents and peers, provide a sounding board for the complex task of identity development, help develop plans for the future and support the setting and achieving proximal and distal goals to achieve these plans (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Due to the transactional nature of the ecological systems, Brofenbrenner believed that strengthening transactions in one or more systems has a ripple effect into other systems. For example, if a mentor can encourage a young person to attend school regularly, their relationship with both the school and their parents may improve (micro-system). This could also lead to improvements in the way the school and parents communicate with each other (meso-system). If parents gain confidence in their child and feel that things are going well for them at school, this could also influence the child's exo-system if this confidence is generalised to the parent's workplace. The way the parent responds to the influence of the macro-system (cultural, political, economic) could also be impacted.

Similarly, growth experienced by a child in one context can have a flow on effect into different contexts. For example, the skills learned from the mentor in how to set and achieve the goal of increased school attendance can be applied in other settings. Eccles and Gootman (2002) describe a holistic approach to adolescence, where optimal progress on the different tasks of adolescence depends not only on the capacity of the individual, but also on the social supports available to the individual. Trusted adults can help expand the range of options, so adolescents can consider several choices (Fischhoff, Welch, & Frederick, 1999) and can

provide young people with the tools and resources they need to effectively manage adverse situations such as a family break-down; moving school; bullying, traumatic events and mental health problems (Oppedal & Toppelberg, 2016).

Link from Rationale to Theory

It is important to note that mentoring is not a panacea but rather offers a platform which can assist young people to navigate the complex developmental tasks of adolescence. Mentoring evidence claims a raft of positive outcomes including improved resilience, self-concept, behaviour and academic achievement (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Montañez et al., 2015; Rhodes et al., 2002). There is rarely an explicit instrumental or goal driven focus in mentoring programs; rather priority is given to the developmental relationship that is formed between the mentee and the mentor. Given this lack of focus, and the complex and idiosyncratic needs of young people, it is hardly surprising that effect sizes have remained stubbornly modest, despite significant advances in research and knowledge of the youth mentoring field (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019).

Theoretical model

Whilst the link between mentoring and positive outcomes for young people has been firmly established, less is known about the processes or underlying mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved.

Rhodes (2006) proposed a model of youth mentoring based on empirical and theoretical literature that has increased understanding of the effects of mentoring relationships on young people. This developmental model of mentoring highlights the importance of a reciprocal relationship characterised by trust and empathy between the

mentor and the young person. It is through these mentoring relationships that positive outcomes are achieved through social-emotional, cognitive and identity developmental processes. Whilst the mentoring relationship is at the heart of the Rhodes' model, the model does not explicitly consider the mentor and the possible interactions between program, mentor and mentee that could influence outcomes.

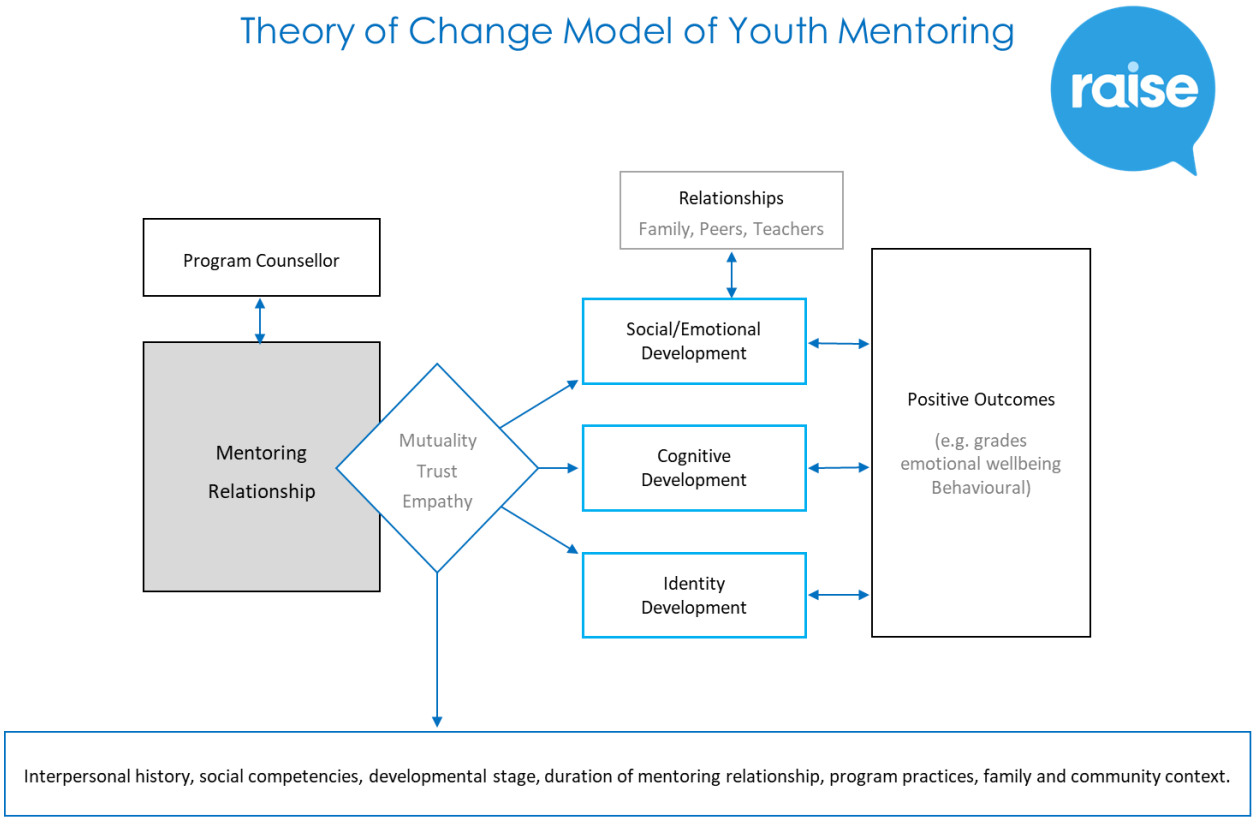

Figure 3. Model of Youth Mentoring (adapted from Rhodes et al, 2006).

Relationship vs Instrumental Mentoring

Relational psychology is based on the notion that human development occurs within human relationships, following a trajectory from dependence to interdependence (Miller,

1976). As suggested by Rhode's theoretical model above, the mentoring relationship has long been seen as the mechanism for change in mentoring programs, whether developmental or instrumental (Grossman et al., 2012; Keller, 2005; Keller & Pryce, 2010; Pawson, 2006; Pryce, 2012; Pryce & Keller, 2012; Rhodes et al., 2006). Pawson (2006) goes as far as to say that mentoring relationships *embody* the intervention – that is, they are "the resource that is intended to bring about change" (Pawson, 2006, p. 5).

Another perspective in the youth mentoring literature is an instrumental framework (Darling, Hamilton, & Niego, 1994). This framework suggests that the mentoring relationship supports young people to master new skills and achieve meaningful goals. Proponents of an instrumental approach to mentoring argue that while a positive relationship between a mentee and a mentor is important, it is not sufficient in and of itself (Lyons, McQuillin, & Henderson, 2019). Indeed, the relational theory of change suggested by Rhodes (2006) is based on the premise of community-based mentoring. School based mentoring (SBM) models are generally shorter in length, and it has been questioned whether a relational model of mentoring is compatible with the shorter, more structured SBM programs (McQuillin, Terry, Strait, & Smith, 2013).

Keller & Pryce (2010) suggest a conceptual framework for a youth mentoring relationship that is based on the notion of permanence and power, and posit that a hybrid of these two facets is needed for a successful mentoring relationship. For example, a parental relationship has unequal power, and very high permanence whereas a voluntary relationship such as friendship is more equal, and more volatile. A mentor may be in a unique position to offer the best of both worlds with a relationship that has the stability and boundaries the parental relationship along with a more equal footing. While Keller and Price (2010) agree with the proposition that the relationship is the mechanism of change (Li & Julian, 2012; Pawson, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006) they argue that a balance between relationship and goal-

directed aims is important. A study by Lyons et al (2019) found that both relationship quality and instrumental activities such as goal setting both had a positive relationship with treatment effects, however it was the interaction between the two that was most interesting. When relationship quality *and* instrumental mentoring were both present, there were significantly higher treatment outcomes than when only one of these was present.

On the other hand, Mitchell, Absler and Humphreys (2015, p. 39), argue that bringing things like goal setting or other professional activities into a mentoring relationship too early can "wreck the very nature of it" (p. 39). This is supported by the work of Morrow & Styles who found that mentors who were overly focussed on program goals were less successful than mentors who focussed on the developmental nature of the relationship (Morrow & Styles, 1995).

Relationship Qualities

Despite this focus on the mentoring relationship, there is a lack of clarity in the literature about what constitutes a 'good' mentoring relationship. Herrera, Sipe & McClanahan (2000) identify three important qualities in mentoring relationships: closeness, emotional support and instrumental support. But what contributes to these qualities? Can good mentoring skills be learned, or does the mentoring relationship rely on the skills of the mentor, or on the willingness of the mentee?

Parra et al. (2002) attempted to break down this question by looking at program processes that contributed to stronger relationships and found that mentor efficacy beliefs pre-program were important in predicting amount of mentee contact, fewer relationship obstacles and greater involvement in program related activities, as well as enhanced feelings of closeness. Likewise, Herrera et al. (2000) found that several program processes including engaging in social activities, time spent together, decision-making, pre and post-match

training, and matching contributed to stronger mentoring relationships. Both studies found that perceived effectiveness of mentor training was a positive predictor of mentor efficacy (Herrera, 2000; Parra et al., 2002; Schwartz, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2012).

On the other hand, Pawson (2006) suggests that inherent mentor qualities such as 'been there, done that' (e.g. mentors suffered a disruptive youth themselves) are an important component of a strong mentoring relationship youth. Pawson suggests that you can't make a great match without taking a mentor's own characteristics and experience into account, and urges programs to look back on details of mentor experience, biography and life history. Looking towards relationship style, Morrow and Styles (1995), found that mentors who took what they called a developmental approach – a relationship embodied by trust, fun and support were more successful than those labelled 'prescriptive', where the relationship was directed by the mentor, and very focussed on program goals with little adjustment for mentee needs.

Li and Julian (2012) agree with Pawson that not only is the mentoring relationship important, but that developmental relationships are in fact the 'active ingredient' across all types of interventions for young people and should be the focus of program practices and policies. They propose that the four key criteria for a successful developmental relationship are attachment, progressive complexity, reciprocity, and a balance of power. The idea of a reciprocal mentoring relationship is present in Rhodes' theoretical model, however there is seldom more than lip-service paid to the notion of reciprocity or mutuality in mentoring literature. There is some agreement, however, that reciprocity is an important piece of the mentoring relationship puzzle (Pawson, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006) and that, through appropriate sharing, mentors can send the message to mentees that they are not alone, and that someone has walked the path before them.

An important part of reciprocity is self-disclosure. In relationships, self-disclosure is a relational communication process that facilitates trust and closeness. Lester, Goodloe, Johnson and Deutch (2019) found that mentors who shared their own personal experiences cultivated 'experiential empathy' which was shown to be an important part of mutuality. Lester et al. (2019) attempt to unpack the notion of mutuality, suggesting that there are two key dimensions that are important – shared relational excitement and experiential empathy. Shared relational excitement relies on both the mentee and the mentor having a genuine interest and desire to invest in the mentoring relationship, whereas experiential empathy is when mentors connect with their mentees through appropriate sharing their own experiences (Lester et al., 2019).

Interestingly, a study by Herrera (2004) showed that while self-disclosure helped mentors to feel closer to mentees, in fact the opposite was true for mentees. That is, mentees felt closer to mentors who self-disclosed less, suggesting that mentees may feel less comfortable with self-disclosure than mentors do. Self-disclosure carries both benefits and risk of harm in other contexts too. Self-disclosure in therapeutic context can be helpful to reduce power imbalances, especially during the early stages of therapy when a client is making a decision as to whether or not they will be able to work with the therapist (Dutton, Bullen, & Deane, 2019), however can also lead to boundary crossings, and even trigger traumatic responses. Given that mentors are often asked to be a hybrid of many different types of relationships – therapist, teacher, parent, friend, coach (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009; Keller & Pryce, 2010), it is important that they understand both the risks and benefits to self-disclosure.

Having explored some of the key theoretical models that provide potential explanations in support as to why mentoring should work and a rationale for the posited importance of the mentoring relationship, the focus now shifts to direct evidence.

The Evidence

Although youth mentoring has a history that spans back over 100 years (Baker & Maguire, 2005), it was not until the 1990's that scholars began to take a strong interest. In 1995, a seminal report by Tierney, Grossman and Resch on a randomized controlled trial of Big Brother / Big Sister of America (BBBSA)'s community-based mentoring program created major policy changes in the USA, leading to a huge amount of investment in mentoring programs (Tierney, Grossman, & Resch, 1995). This in turn led to major growth in both the number of mentoring programs and in the type of mentoring programs offered.

In 2002, DuBois, Holloway, Valentine and Cooper undertook the first major meta-analysis of available evidence on youth mentoring, which included 55 youth mentoring programs that were published up to 1998. They found that youth mentoring programs predicted positive outcomes for youth across multiple domains (emotional/psychological; problem/risk behaviour; social; academic). However, effect sizes were small (ranging from .10 to .22 across specific domains) with an overall effect size of .18. From the results of this meta-analysis, they made several recommendations for future practice including:

- recruitment of mentors;
- clearly communicating expectations;
- hosting group activities;
- supporting and involving parents;
- using community settings,
- providing ongoing training;
- support for mentors; and
- monitoring program implementation practices.

In 2011, Dubois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn and Valentine undertook another major review to assess developments in both theory and practice in the youth mentoring field. This meta-analysis included 73 evaluations of mentoring programs published in the decade

between 1999 and 2010. Overall, they did not find any improvements in the effectiveness of youth mentoring programs, despite research over the past decade that has significantly advanced the understanding of the factors and processes that contribute to successful outcomes in youth mentoring. These results indicate that practice has not kept up with research.

Whilst it was disappointing not to see new evidence translating into stronger outcomes for young people, it should be noted that small to moderate effect size is standard for youth prevention programs (Tanner-Smith, Durlak, & Marx, 2018). Further, even small to moderate improvements in things like academic engagement can make a big difference to positive pathways for youth development (Tanner-Smith et al., 2018).

DuBois et al. used a developmental model of youth mentoring (Rhodes et al., 2006) as the conceptual framework, which provided additional insight, particularly in relation to possible moderating factors. In summary, they found that programs are more effective:

- with youth who exhibit problem behaviours;
- with youth who fit a risk profile of either high environmental/low individual risk or high individual/low environmental risk;
- when they have a higher proportion of males;
- when there is a good fit between the background and educational level of the mentor and the goals of the program;
- when they match mentors and protégés based on similar interests; and
- when they are structured to provide ongoing support for mentors.

Raposa et al. (2019) undertook a further meta-analysis of the data from 70 studies of youth mentoring, with a sample size of 25,286 - the first comprehensive meta-analysis since 2010 (DuBois et al., 2011). The findings were remarkably similar, (mean effect of .21) despite using tighter inclusion criteria that aligned with the prevailing developmental theory

of youth mentoring (Rhodes et al., 2006). For example, only mentoring programs that incorporated a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a trusted adult were included and group, peer-based and curriculum-based mentoring programs were excluded. There was, however, significant variance between effect size for different outcome domains even within the same programs. Strongest effect sizes were seen for social support and important relationships which contrasts with previous meta analyses (e.g. (DuBois et al., 2011) where psycho-social outcomes had relatively small effect sizes.

These results beg the question of why effect sizes have not increased given the greater implementation of industry benchmarks, increase of mentoring programs which follow evidence-based practices (Raposa et al., 2019) and more sophisticated understanding of good evaluation. It is possible that this plateau or stagnation is simply the highest that can be expected from a low-intensity non-specific intervention such as mentoring. As mentioned previously, effect size in terms of youth prevention programs is generally much lower than that suggested by Cohen as 'small' 'moderate' or 'large'. A mean effect size of .21 is not only 'large' in comparison to youth prevention programs in general (mean of .07 - .20), but can be meaningful in terms of positive pathways for young people (Tanner-Smith et al., 2018). Unlike more targeted interventions, most mentoring programs focus on and measure a wide range of outcomes from psychological, emotional, behavioural, academic and health (DuBois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019). This may mean that while measured outcomes are statistically smaller, young people may be experiencing a broader range of support. On the other hand, the lack of focus may mean that mentoring programs are trying to be all things to all people and failing to reach potential because of this.

In-School Mentoring

While these three meta-analyses were conducted across both school and community settings, a large proportion of the research to date on mentoring (both in the USA and other countries) has been on community-based mentoring programs. A more recent development has been the extension of these programs into school environments. School based mentoring is one of the fastest growing program models in the USA, with 28% of programs using this format (Wheeler, Keller & DuBois, 2010). As with community-based mentoring, most school-based mentoring research comes from the United States and is conducted on programs run by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBSA).

Overall, research suggests that school-based mentoring programs yield small, significant improvements in both academic performance and student beliefs in their own academic ability. For example, (Herrera, Grossman, Kauh, & McMaken, 2011) examined the impact of school-based mentoring (SBM) both on outcomes that are closely linked to the school environment (e.g., academic performance, self-perception of academic abilities and attitudes to school) as well as the broader outcomes associated with community mentoring research (e.g., social and personal wellbeing, relationships with others and self-esteem). They found that outcomes linked to the school environment were better for mentored youth, specifically academic performance and self-perception of academic abilities. They were also more likely to report having a "special adult" in their lives. However, there were no improvements on broader outcomes such as global self-worth, relationship with others and rates of problem behaviour.

Conversely, when Wheeler, Keller and DuBois (2010) compared three separate large-scale controlled-random assignment studies on school-based mentoring (including the study by Herrara et al. discussed above), they did not find any effects for academic achievement.

They did, however, find modest effects for support from non-familial adults, peer support, self-perception of academic ability, absenteeism and truancy.

A systematic review and meta-analysis on school-based mentoring in the United States by Wood & Mayo-Wilson (2012) evaluated eight studies with 6,072 participants and concluded that while individual studies reported some positive outcomes, the results suggest that mentoring did not result in any overall improvement in academic achievement, attendance, behaviour or psychological outcomes. In contrast, a more recent meta-analysis by Raposa and colleagues (Raposa et al., 2019) found that there were no differences between effect sizes for school and community programs. Interestingly, programs requiring shorter meetings yielded larger effect sizes.

Further, there were no consistent results to suggest that individual differences such as age or gender played a role in the outcomes. This contrasts with previous studies which have shown that younger youth have closer and longer lasting mentoring relationships (Kupersmidt, Stump, Stelter, & Rhodes, 2017). It is worth noting that whilst there were no differential outcomes in relation to age, the mean age of 11 years in this review may not be generalisable to older adolescents.

Unlike the meta-analysis conducted by DuBois and colleagues (DuBois et al, 2012), information on the delivery of the mentoring programs was not included in the study, and therefore program components that might improve (or diminish) effects were unable to be identified . Wood and Mayo-Wilson (2012) called upon future research to explore the mechanisms of change in school-based mentoring programs. Likewise, Raposa et al. (2019) argue that mentoring programs need to be both more targeted and more aligned to evidence from developmental, clinical and prevention science rather than the usual more general approach.

Benefits of In-School Mentoring

Despite the somewhat limited and conflicting evidence around school-based mentoring programs, there are clear benefits to providing mentoring services in a school environment. Schools can often be difficult institutions for young people to navigate and unhappy experiences in school can lead to a number of negative outcomes including poor academic performance and social and behavioural problems (Masten et al., 2005). These outcomes can contribute to disengagement with school and potentially school drop-out (Kendziora, Osher, & Carey, 2014). As school completion is important for a number of important economic, health and other factors, it is vital that young people have the support they need to stay connected and engaged. Harter (2006) suggests that scholastic self-concept is an important predictor of classroom motivation, and that the provision of mentoring in the school environment provides important context-specific support for young people that they may be able to internalise into their self-concept as students (Harter, Waters & Whitesell, 1998).

Despite the challenges experienced during adolescence, young people are often reluctant to seek support for emotional and behavioural difficulties, however one of the main areas they do seek this support is at school (Ivancic et al, 2014). In addition, the school environment allows youth who are at risk of developing difficulties (but not currently experiencing them) to access support that can offer them protective strategies to increase their resilience against future problems. From a practical, program implementation perspective, a school environment provides structure (most school-based programs have a specific time for meeting each week), ease of providing program support and supervision of matches and opportunities for protégés to build support networks at school. For mentors, the group structure of the program means that there are opportunities to network and provide peer support to each other.

Limitations of In-School Mentoring

On the other hand, there are also limitations of in-school mentoring programs. The mentoring relationship is thought to be one of the most important features in driving positive outcomes for youth (DuBois et al., 2011; Pryce, 2012; Pryce & Keller, 2012; Rhodes et al., 2006; Spencer, 2007). Length of the match has been shown to be important for both the quality of the relationship and the outcomes achieved for youth, with relationships over 12 months achieving the best results (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011). In fact, some research shows that matches under three months can be detrimental to youth (Grossman et al., 2012). Matches in school-based mentoring programs are generally much shorter than community mentoring matches, as they are confined to the school year, and usually not rolled over into following years. The typical length for a school-based mentoring program is between 6-9 months. It seems likely that the relationship developed during this time will not be as close as the relationship developed over a longer period, although Herrera et al (2000) found no difference between relationship quality in longer community based mentoring programs and their shorter school-based counterparts.

It is also unclear whether it is the length of the match that is important, or the fulfilment of expectations/mentor commitment. Some research suggests that match completion is much higher in the school environment than in a community-mentoring environment (Keller & Pryce, 2010) which is important because when matches terminate early it can leave young people worse off than prior to mentoring. For example, in a study by Slicker & Palmer (1993), youth whose matches terminated prematurely had lower self-concept scores than youth in the control group.

Other challenges particular to school environments include potential lack of teacher support and lack of a suitable space for mentoring to take place. In addition, for students who are struggling academically, missing out on lessons can be detrimental. A study by Schwartz,

Rhodes and Herrara (2012) showed that academically at-risk students who missed classes to attend mentoring showed detrimental results in their academic outcomes, with no evidence of any benefits to participants. Finally, research shows that parents who are engaged with the mentoring program are more likely to support the mentors' positive influence (Dubois et al., 2002; Spencer, Basualdo-Delmonico, & Lewis, 2011) and yield better youth outcomes (Higginbotham, MacArthur, & Dart, 2010; Rhodes et al., 2006; Weinberger, 2005). Because school-based mentoring occurs in the school grounds, parental involvement is less likely than in community-based mentoring programs.

In-School Mentoring Relationships

Both the benefits and challenges of school-based mentoring programs demonstrate that they are different in many ways from more traditional community-based mentoring programs. However, as with community-based mentoring, it appears that the relationship quality between the mentor and the protégé is the key to achieving positive outcomes, despite the shorter duration and intensity (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Pryce, 2012; Pryce & Keller, 2012).

Bayer, Grossman and Dubois (2013) examined data from a randomized trial involving over 1,000 young people in a school-based mentoring program and found that students who reported a close relationship with their mentor had better academic outcomes than the control group. Conversely, students whose relationship with their mentor was not close showed no improvements compared to the control group. These results were the same over different match durations, suggesting that the closeness of the mentoring relationship may be more important than match length.

Indeed, contrary to research that shows that the length of the match is important (Grossman et al., 2012; Rhodes et al., 2006), the initial meta-analysis by DuBois et al (2002)

did not find that relationship duration predicted outcome and concluded it was possible that it is not the length of the match per se that is important, but more the length of the match in relation to the commitment given. Unfortunately, duration relative to program expectation/mentor commitment was unable to be used as a moderator in the 2011 analysis (DuBois et al, 2011) because the required information was reported by only a small number of studies, and insufficient variation on the moderator across studies.

Pryce and Keller (2012) used a mixed methods approach to investigate relationship trajectories in a school-based mentoring program. They found four different types of relationships. Fifty percent of mentoring matches had what Pryce and Keller describe as "progressive" matches, which improved in strength and quality throughout the duration of the match. The other half were described as either "plateaued" (where the match initially made progress but did not become close) or "stagnant", where the match struggled to make a connection. A small percentage of matches were classified as "break-through", where the relationship was initially challenging, but succeeded following a 'break-through moment'. Interestingly, even the difficult matches were sustained for the entire year, fulfilling the commitment made by mentor and protégé. This contrasts with research from community mentoring programs, where approximately 50% of matches end prematurely (Rhodes et al., 2006).

Recent data from Australian based youth mentoring charity Raise Foundation show that in their school-based mentoring program less than 10% of matches end prematurely (Raise Foundation Evaluation Report, 2015). It is possible that the structure and support made possible by the school environment can protect and preserve these relationships through challenging times (Pryce & Keller, 2012). It is likely that youth who find it difficult to establish and maintain a successful relationship with their mentor have a history of conflicted relationships (Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013). If, as suggested above, a

school-based mentoring program can nurture and support this type of relationship, it could have a profound impact on a young person's ability to develop relationships with others outside of the mentoring context.

Of course, the relationship between the mentor and mentee influences, and is influenced by, many other factors. For example, one study found that mentoring improved other important adult relationships, particularly that of parent/care-giver-child (Rhodes, Grossman, & Resch, 2000). In a social-ecological framework, for school-based mentoring programs, mentoring is more likely to improve the student-teacher relationship due to the proximity of this relationship and the involvement of teachers in the mentoring program (DuBois et al., 2011; Spencer et al., 2011).

Dallos and Comley-Ross (2005) undertook a qualitative study to explore the experience of six mentees in a school-based program and found that a central theme was trust. Trust took time to develop, and mentees in this study described setting small 'tests' to help them to decide whether or not they were going to trust their mentor. Mentors facilitated trust by being consistent, demonstrating effort (for example showing a genuine interest in mentee hobbies) and reciprocity. Interestingly, boundary crossing by mentors (e.g., breaking program rules by inviting young people back to their homes or smoking) were viewed by mentees as facilitators of trust, possibly because this set mentors apart from other authority figures (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005).

Pryce and Keller's (2012) work on relationship trajectories begs an important question. Why is it that some mentoring relationships flourish, while others have a more difficult trajectory? Even considering individual program practices such as ongoing relationship support and mentor training, these differences in individual relationships are apparent. Spencer (2007) examined failed mentoring relationships, and found several distinct

themes, or reasons for their early demise. These reasons included abandonment of the relationship by either the protégé or the mentor; a perceived lack of protégé motivation; unfulfilled expectations; poor mentor relational skills, family interference and insufficient agency support. On the other hand, factors that differentiate successful mentoring relationships include qualities such as authenticity, empathy and companionship (Spencer, 2004) and a strong emotional connection between the mentor and the mentee (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; LoSciuto, Rajala, Townsend, & Taylor, 1996).

Australasian Evidence

The national focus on mentoring in both policy and practice in the USA has led to a solid body of quality research - both qualitative and quantitative - that has greatly increased understanding of the processes by which mentoring is effective. There is far less evidence on Australasian mentoring programs, and so caution needs to be exercised when generalizing results to an Australian context. It is likely that the Australian context differs to that of the USA in terms of social structures and cultural differences. In addition, the focus in USA of "high risk" youth may not be relevant in Australia, where many programs focus on early intervention or low risk (Farruggia et al., 2011). Further research on Australian youth mentoring programs will help to identify both the similarities and differences to USA based programs, ensuring that best-practice benchmarks in Australia include evidence from Australian research.

Formal youth mentoring in Australia is a relatively recent initiative. The Big Brother Big Sister program that originated in the United States of America over 100 years ago was established in Melbourne and Sydney in 1978, however it was not until the 1990's that youth mentoring gained popularity as an intervention for at-risk youth (Hartley, 2004).

In 2004, some of the major players in the industry (The Smith Family, Big Brothers, Big Sisters Australia, Job Futures and the Dusseldorp Skillls Forum) formed a partnership. The collaboration lobbied the Australian Government for funding to run a national peak mentoring body in an attempt to lift the profile of mentoring by establishing clear definitions, adopting a set of evidence-based benchmarks and working closely with business, employers and philanthropic funders (Hartley, 2004). At the same time, the Mentoring and Capacity Building Initiative (MBCI), a Victorian Labor government initiative was established in 2005 to support mentoring programs targeting young people who were at risk of disengaging from education and employment. In 2008, MBCI were supporting 159 programs that were working with 4,533 at risk youth (Broadbent & Papadopoulos, 2009).

Despite the increase in popularity, there is little peer-reviewed evidence supporting the efficacy of Australasian-based mentoring programs, and the existing evidence has significant limitations. For example, in a mixed-methods evaluation of ten school based mentoring program pilots for Indigenous students, it was found that participating in mentoring improved attendance, strengthened engagement in school and facilitated better relationships between families, schools and communities (MacCallum, Palmer, & Beltman, 2005). However, due to the diversity of the participating programs, comparisons were not possible.

In New Zealand, a systematic review by Farruggia et al (2011) found that youth mentoring programs were effective in general, with programs that targeted psychological and interpersonal outcomes being more effective than those which targeted academic, behavioural or vocational outcomes. They also found that programs that were more targeted (e.g. had fewer domain goals) were more effective than broader programs that had a multitude of different outcomes they were targeting. They also found positive associations between best-practice and effectiveness, especially for psychological and interpersonal goals. This is

similar to USA research by DuBois et al (2011) and Raposa et al (2019). Other findings include:

- Highly structured programs were more effective than less structure
- Gender matching increased effectiveness
- There was no difference for length of program after 1-year threshold
- There were no differences in paid vs volunteer or family involvement
- Peers were less effective than older mentors
- There was no variation in effectiveness for gender or age
- Programs aimed at low/mixed socioeconomic groups were more effective than mid-level
- Component studies (part of wraparound services) were shown to be more effective, however it was difficult to tease out the unique effects of mentoring in these studies.

While these findings match previous research from the USA, a limitation of this review was that it included all studies that met inclusion criteria and did not take into effect the quality of the research (Farruggia et al., 2011).

Unlike the majority of the evidence from the United States, Noonan, Bullen & Farruggia (2012) argue that cultural context is important. For example, in New Zealand, mentoring programs with a component of outdoor and practical activities appear to be particularly beneficial for youth given the cultural identity of risk taking and adventure. Attempts to address healthy eating behaviours or sleep were less successful, which is consistent with evidence that behavioural change is more difficult to achieve than psychological and interpersonal change (Farruggia et al., 2011). Larger effect sizes were reported in young people who were classified as ‘high risk’, consistent with research undertaken in the USA (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Farruggia et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019).

The difficulties of synthesising research in a way that is relevant to the specific populations is not limited to cultural context. The World Health Organisation defines adolescence as being between 10 and 19 years old, however recognises age is just one way of defining adolescence, and more relevant for comparing biological change. Social and emotional development may vary with different socio-cultural environments. For instance, in some cultures the shift from childhood to adulthood happens very quickly. In Australia, services differ in their interpretation of 'young people', for example Headspace see their target group as 12-25 years, whereas Reach Foundation service young people from 10-18 years.

Youth mentoring organisations in Australia also have significant differences in the populations they work with. For example, Big Brother Big Sister Australia provide both community and school-based mentoring supporting young people aged between 7 and 17. On the other hand, Raise Foundation, who focuss on in-school mentoring programs, have a more targeted approach from Year 7 through to Year 10, with most young people in the programs aged between 14 and 15 years. In Australia, school-based mentoring programs tend to focus on high school students, whereas theoretical models of mentoring have been developed for community-based mentoring programs (e.g. Keller, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2006) and adapted for school-based programs (Herrera, 2000) in the USA where the age range and context for development may not be generalisable to an Australian high-school population. Therefore, it is important that these models are tested and refined in the geographical, cultural and developmental contexts in which they are applied.

Can Youth Mentoring Programs Effectively Support Australian Adolescents?

In conclusion, adolescence is a time of great change, and one of the most challenging transitions a person must go through in their lifetime. Many of the key developmental

psychologists argue that the presence of a trusted, caring adult is crucial for development. The paradox of adolescence is that just at the time that parents or caregivers may be most needed to support and scaffold a young person, one of the key tasks is to separate from parents and figure out who they are, what they know, and how they feel about it. This paradox, combined with the increasing mental health concerns for young people, suggest that a trusted adult role model outside of the immediate family could play a crucial role in assisting young people to successfully navigate the challenges of adolescence.

However, the reality is that many families do not have the capacity to provide a rich and supportive environment, and the more risk factors a young person faces, the less likely they are to have access to a supportive adult relationship (Raposa et al., 2018). In addition, many schools in low SES areas have large class sizes and high levels of classroom disruption leading to high staff turnover and increased stress where teachers and welfare staff have lowered capacity to provide individual support to students (Gannon & Sawyer, 2014).

The recently published Gonski 2.0 Report includes recommendations for mentoring in schools as a "holistic solution to re-engage young people facing a wide range of adversities, because it gives them an opportunity… to confide in an independent and trusted support person" (Gonski et al, 2018, p.61). As a relatively low-cost intervention, youth mentoring holds appeal for governments and schools, particularly where they are under-staffed in terms of wellbeing and psychological resources. However, it is important that we look beyond the idea of mentoring being a panacea for young Australians. This review has found that whilst youth mentoring is an increasingly widespread intervention for adolescents worldwide, the evidence supporting its efficacy is mixed, and there is a lack of evidence supporting its use for Australian youth.

We also know that not all mentoring relationships are created equally – some mentoring relationships flourish whilst others falter. Ineffective mentoring can leave a young person worse off than having no mentor at all. Consequently, it is vital to understand the active ingredients of successful mentoring programs and mentoring relationships so that an evidence-based, cost-effective and scalable solution to support young people can be implemented in Australian schools.

Thus, the intent of this research project is to test existing assumptions of youth-mentoring and build on the existing Australian evidence-base to further knowledge of the efficacy (or otherwise) of youth mentoring programs.

To achieve this aim, the design of this research project needed to be both robust enough to produce valid, meaningful data that is able to withstand scrutiny, as well as being flexible enough to respond to unforeseen insights and questions that arise along the journey. The methodology, and the processes that I undertook to decide on this methodology is detailed in the next chapter.

The Mystery Man got nervous
And he fidget around a bit
He reached in the pocket of his Mystery Robe
And he whipped out a shaving kit
Now, I thought it was a razor
And a can of foamin' goo
But he told me right then when the top popped open
There was nothin' his box won't do
With the oil of Aphrodite
And the dust of The Grand Wazoo
He said: "You might not believe this, little fella
But it'll cure your Asthma too!"

— ***Frank Zappa***, *Cosmik Debris*

Earlier in this thesis, I observed that the research process I undertook was far from linear (see p.3). In the process of providing details, justification, and rationale for the methodology adopted, this chapter charts my journey from a positivist RCT design to a pragmatic, practitioner-focussed mixed-methods design. To this end, reporting a story, in this instance a story of my critical self-reflection of research understanding, is considered appropriate.

After explaining the research journey, this chapter provides a brief description of mixed methods research, before introducing the 'research-practitioner' framework that has been adopted. This is followed by critically examining how common issues and criticisms of both mixed-methods and practitioner-research have been considered and addressed. Finally,

a rationale for the chosen methodology is presented, followed by a description of the overall research design.

From RCT to Mixed Methods

I began this journey with a very clear destination in mind. I was intending to 'prove' that mentoring did (or did not) work in an Australian school-based setting. To achieve this goal, it was very clear in my mind, that the best, and perhaps only way to do this was through a randomised control trial.

Assumptions of RCT's

Randomised control trials (RCTs) have long since been held as the 'gold standard' of evidence-based research and have become increasingly popular in the social sciences. There is no doubt that they have a valuable part to play in the advance of scientific evidence, and there is a perception that they can yield causal inferences that are more valid and reliable than any other empirical measure (Deaton & Cartwright, 2018). However, the RCT model holds some assumptions that are very difficult to implement in the social sciences for both ethical and practical reasons. First, RCT designs require random allocation of participants to intervention and control groups; second, both participants and researchers must be unaware of which group they have been assigned to until the study is completed (double-blind); and third, all intervention groups should be identical except for the experimental treatment (Wadhwa & Cook, 2019).

The double-blind requirement of an RCT whereby both participants and researchers need to be blind (e.g. do not know whether they have been allocated to the experimental or the control group) is very difficult to achieve in the social sciences. It is nigh impossible as a solo researcher, even more so when that researcher is someone involved in the program. Even a single-blind requirement (participants blinded only) is challenging as most often

participants will quickly be able to ascertain whether they have been assigned to the experimental group or the control group. This problem can lead to issues of cross contamination and the Hawthorne effect or reverse Hawthorne effect (Scriven, 2008).

A case study from youth mentoring

To highlight the challenges of conducting RCT's in the social sciences, a case is drawn from the youth mentoring literature which contravenes many of the assumptions of an RCT. A report by Wheeler, Keller and DuBois (2010) compares three oft-cited school mentoring programs whose study design all included a control group. The studies in question are large-scale studies (Bernstein, Rappaport, Olsho, Hunt, & Levin, 2009; Grossman et al., 2012; Herrera et al., 2007; Karcher, 2008), with 1,139, 525 and 2,360 participants respectively. Close inspection of these studies revealed that a high percentage of participants in the treatment groups did not receive mentoring (7%, 10% and 17% respectively). In addition, of those in the control groups, approximately 1/3 of participants received a form of mentoring during the experimental phase. A control group where over 30% of participants receive a similar treatment to those in the experimental group does not seem to offer much control. This is just one representative example that illustrates the challenges faced by the social and behavioural sciences when it comes to implementing RCTs.

Ethical Considerations

In addition to the practical challenges discussed above, specific ethical concerns were also encountered in the current research project when initially exploring this path. To meet the minimum statistical requirements of an RCT, a relatively high number of participants are required. For my very early research design, power analysis suggested a minimum of 80 participants in both the experimental and the control group. It was not the number of

participants for the experimental group that was the problem, but rather finding participants for the control group.

When the idea of a control group was first presented to the major stakeholders (Raise Foundation Program Directors and school staff), the idea of randomly assigning students within a school to a mentoring program or a control group was vetoed because of ethical concerns. Priority had to be given to those students who had the highest need for the mentoring program, and it was decided that withholding the intervention from a young person in need for research purposes could not be justified. This resistance to random allocation by practitioners has been previously documented (Little et al., 2004) although proponents of experimental design put forward a somewhat Kantian philosophical argument that it is less ethical *not* to undertake an RCT – that relying on information based on 'weaker' evidence (e.g., non-experimental designs) can potentially lead to practices that are detrimental (Cook, Scriven, Coryn, & Evergreen, 2010). Regardless of these conflicting arguments, the decision was made at an organisational level and I needed to adapt accordingly.

Quasi-Experimental Design

Thought was then given to a quasi-experimental design, drawing on students from schools who were waiting to become part of the Ismo mentoring program as a 'wait-list control' with the expectation of providing the mentoring program at these schools (and thus to those students in the control group who wished to take part) in the following year. However, Raise Foundation experienced unprecedented growth in 2015 due to a government grant, increasing their school-based mentoring program from 15 programs to 41. Thus, while the experimental group more than doubled overnight, any 'wait list' that could be drawn upon evaporated instantly. I turned to the literature to assess my options, to see what others in

similar situations had done, and to decide whether it was worth pursuing a quantitative evaluation study without a control group.

Towards Mixed-Methods

Even before the challenges described above became apparent, I was drawn to a mixed methods study design because of my frustration with the limitations of self (or other) report questionnaires. When filling in questionnaires myself, I often become frustrated at their limitations and ambiguities (what do they mean by that question? I can be both, depending on the circumstance. What are they trying to ask me? Am I answering this correctly? I'm bored!). Test construction is a discipline of its own, and unintended ambiguity, social desirability and acquiescence, especially if left unchecked, present as serious confounds (Costello & Roodenburg, 2015). In particular when working with young people, I was concerned that I would be asking them a set of questions that may or may not be relevant to their individual experience of mentoring. I was drawn to speaking in depth with participants about their experiences, and their outcomes, as individuals rather than data points. Despite this leaning, at the early stage of my research my scientific indoctrination into a positivist paradigm weighed heavily and I felt like I had reached an insurmountable stumbling block. An evaluation study without an RCT did not seem like it could be worthwhile. So, I started to think about what I really wanted to know, and what was a defensibly sound way of coming to know it. That leads to the next question: What was it that I was trying to achieve through this study?

The answer was threefold. First, I wanted to know if school-based mentoring worked. Are we dealing with "the dust of the Grand Wazoo", or is it a real thing? Does it achieve the outcomes that it purports to? Is it worth the money that is being spent on it? Based on previous research, and the Ismo program's foundation in evidence-based practice, it seemed reasonable to think that it would 'work'. The more specific question that I wanted to answer

was whether it was effective in an Australian high-school context. As reported in the review of the literature (see p.44), the majority of evidence supporting youth-mentoring is from the USA, where the age, gender, cultural and socio-economic make-up of the participants is often vastly different to those in Australian mentoring programs.

Second, it seemed that theoretical models of mentoring based on relational theories had been transferred from community to school-based settings without due consideration of the inherent differences between the two. The effectiveness of a relationship-based model in school mentoring programs has been previously questioned (Lyons & McQuillin, 2019; McQuillin et al., 2013), and I wanted to test whether these theories held up in the shorter, more structured school-based programs.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I needed to know *how* mentoring worked in Australian schools. What processes and mechanisms supported (or hindered) the road to positive outcomes? A quantitative RCT was not going to be able to answer this important question. And so, in a pragmatic, ethically driven decision, I decided to drop the idea of an RCT, and introduce a rigorous qualitative study, with a pre-test post-test quantitative phase to help provide structure to the qualitative results. At the same time, I wanted my qualitative results to add meaning to the survey data. And thus, my study began to take shape. Of course, as with any PhD journey, and particularly one that is interested in real, live young people, as well as juggling the needs of external stakeholders, my journey has not been a linear one. This has been a process of discovery and learning that has been both frustrating and exhilarating. My aim is to be both honest and accurate in recording this journey's process and reasoning, the twists and turns of direction in method and process, supporting each with valid, carefully constructed justifying arguments. By sharing the challenges that I faced along the way, and my attempts to overcome them, my hope is that this may help (or at the very least encourage) other novice researchers who are 'going it alone'.

In the absence of a comparison group, I am not seeking to use the quantitative phase of my research to make causal claims about the efficacy (or otherwise) of school-based mentoring. Rather, the purpose of the quantitative phase is to provide a framework and context for the analysis and understanding of the qualitative data. Considered together, the two different methodologies can add strength and validity to each other, with the aim of becoming more than the sum of their parts.

An introduction to Mixed Methods Research

This decision led me to consider the literature on Mixed Methods Research. Mixed methods research (MMR) involves the intentional combination of at least one qualitative and one quantitative component in a single research design or project with the purpose of providing a deeper understanding than that which could be provided by either method alone. (Bergman, 2008; Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Shannon-Baker, 2016). Despite, or perhaps because of its relatively quick and immense growth in popularity, MMR has been criticised for a lack of clarity in design and analytical processes; overly simplistic applications, and poor integration of methods (Bergman, 2008).

One of the reasons put forward for these short-comings is one of competence; critics of mixed methods argue that researchers rarely have the skill-set necessary to perform both types of research adequately. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2012) support this criticism, arguing that mixed methods researchers must become 'connoisseurs of methods'. This was a daunting proposition for me as a PhD candidate embarking on my first piece of solo research. My undergraduate training in research methodology was firmly entrenched in a positivist paradigm; in fact, no qualitative research was taught in my undergraduate course; neither was a qualitative or mixed-methods design allowed in my fourth-year thesis.

Despite this focus on quantitative research (or perhaps because of it!) I was drawn to the richness and depth of qualitative research; I loved the way that the voices of research participants connected me to their experiences and made me care about them in a way that quantitative data did not. I am a reader of stories, rather than a mathematician. Story is a powerful way of explaining and understanding. However, the training and unquestioned assumptions of objectivity and sufficiency of a positivist only paradigm had left its mark, of which, after some struggle, I now have developed a more balanced view. That is, rather than reject one or the other, I am encouraged by coming to an understanding of the way that they can complement each other. As a practitioner in the not-for-profit sector, being able to 'speak the numbers' means that I can communicate effectively with those who understand this language, such as funders and corporate investors. The qualitative data, the stories behind the numbers bring them to life and help to drive engagement and interest.

As for Teddlie and Tashakkori's request that I be a connoisseur of both methods - this I cannot hope to claim at this stage of my research career, however I took steps towards this direction. My research training was in quantitative methods, thus I sought to enhance my qualitative research skills by undertaking extensive reading and seeking advice from experienced qualitative researchers. I attended an intensive Qualitative Research Analysis and Writing course at the University of Sydney and began regular peer review sessions with other qualitative researchers in my Department. This opportunity to learn new skills and become open to new ways of addressing research questions was highly valuable and being able to practice these new skills immediately consolidated the learning.

A Pragmatic Paradigm

Another challenge of MMR is how to choose an epistemological approach. Critics of mixed methods approaches favour a 'purist' approach (Rossman & L. Wilson, 1985) and argue that researchers need to choose a single paradigm, because different assumptions

provide the foundations for each approach. A full debate about the mixing of different worldviews, or paradigms, is beyond the scope of this thesis however a brief discussion is warranted. Qualitative and quantitative researchers have generally approached research from different worldviews. A positivist paradigm is usually associated with quantitative research methods and relies on a view of the world as a complex arrangement of variables. This paradigm is interested in empirical observation and measurement and makes claims of causality. Conversely, a constructivist paradigm is associated with qualitative research methods, and relies on the notion of meaning being socially constructed (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Researchers using this paradigm are interested in understanding the meaning of a phenomenon, and how it is experienced in a subjective way (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Whilst some believe that never the twain shall meet, a mixed methods approach can draw on the strength of each method and minimise the weaknesses or limitations of any single approach. Whilst mixed methods is not a paradigm in and of itself, many researchers have adopted pragmatism as the paradigm for this type of research (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Pragmatism allows researchers to use a different mix of methodologies, whilst being guided by a primary desire for socially useful knowledge (Feilzer, 2009). This paradigm sits well with both my own preference for practical, applied research and the research problem in question, namely program evaluation.

Rationale for Mixing Methods – The Current Study

Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011) suggest that researchers be explicit about the reasons for mixing methods. In the current study, the primary reason for choosing mixed methods is *context*, whereby the qualitative findings can provide contextual, internally valid understanding of the more generalizable and externally valid survey results (Bryman, 2006; Hesse-Biber, 2010).

Quantitative research can show, for example what is happening in the Ismo program for youth, in terms of generalizable data, such as statistical averages or what is "normal". Furthermore, through statistical analysis we can learn whether the Ismo program is effective in influencing positive outcomes for youth based on pre-determined survey tools. This is essentially testing what has been observed anecdotally, using experience, consultation, theory, and previous research to drive the questions that are asked (e.g., the measures used) to evaluate the outcomes of the program. However, this approach is restricted by current knowledge. Participants are not able to answer questions that they have not been asked in the quantitative survey.

Given that the majority of research has been dominated by the Big Sister Big Brother Agency in the USA, there is the risk that the evidence is 'blinkered' and insular. A more exploratory, qualitative approach has the potential to take us beyond these boundaries and offer up questions that have not previously been considered. Qualitative enquiry can tell us a story of *why* these things are happening, and can capture the nuances, complexities, and uniqueness of the individuals in the study.

Through this mixing of methods, we can learn not only what the outcomes of the Ismo program are, but also obtain process knowledge, more about *why* and *how* these things are occurring. This approach allows for us to draw on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative paradigms and aims to minimise the weaknesses of a single approach (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005).

The Study Design

There are three important considerations when designing mixed methods research, which are priority, implementation and integration (Cresswell, Plano Clark, Guttmann, & Hanson, 2003). Priority refers to the method that is emphasised or privileged in the research;

implementation refers to the sequence or timing of data collection, and integration asks the researcher to be explicit about how and when the methods are 'mixed'.

The mixed methods approach used in this study is essentially a sequential, exploratory mixed methods design privileging qualitative data. Qualitative data is privileged in this research because the qualitative studies form the largest part of this research in terms of data collection and analysis, and priority is given to the questions that can be explored through qualitative research such as *how?* and *why?* As suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the sequence of the quantitative and qualitative data collection has been determined by the purpose of the research, and the research questions.

First, the quantitative data in the form of a hard copy survey instrument was collected at two time-points (baseline and post-intervention). The data was analysed using paired samples *t*-tests and partial correlations to test the quantitative hypotheses. In the qualitative studies, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from participants to explore, in their own voice, their experience of participating in a school-based mentoring program. While the data for the qualitative studies was collected concurrently with the quantitative data, it was analysed sequentially. As is shown in Figure 4 below, each study relates to and builds on the findings of the previous study. Finally, all findings are integrated and interpreted as a whole.

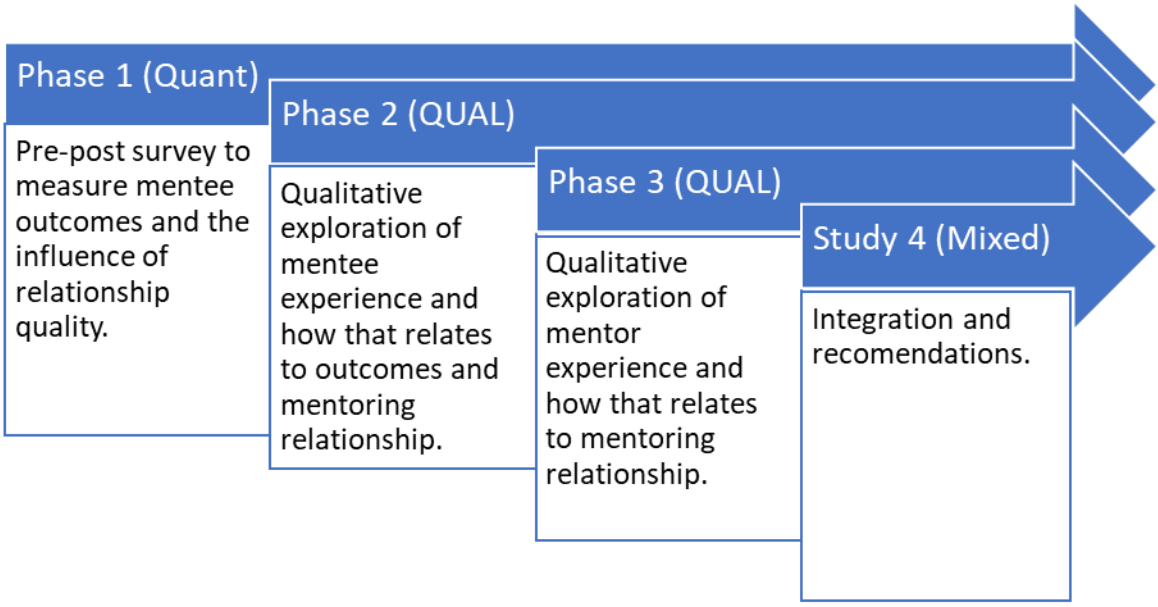

Figure 4. A sequential, exploratory mixed methods design privileging qualitative data.

Table 2 describes the different components of the research design.

Table 2

An overview of the study design

Objective	Methodological approach	Rationale for method chosen	Implementation and data analysis
To evaluate the effectiveness of the Ismo mentoring program. To examine the influence of the mentoring relationship on outcomes.	Pre and post surveys designed to measure mentee adjustment over the course of the program.	To assess whether the Ismo program was successful in achieving positive impact for beneficiaries (e.g. young people).	Surveys administered at the beginning and end of the program. Paired sample *t*-tests conducted to test mentee adjustment. Regression analyses to test influence of mentoring relationship
To understand the experiences and perceptions about the Ismo mentoring	Semi-structured interviews with mentees and mentors within 3	To obtain in-depth data on the views of mentees and mentors to be able to	Interviews with mentees and mentors were audio recorded, transcribed

program from participants (mentees and mentors)	months of the conclusion of program.	answer questions that were not able to be answered by the quantitative study (e.g. *how* and *why)*	and thematically analysed.
To make recommendations for future practice for the Ismo mentoring program.	Review Ismo program practices in the context of the study findings.	To compare the current practices to the results of the quantitative and qualitative studies	Integrated results from all three studies compared and contrasted

The Research Practitioner

Alongside the shift from a randomised control trial to a mixed methods approach came a shift from a traditional theoretical approach to an experiential, practitioner-based approach. As with the tension between methodological approaches such as quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research, so too a tension exists between practitioner research and more traditional academic research. Proponents of practitioner-research argue that empirical knowledge is limited in its ability to add to or interact with the knowledge that is held by practitioners – knowledge that can only be gleaned through experience on the ground (Freshwater & Lees, 2008; Smedslund & Ross, 2014).

Shaw and Lunt (2018) emphasise the importance of practitioner-based research in being able to harness knowledge that emerges directly from practice, however rather than taking a for or against stance, they argue that both academic research and practitioner-based research should be seen as equally important. Likewise, I would argue that there can be great benefit from the interaction between theoretical and practical. In my own work, for example, the theoretical frameworks proposed for youth mentoring outcomes have been of immense help in helping to make practical and informed (*evidence-based*) decisions about the programs – for example how long they should be, how much training mentors should receive, what support do mentoring matches need etc. (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011;

Grossman et al., 2012). However, they are of little help in understanding the multitude of unique interventions that occur within a youth mentoring program that are not prompted by theory. In a mentoring intervention, the *mentors* are the practitioners. The theoretical frameworks suggest that it is this relationship between mentor and mentee that is the mechanism for change, however mentors have little or no theoretical knowledge from which to work. How then, can we rely on theoretical frameworks to explain mentoring outcomes? Perhaps a body of knowledge that is practice-based could better answer questions about what works and what does not work for specific programs and interventions.

Research to Practice Gap

Sayer (2010p.15) argues that "social scientific knowledge is primarily propositional or referential, rather than practical, and this should immediately provide some clues as to why it seems unable, except very indirectly, to help us decide how to live". Sayer's argument lies at the heart of my desire to undertake research that has a more immediate and direct impact – research that can, indeed "help us decide how to live".

As stated previously, I have a great respect for rigorous, theoretical, scientific academic research. However, as a practitioner on the ground working long hours in a tightly resourced not-for-profit looking for answers, it is often difficult for me to find them. I must wait for academic research that relates directly to my practice. If I am lucky enough that someone has sought to answer the question I am asking, I will then need to make a decision as to whether it is reasonable to believe the findings may be generalisable to the population that I am working with. Then I must test/replicate the findings to see whether in fact they do apply to my practice. Then, and only then can I implement on a wider scale. This process takes years! As a research-practitioner, the research that I am doing can be immediately relevant, specific to my program's needs and can be tested and implemented quickly. Staff

are more likely to adopt the results of the research because it is relevant to what they do; they can recognise the benefits and see themselves in the research (Freshwater & Lees, 2008).

I understand that this is a simplistic argument, and there are many reasons that prevent practitioners from taking up the research baton and conducting research that can join the conversation and interact with academic research. Indeed, through the process of this research, this challenge has become one of great interest, and one that I will attempt to address in the final chapter. Currently the relationship between theory and practice is primarily unidirectional in nature where research seeks to inform practice, but practice rarely has the opportunity to inform research. Many practitioners are too busy on the ground to do the type of research that would lead to publication (Dick, 1993; Kaffenberger, 2012; Mason et al., 2016). Even if time permits, for many it is not seen as part of their role, and others lack the confidence in their abilities to undertake and apply research findings (Kaffenberger, 2012; Mason et al., 2016).

Benefits of practice-based research

Despite these difficulties, I argue here that the benefits of overcoming these barriers have the potential to be transformational. Research that is done with the *intention to produce change* has the potential to close the research-practice gap. This type of research cannot and should not aspire to claim hierarchy over more traditional academic research. It does however have its own role to play, in its specificity and relevance to local research problems and questions and building an evidence base through careful, research driven observation of interactions that fall outside of theoretical knowledge (Shaw & Lunt, 2018). Further, practitioner-based research has the additional benefit of the engagement of the practitioners themselves – both to a rigorous research practice, but also in their motivation and passion for their work. Freshwater and Lees (2008) suggest that it can be highly valuable for

practitioners to be building an evidence base at the same time as building their skills as practitioners.

This argument is not intended to elevate practitioner-based research to a position where it is seen as being more important, or more relevant than academic research. It has been suggested, however, that the opposite of this is currently true – that academic research is performed by an 'elite' few, and that the relationship between academic research and practice is unidimensional and therefore disconnected from the realities and complexities of human-based practice (Rolfe, 1998). I suggest that what is needed is a middle ground, where academic and practice-based research can interact and inform each other in a way that elevates both. We need the "rigour, logic and rationality" (Freshwater & Lees, 2008) of academic research, along with the flexibility, specificity and immediacy of practice-based research.

As a practitioner of some years who has come back to study as a PhD student, I had a unique opportunity to combine the rigour and focus of academic research with the practical, specific and relevance of practitioner-based research. The usual barriers to practice-based research were overcome in this way – I had time, through my PhD scholarship and having the opportunity to work part-time during the initial stages of the PhD. Because of my undergraduate and postgraduate training in psychology, I had both the research knowledge and confidence to conduct the research, along with support and supervision from the University which brought academic rigour to the process. I had the opportunity to build my research skills as part of the PhD process, undertaking intensive courses in both qualitative and quantitative methods, and I had a high level of motivation because of my passion for learning and applying what had been learnt in a practical way.

Throughout this process - which admittedly has taken many years, I was able to provide feedback and implement change both to my organisation and to my research. When I was working, I learnt things that sparked ideas for my research. When I was researching, *something I never would have time for in my day to day role*, I came across articles and information that sparked ideas for practice that I was able to immediately test. This process of behaving "sometimes as a practitioner, sometimes as a researcher, and at all times as an author who is making meaning out of the interactions and presenting them to an external audience" (Drake, 2010, p.2) has been incredibly rewarding and has stimulated growth and development of me personally – both as a researcher and as a practitioner in a way that I believe has added much value to both roles.

Unlike traditional methods, where the first step is defining precise research questions (Kaffenberger, 2012), Dick (2013) argues that one of the benefits of practice-based research is the ability to be responsive throughout the research process. As detailed earlier in this chapter, my research journey has been anything but linear, neat and pre-defined. My initial (albeit short-lived) positivist stance sought to establish both causality and generalisability. Shifting towards more exploratory methodologies and research questions felt more purposeful and authentic, and yet something still niggled as to whether I had given up too much. It was not until that simple but powerful question from my supervisor (quite possibly borne out of frustration at my paralysis and indecision) "what do you want this research to achieve?" that I was able to answer with confidence and redefine my research questions further to be unashamedly practice-focussed and specific to my work as a practitioner.

Thus, the purpose of the current study is:

- First, I want to increase understanding of a specific school-based mentoring program in Australia, the In-School Mentoring Opportunity (Ismo) Mentoring Program developed and delivered by Australian charity Raise Foundation.
- Second, I want to influence changes to this mentoring program that will bring about improvements for its beneficiaries.
- Third, with extreme caution, I want to add to knowledge and influence change for other similar programs whilst being clear that this research will not presume generalisability to other settings, but rather focusses on a cycle of continuous improvement in *this* setting (Mason et al, 2016).
- Fourth, I want to record the process, including the challenges, of the research-practitioner approach.
- Finally, I want to consider the effectiveness of this approach and its viability for use by practitioners in the youth intervention field.

Checks and Balances

Before proceeding, I need to acknowledge further to previous indication in the introduction, my strong personal history and belief in youth mentoring to maintain the integrity and trustworthiness of this research. Mentoring has played an important role in my own life since adolescence and failure to acknowledge this would be both unethical and detrimental to the research I have undertaken. I have adopted several methods advocated and used by experienced qualitative researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Patton, 2002; Guest et al, 2012) in an attempt to acknowledge, recognise and evaluate how my personal bias impacts the way I interpret the data. These methods are critically considered in Chapter 5. p.115.

I now turn to the empirical stage of this project, where the data will be examined, and the story of participation in the Ismo school mentoring program told. The first phase of this

discovery is quantitative and is a pre-post examination of mentee outcomes. The aim of this study is to ascertain whether the Ismo program is achieving positive outcomes for the young people who participate in it. The results of this study are important; they will help answer the question of whether the results of predominantly USA-based research can be generalised to an Australian setting. They will also provide information as to whether the Ismo program is an effective intervention for high school students in Australia. Finally, they will provide a framework from where to ground the qualitative explorations.

Before embarking on this next stage, I remind the reader that as a research-practitioner the aim of this research is *improving effectiveness* or *deepening understanding of practice* (Shaw, 2011) and this aim will guide the analysis and discussion of the data.

Chapter 4 – The effectiveness of a youth mentoring program in an Australian high school context

"Mental health issues are growing for our young people. We know that anxiety and depression are on the increase, that eating disorders are also on the increase. When I was a teenager, I didn't know anyone who was self-harming and cutting their own arms, but we see a lot of that today. I'm really worried about our kids. With all those issues they are facing, they are not asking for help. It's not ok. But I think we can do something about that." (Vicki Condon, Raise CEO and Founder, TEDEx 2018).

As noted in Chapter 3 (p. 51), in health and allied disciplines, the 'gold standard' for research has long been regarded as the experimental control group study design. In practice, such studies are difficult, if not impossible to implement, for both practical and ethical reasons. However, organisations delivering programs that purport to solve social problems as described in the above quote from Raise CEO Vicki Condon, nonetheless need valid and objective evidence. This evidence is necessary both to ensure that their interventions are working and to enable accountability. To that end, to answer the research questions posited for this study, a pre-post intervention design has been implemented. It needs to be acknowledged that while this type of research design cannot and should not claim causality, it can provide useful information that allows program owners to report improvements (or declines), as well as track the ongoing performance of their program from year to year. The rationale for its use in this project is that, combined with the complementary qualitative insights of this research, it adds needed understanding of the effectiveness of the mentoring program and how the experience of participants influences effectiveness.

At the conclusion of the literature review, I posed a broad general question that needs to be answered if mentoring is to be justified: "can youth mentoring programs effectively support Australian adolescents?" Having approached this study from a research-practitioner perspective as described in the methodology chapter, I take a more focussed pathway to investigate whether there is evidence that a *specific* youth mentoring program has effectively supported *specific* positive outcomes for young people in a *specific* context.

To reiterate from Chapter 2, mentoring interventions have been shown to be effective in achieving positive outcomes for young people in both community-based and school-based settings. Findings have been mixed, particularly in school-based mentoring programs (SBM) (Dubois et al., 2002; Wheeler, Keller, & Dubois, 2010). Moreover, mentoring as an intervention yields stubbornly low effect sizes even though a significant body of research has enhanced understanding of program best-practice over the past 20 years. Research findings show that effect size increases incrementally in relation to a number of important program practices including recruitment and training of volunteers, program support of the mentoring relationship and structured curriculum, however even with this increase in knowledge subsequent meta-analyses have not demonstrated stronger effects (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Raposa et al., 2019). In addition, there is a lack of Australian research into youth mentoring which begs the question of whether the results can be generalised to Australian settings.

Raise Foundation is an Australian charity that has been delivering youth mentoring programs in Australian high schools since 2009. The charity claims that their program is evidence-based and meets or exceeds all the Australian Youth Mentoring Network benchmarks (AYMN, 2012). Based on the literature, this adherence to best practice should indicate stronger effects for program participants (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011). However, as discussed above, context is important both in terms of school vs community-

based mentoring, and in terms of understanding whether results from USA can be generalised to an Australian population. Thus, there is an opportunity to explore whether current research findings are applicable to Raise Foundation's Australian high-school based setting.

This chapter then seeks to explore whether Raise Foundation's In School Mentoring Opportunity (Ismo) program is able to support positive adolescent development in Australian high school settings across New South Wales and Victoria.

Research Context

This research was undertaken in 2015 in conjunction with Raise Foundation, a registered charity with DGR status who deliver mentoring programs for young people in Australian high schools. At the time of the research, Raise Foundation was operational in two Australian states (NSW and Victoria). The organisation was founded by CEO Vicki Condon in 2009 and in 2015 the vision for Raise was "To impact the wellbeing of young people in Australia who are at risk of disengagement, by providing best practice youth mentoring programs" with a mission simply to "provide youth mentoring programs in Australia" (Raise Foundation Annual Report, 2015, p.5). In 2015 the organisation experienced significant growth through being awarded the NSW Government's "Youth Frontiers" initiative and grew to support 493 young people in 41 high schools across NSW and Victoria. At the time of writing this chapter, Raise has grown to be a medium to large-size charity in a significant growth phase, with an annual turnover of $4.5M and a bold strategic plan to be able to offer their mentoring program to every public high school in Australia by 2024 (Raise Foundation Strategic Impact Plan, 2019).

At first glance, this is certainly something to be celebrated. However, with significant growth comes significant risk, and growth at the expense of quality may be worse than no growth at all (Dubois et al., 2002; Karcher, Nakkula, & Harris, 2005; Spencer, 2006).

Research has consistently demonstrated that a poor or incomplete mentoring experience can leave a young person worse off (Grossman et al., 2012; Herrera et al., 2007; Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014). Thus, it is imperative that an organisation like Raise Foundation, whose strategic goal is to provide a mentoring intervention in *every public high school in Australia* (Raise Foundation, 2019), have an in-depth knowledge of the elements of the program that lead to positive experiences and successful outcomes, as well as those that do not. Indeed, this knowledge is essential for every youth mentoring organisation.

Setting for Study

The mentoring programs that Raise Foundation provides support young people in Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 at government high schools in NSW and Victoria. The target group for the program are young people attending high school in Year 7 through to Year 10 who meet the criteria for inclusion. Broad inclusion criterion is that the young person 'is at risk of disengaging from school, home or life' (Raise Foundation, 2015). Specifically, risks for disengagement include social isolation, poor social skills, lack of strong adult role model; struggling with schoolwork, being bullied, and low self-esteem amongst others.

Raise follows a developmental model of youth mentoring based on Rhodes' Model of Youth Mentoring which suggests that a relationship based on mutuality, empathy and trust is built between a mentoring dyad, the mentee experiences positive growth in social-emotional, cognitive and identity development (Rhodes et al., 2006). Central to the intervention is the match between the young person and their volunteer mentor.

The organisation pride themselves on their 'best-practice' approach to mentoring which is based on research evidence and current best-practice as suggested by the Australian Youth Mentoring Network (AYMN) (Raise Foundation Annual Report 2015, p.17).

The Mentoring Intervention

The Raise mentoring program is a strengths-based program which aims to "impact the wellbeing of young people at risk of disengaging in Australia through best practice youth mentoring programs." (Raise Foundation, 2015). Essentially the program is an early intervention model that aims to equip young people with positive assets in the form of social-emotional support, increased self-concept, improved relationships and better school engagement through a caring and nurturing relationship with a non-familial adult. The program is guided by best-practice evidence through mentoring research and the Australian Youth Mentoring Network national benchmarks and utilises a theoretical framework to guide program delivery (9, 2012; Rhodes et al., 2006).

As previously noted, at the heart of the mentoring intervention is the relationship that develops between the young person and their mentor, a relationship that is hopefully based on mutuality, trust and reciprocity (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006). Research has shown that both frequency and length of the relationship is important, and best-practice suggests a minimum match length of six months (Grossman et al., 2012). Thus, mentors in the Raise program are expected to commit to the entire length of the program (20 weekly one-hour meetings over 6 months) and must not have more than two weeks leave planned during this period.

Prior to meeting the mentees, volunteer mentors are child-safe checked (a current Working With Children Check as well as police clearance is required) and receive 12-hours of TAFE Accredited training (Cert I 'Mentoring in the Community') to prepare them for their role. They are then allocated to a school, where the mentoring will take place. At the first meeting, group activities are conducted to assist the matching process. At the next meeting, mentors and mentees are matched based on (a) mentee preference (b) shared interests and (c) mentee need. Over the following weeks, a structured program curriculum is provided (see

Appendix 1, p. 298) however, the focus of the intervention is on the relationship that is developed between the mentor and the mentee, with the hope that this relationship will support positive development for the young person.

After matching, mentors attend the school premises at the same time and day every week, to meet with their mentees. The Raise program counsellor greets all mentors and mentees as a group to welcome them and introduce the weekly topic which is supported by activities in a mentoring handbook provided to each participant. Mentees and mentors then separate into their mentoring pairs, where they spend between 40-50 minutes together. Each match is free to choose their own activities during this time; activities commonly include basketball, Uno or chess, drawing, completing the weekly activities or simply talking.

The sessions are 'mentee-led' (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011); mentors are encouraged to let the mentees determine the activities and conversation so that the session meets their mentee's individual needs. The last ten minutes of the session are spent as a group with all mentors and mentees sharing morning or afternoon tea together. Mentees then return to their normal class routine, and mentors meet with the Raise program counsellor for a group supervision session to discuss any issues that they need support with and receive any necessary training to support their continued development.

The closure of the program is supported over the final weeks of mentoring and culminates in a formal graduation ceremony where mentors and mentees have an opportunity to reflect on their experience and formally close the match at which time all contact between the match is ceased.

The current research looked at the cohort of young people who participated in Raise Foundation's in-school mentoring program in 2015.

Theoretical Model of Mentoring

Rhodes' (2006) model of youth mentoring was used to guide the selection of measures and research questions for the study. As described in the literature review (p.28), this theoretical model posits that mentoring encourages positive growth for mentees in three outcome areas; social-emotional, cognitive and identity development. As young people experience growth in these areas through their experience of a positive relationship, and the modelling of positive relational behaviours within it, other important relationships such as those with family, teachers and peers improve. The enrichment of these relationships in turn stimulates further development for mentees.

It is important to note that in this theoretical model, the mentoring relationship, characterised by mutuality, trust and respect, is at the heart of the intervention (Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006). It is through this relationship that mentees are able to experience the growth in cognitive, identity and social development which in turn leads to desired positive outcomes (see Figure 3). An example of this theoretical model in practice is described in the following vignette:

> *Rosie is selected to participate in a mentoring program at her school. She is matched with her mentor, Laura. They immediately bond over a shared love of cats, however a deeper bond is forged over time. Laura allows space for Rosie to build trust, and shares some of her own personal experiences to develop mutuality and demonstrate positive role-modelling. Rosie soon comes to realise that Laura is someone she can trust – she turns up every week, and doesn't judge her, even when she doesn't agree with what she is saying. She's also a great listener! Laura provides lots of encouragement to Rosie, helping her figure out how to cope with the bullying that she experiences in the playground. She's the first person that Rosie talks to about her attraction to girls which feels confusing and shameful. Laura's encouragement helps*

Rosie to feel better about herself, and more confident. She is still bullied, however now when she hears the taunts in the playground "you're fat, you're ugly, you're a dyke", she tells herself "Laura thinks I'm amazing – who are you to say any different". Through Laura's consistent, patient mentoring, Rosie comes to believe in herself more, and begins attending school more regularly. This helps her relationships with her friends (she sees them more regularly) her teachers (she's understanding more in class) and her parents (who aren't nagging her as much). Through these strengthened relationships, Rosie's social, cognitive and identity skills continue to develop.

Although school-based mentoring has garnered more interest in recent years, existing theoretical frameworks such as the Rhodes model were developed for a community-based mentoring where the time-frame of the relationship and the individual sessions are traditionally much longer than school-based mentoring - an average of three hours per week over 18 months as compared to an average of one hour per week over 6 months (DuBois et al., 2011; Herrera et al., 2011).

Because of the difference in the amount of time mentees and mentors spend together in school versus community mentoring, there is some disagreement as to whether a developmental model is appropriate for a school setting. Some researchers argue that the school-based mentoring environment (e.g., more structured, shorter interventions) is not conducive to developing close relationships. For example, Lyons and McQuillin (2019) found that in SBM low quality relationships were associated with negative outcomes for young people. In the same study, while increases in relationship quality were associated with positive outcomes in some domains, there was a negative association for others, suggesting that relationship quality alone may not be sufficient to achieve positive outcomes. It is

important to remember here that associations are not the same as causation, and there are other factors that could explain these associations.

Cavell and Elledge (2014) also argue that the school-based mentoring environment may prohibit the development of a close relationship and suggest that programs in this context focus on goal-setting skills instead. In another study, McQullin, Strait, Smith and Ingram (2015) found moderate, positive changes in student grades and behaviour after a 12-week goal focussed mentoring program. However, 7 out of 10 outcomes they measured were not significant, leading them to conclude that this brief, goal-focussed approach did not offer an improvement over more traditional relationship-based model. Others take this argument further and suggest that instrumental mentoring programs may focus on goals to the detriment of the young person (Morrow & Styles, 1995; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008).

Regardless of whether or not SBM is the best environment to nurture a close mentoring relationship, Rhodes' model suggests that if mentors and mentees *were* able to develop a close relationship characterised by mutuality, trust and respect, that they should experience positive change regardless of their environment (Lyons & McQuillin, 2019). This research aims to test whether the theoretical model upon which Raise Foundation's mentoring program is based is appropriate in a high-school setting by looking at the outcomes experienced by mentees, and the impact of the mentoring relationship on those outcomes.

The importance of context

While there is a plethora of research that demonstrates youth mentoring can affect positive outcomes for young people, *context* is identified as being a research gap. A large body of mentoring research exists; however the majority of this research has been undertaken

in the USA with a single mentoring provider, Big Brother, Big Sister (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Herrera et al., 2013; Tierney et al., 1995).

Thus, this research was designed to explore whether a shorter, school-based mentoring program in Australia resulted in improved social-emotional outcomes, engagement with education and relationships with others, and further explore what role the mentoring relationship played in influencing these outcomes.

Study design

This study is part of a larger mixed methods research project. The design for this study is a non-experimental pre-post intervention study using a within subjects repeated measures design. For a full discussion on the rationale for choosing the study design and methodology see Chapter 3 (p.58).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions for this phase of the study were developed using the theoretical model described above as the framework. Specifically, the research questions for this study are:

1. Does participation in Raise Foundation's Ismo mentoring program result in improved outcomes for young people, specifically:
    a. Improved social-emotional outcomes
    b. Improved school engagement
    c. Improved relationships with others

2. How does the quality of the mentoring relationship influence these outcomes?

Ethics

Low risk ethics approval was granted for all phases of the project by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) on January 12th, 2015 (MUHREC LR CF14/3822 – 2014001998 – The Evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (Ismo)). As the research was being conducted in public high schools in New South Wales and Victoria, Department of Education Ethics approval was sought from the relevant parties. Approval was received from the NSW Education Department on 29 October 2015. SERAP 2015255. Approval was received from the Department of Education & Training in Victoria on 2nd June 2015 (2015_002717). Copies of all ethics approval documents can be found at Appendix 2 – Ethics Approval.

Program Selection Criteria

For a young person to participate in the Ismo school mentoring program, they must be in high school years 7, 8, 9 or 10 (in Australia, this means an age range from 12-16 years). They must be identified by the school, usually by wellbeing coordinators and year teachers, as being 'at risk of disengagement', must want to participate, have consent from their parents and commit to attending weekly mentoring sessions in Term 2 and Term 3. Reasons for referral vary, with the main referral reasons document for 2015 as follows:

- Exhibits poor social skills
- Is socially isolated
- Lacks a strong adult role model
- Is struggling with schoolwork
- Has low self-esteem
- Is shy or withdrawn
- Is being bullied
- Showing signs of anti-social behaviour
- Is experiencing grief or bereavement
- Is experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety or depression

The risk threshold for participation in the Raise mentoring program was described as low to medium risk, however there are no strict criteria for inclusion, and the program is guided by each school as to the students who would benefit most from participating. After identifying potential students, the school contact provides students with information and a consent form for parental/carer consent to participate. Once consent has been received, the school may provide additional background information about the young person to the Raise program counsellor. This information is not disclosed to mentors.

Sampling & Recruitment

The population from which the study sample was drawn consisted of the 493 young people who had signed up to participate in Raise Foundation's in-school mentoring program in 2015. These participants were high school students from Years 7 to 10 in Victoria and New South Wales (NSW), with 84% of participants from NSW. Parent/guardian consent for students to take part in the study was obtained at the same time that parents/guardians provided consent for their child to participate in the mentoring program (see Appendix 3 – Consent Forms and Explanatory Statements). All potential participants were shown a video outlining the research project during an early mentoring session and provided with an explanatory statement and consent form (see Appendix 3).

From a potential 493 student participants in the mentoring program, 421 mentee surveys were completed at baseline (upon commencement of the mentoring program). Of these, 9 participants did not have both parent and student consent and were not included in the analysis. The remaining 63 mentees were absent on the day that evaluations were collected. For Time 2 data, 329 out of a potential 493 surveys were collected. There were several factors that influenced the lower rate of completion for Time 2 data. Firstly, staffing issues resulted in surveys not being completed at two schools. Secondly, a high rate of absence for students was recorded on the day that Time 2 evaluation were collected. Finally,

even though program staff had been trained at the beginning of the year, there was a feeling among some staff members that the questionnaires placed too much of a response burden on young people, and this could have impacted the return rate.

Of the surveys collected, 23 had to be excluded from the analysis due to missing or incorrect codes, meaning that pre and post results were unable to be matched. A further 163 were excluded because data was only collected at one time-point due to absences. Five were excluded due to Time 2 measures not being filled in at all. In total, 293 participants completed surveys at Time 1 and Time 2 and were able to be matched by unique code, 59.4% of the total sample.

Table 3

Response rates from students at pre and post intervention

Total Mentee N = 493	Returned	Absent (non-response)	Non-consent	Missing code or blank data
Time 1 (April –May 2015)	421 (85%)	63 (12%)	9 (1.8%)	
Time 2 (Sept –Nov 2015)	329 (67%)	134 (27%)	7 (1.4%)	23 (4.6%)

Demographic Information

The overall sample consisted of primarily Australian born participants (83%), with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background accounting for nearly 10% of the sample. Sixteen percent of the sample were born in a country outside of Australia and 11.6% of the sample did not have English as a first language. The gender breakdown was 57.5% male and 42.5% female. Most young people lived in or near an urban location. Forty-three percent of the sample did not live with both parents. The age range of young people was from 12 to 16, with a median age of 14 years.

Table 4

Demographic details for mentees

	N	%
Gender		
Male	164	57
Female	119	41
Did not disclose	5	2
Total	288	100
Age		
Minimum	12	-
Maximum	16	-
Median	14	-
Standard deviation	.78	-
Living Arrangements		
Lives with both parents	165	57.7
Lives with one parent	90	31.5
Other	31	10.8
Did not disclose	2	.7
State of residence		
New South Wales	242	84.2
Victoria	14	4.8
Did not disclose	32	3.8

Procedure

Data Collection

Survey data were collected at two time points – at the commencement of the mentoring program to establish baseline levels and then six months later in the penultimate week of the program to measure change. Demographic information for students and their mentors was collected at the first time point. Measures of the mentoring relationship quality were collected at the second time point.

The survey questionnaire was paper-based and administered to mentees in the first one-on-one mentoring session of the mentoring program in 2015. To ensure consistency in

administration, a video explaining the research was produced and shown to participants by Raise Foundation Program Coordinators, who then invited participants to complete a consent form if they agree to take part in the research. Consent forms were placed in an envelope and mailed to the researcher. Participants then completed the questionnaire as a group. Program Coordinators were trained by the researcher to administer the questionnaire and were provided with a list of "Frequently Asked Questions". The reason for choosing paper-based administration rather than web-based administration is the lack of computers available at some of the sites, and the benefits of group administration (e.g. consistency of information provided, survey response rates and the ability to answer questions).

To ensure that anonymity of participants was protected, students and mentors were guided to create a unique code for their survey that would be used again for the post-survey data. Students who did not wish to take part in the research, and those who did not have parental consent, had the choice of filling in the questionnaire without a unique code (writing NC instead indicating no consent) or not completing the questionnaire. Completed questionnaires and consent forms were then collected by the Program Coordinator and posted by registered mail to the researcher for data entry.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the quantitative results was conducted using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS), version 22.0. To answer the research question "*Does participation in a Raise Foundation's Ismo mentoring program result in improved outcomes for young people; specifically, social-emotional outcomes, improved school engagement and improved relationships with others*", paired sample *t*-tests were conducted. To examine the influence that the quality of the mentoring relationship has on these results, partial correlations between the reports on quality of relationship and change scores for the various measures of mentee adjustment (controlling for T1 scores) were used.

Data Cleaning and Screening

Raw data was input from hard copy responses into Excel and transferred to SPSS for analyses. Descriptive statistics were used to identify any data entry errors; maximum and minimum scores for all variables were checked; where there were entries outside of expected maximum and minimum scores, data were checked against the original surveys. Two data entry points could not be checked against original surveys and were substituted with the mean (Tabachnick, 2013). Five cases with 30% or more missing data were identified and excluded, leaving a total of 288 cases.

SPSS MVA (Missing Values Analysis) was used to detect patterns of missing values in the dataset (Tabachnick, 2007, 2013). The Youth Survey (Jucovy, 2002) was the only scale where there were missing data over 5%, and *t*-tests were conducted on variables within this scale with over 5 per cent of data missing. Little's MCAR (Missing Completely At Random) test had a statistically non-significant result ($p = .177$) so MCAR can be inferred (Little, 2002).

As missing values were scattered throughout cases and variables, deletion of cases would have resulted in substantial loss of data. As the data was assumed to be Missing at Random (MAR) the decision was made to estimate missing values and use the estimates during data analysis (Tabachnick, 2013). An expectation-maximisation (EM) imputation algorithm was conducted in SPSS to impute missing data by using a maximum likelihood approach to generate values (Little, 2002). There were no significant differences between variable means before and after EM imputation.

Univariate outliers were examined by converting item scores to z-scores and examining the data for z-scores in excess of 3.29 (Tabachnick, 2013). None of the variables exceeded the critical value.

Comparison of study sample

In order to assess whether there were meaningful differences between participants who completed both T1 and T2 surveys and those who only completed the T1 survey, analyses were conducted to compare these two groups on demographic items (age, gender, ethnicity, living arrangements) and measures that were assessed at baseline (e.g., Children's Hope Scale, Scholastic Self-Concept, Global Self-Concept, Perceived Social Support, Attendance, Grades, Relationship with Family and Relationship with Friends). There were no significant differences between groups on any of these measures.

Measures

A pre-post intervention questionnaire was developed in consultation with a panel of experts including the CEO of Raise Foundation, a Student Wellbeing Coordinator, and Program Coordinators from the Ismo Program (see Appendix 5 – Survey Measure). Measures were chosen in the context of the theoretical model and expected outcomes as discussed previously in this chapter. The survey was piloted on Raise Foundation staff, and a group of high school students known to the researcher to test for face validity and comprehension. Feedback from the pilot tests led to refinement of the measures, which are discussed individually below where applicable.

The measures chosen to measure the expected outcomes are shown in Table 5 and described in more detail below.

Table 5

Expected Outcomes and Measures

Outcome	Measure
Social-emotional wellbeing	Harter's Global Self Worth Scale (adapted) Children's Hope Scale
Improved educational engagement	Harter's Scholastic Competence Scale (adapted) Single item self-report questions about attendance and grades.
Improved relationships	Social Provisions Scale (guidance subscale) Single item self-report questions about relationships with parents and peers.
Mentor Relationship Quality	The Youth Survey (youth-centred and emotional engagement subscales)

Social-Emotional Outcomes

In their 2010 report addressing the conceptualisation of social and emotional wellbeing for children and young people and the policy implications, Hamilton and Redmond (2010, p.5) define social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) as follows:

> "Social and emotional wellbeing is a broad term that includes feelings, behaviour, relationships, goals and personal strengths … Wellbeing might be displayed differently depending on culture, temperament and individual differences".

For the current study, social-emotional development was operationalised with a number of subjective measures where the young people provided responses to questions about their own social-emotional wellbeing. Hamilton and Redmond (2010) argue that subjective measures have a distinct advantage over objective measures in measuring wellbeing both from a child's rights perspective and the notion that everyone is an expert in

their own social-emotional wellbeing given that it directly concerns an internal state of mind and self-perception of personal relationships with others.

Recommendations are that indicators of SEWB have key characteristics, including that they should have a clear conceptual basis – either positive (e.g. the world we wish to live in); or negative (e.g. the problems we are hoping to solve); that they can be disaggregated; that they can be potentially compared across countries and that they can be designed so that young people are the respondents (Hamilton & Redmond, 2010 p. 46).

In the current study, the Raise mentoring program takes a strengths-based approach, therefore only positive measures to indicate change in SEWB for the young people who participated were used, being hope for the future and global self-worth.

Children's Hope Scale

The Children's Hope Scale (CHS, Snyder et al, 1997) is a 6-item scale that taps children's sense of their agency (ability to take control) and their perceived capability to come up with pathways through which they can achieve goals. Items such as "I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future", and "when I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it" are assessed on a six-point Likert-type scale: 0-'none of the time'; 1-'a little of the time'; 2-'some of the time'; 3-'a lot of the time'; 4-'most of the time'; 5-'all of the time'. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was $\alpha = .84$. Snyder et al (1997) originally suggested a two-factor model for the CHS, however further studies have shown little evidence for a two-factor model (Snyder, Ilardi, Michael, & Cheavens, 2000; Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004, 2006). The results of the current study supported a one-factor structure, therefore, the CHS was scored using a total score which represents the mean of all six items (Bickman et al., 2010). The total possible score is 6, with a score of 4.67

being considered high, indicating a strong positive perception of self-capacity to achieve goals (Bickman et al., 2010).

Harter's Global Self Worth Scale (adapted)

This is a five-item scale taken from the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Harter, 2012a) . The Global Self Worth Scale measures how much one likes oneself as a person, is happy with the way one is leading one's life, is generally happy with the way one is, as a human being (Harter, 2012a). Self-worth, self-concept and self-esteem are used interchangeably in the literature (Erdvik, Haugen, Ivarsson, & Säfvenbom, 2019) and are linked to a number of positive life outcomes including happiness (Dumont & Provost, 1999) and better social relationships (Harter, 2012b). Conversely, low self-esteem in adolescence is linked to a number of negative outcomes including lower mental and physical health and increased risk behaviour (Beck, Brown, Steer, Kuyken, & Grisham, 2001; Dumont & Provost, 1999; Schwartz, Lowe, & Rhodes, 2012; Trzesniewski et al., 2006).

Harter's original scales used a 'structured alternative format' (Harter, 1982) that is thought to decrease the likelihood of socially desirable responding in comparison to Likert-type scales. However, feedback after the pilot survey from young people and Raise Foundation Program Coordinators was that this format was confusing, and difficult to understand. Thus, the scales were adapted to use a Likert response format (Herrera et al., 2011; Wichstraum, 1995). Typical items include "I feel I am just as smart as other kids my age" and "I am happy with myself most of the time". Participants rate how closely they align with these items on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 = *not true at all* to 4 *very true.* Total possible score for the scale is 4. The mean score for this subscale for is 3 (Harter, 2012a), with higher scores relating to higher self-concept. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .88.

School Engagement

School engagement is a complex construct that has suffered somewhat from a lack of agreement and clarity in its definition. A full discussion is beyond the scope of this study (see Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris, (2004) for a review of the literature), however there is some agreement that school engagement is multidimensional and therefore should be measured over a number of different domains. Three commonly used domains are cognitive, behavioural and emotional engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004) with some researchers including academic engagement (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). This study focussed on behavioural engagement and academic engagement, with the assumption that young people are able to accurately report on their own engagement (Reschly & Christenson, 2012). Behavioural engagement concerns both positive behaviour (e.g., following expectations and rules) and negative behaviour (misconduct, disobeying orders, being disruptive) (Nguyen, Cannata, & Miller, 2018) and is operationalised in this study by attendance. Academic engagement refers to how well the student engages with the academic tasks in the classroom, homework completion and grades (Reschly & Christenson, 2012) and is operationalised in this study by student perception of how well they are doing in terms of their grades, and their academic self-concept.

Attendance

Attendance is considered an effective measure of school engagement (Miranda Zapata, Lara, Navarro, Saracostti, & De Toro, 2018; Willms, 2003). Low levels of school attendance have been associated with poor academic performance, higher levels of absenteeism, early school leaving and negative attitudes towards school (Willms, 2003). Hard attendance data was not available for the current study; however perception or self-concept of ability has strong links to actual performance (Brookover, Thomas, & Paterson, 1964; Huang, 2011; Moritz Rudasill & Callahan, 2008). Thus, it was considered that student

perception of their attendance would be a reasonably proxy, and attendance was measured by a single-item question asking young people to rate their attendance on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *1 = terrible to 5 = excellent*.

Academic Self-Confidence

Academic interest and motivation were measured using Harter's Scholastic Self-Concept which assesses a child's perceived competence in regard to schoolwork. Increases on this scale often precede performance improvement (Harter, 2012a), and research links academic concept to both youth's self-concept and academic achievement (Moritz Rudasill & Callahan, 2008). The highest possible score is 4, and the mean for this subscale is 3 (Harter, 2012a), with higher scores relating to higher confidence in academic ability. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .76.

Grades

In the current study, grades were measured by a single-item question asking young people to rate how they perceive their grades at school on a 5-point likert scale ranging from *1 = terrible to 5 = excellent*. Perceived competence has been linked to performance improvement through the development of intrinsic motivational orientation (Harter, 1992).

Relationships with Others

Close, caring relationships with others have been shown to be important for psychological wellbeing throughout the lifespan. Adolescent research has typically focussed on two main types of relationships: peers and parents. From an attachment perspective, young people need to feel confident that those they are attached to are available and responsive to them. If they have developed secure attachments to their principal care-givers in infancy and childhood and feel confident that they have access to a consistent, trustworthy and caring other, they are more likely to seek out and experience balanced, reciprocal

relationships as they mature (Armsden & Greenberg, 1987). Bowlby (1982) suggested that individuals have better psychological outcomes throughout the lifespan when they have access to trusted, caring, available and responsive others. Further, Wilkinson (2004) found that both peer and parental attachment had a significant contribution to the psychological adjustment of young people, primarily through influencing the way young people viewed themselves.

In the current study, relationship support was measured using the guidance subscale of the Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona & Russell, 1990) as well as single item self-report questions about relationships with parents and peers.

Social Provisions Scale

The Social Provisions Scale (SPS-R; Cutrona & Russell, 1990) is a 24-item questionnaire that examines the degree to which the young person's social relationships provide support for the young person across six domains. There are four items for each of the following domains: attachment, social integration, reassurance of worth, reliable alliance, guidance, and opportunity for nurturance. The guidance subscale used in the current study relates to whether a young person feels they have guidance or advice to support them in the context of stress (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Items such as "there is someone I can talk to about important decisions in my life" and "there is no one who shares my interest and concern" are rated on a four-point scale 0-'strongly disagree', 1- 'disagree', 2-'agree', 3-'strongly agree'. (α = .93). The highest possible score is 4, with higher scores relating to higher perception of social support. Cronbach's alpha for the current study was .78.

Relationship with Family & Friends

In the current study, important relationships were measured by a single-item question asking young people to rate their relationships with family and friends on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *1 = terrible to 5 = excellent*.

The Mentoring Relationship

The Youth Survey

The Youth Survey (Jucovy, 2002) is a 19-item questionnaire that is designed to measure the strength of mentor-mentee relationships from the mentee's perspective. It measures three different but related qualities of mentor-mentee relationships. For this study, quality of mentor relationship was measured by the Youth-Centred Relationship Scale and the Emotional Engagement Scale (Chan et al., 2013; Schwartz, Rhodes, et al., 2012). Items such as "when I'm with my mentor, I feel special" and "I wish I knew my mentor better" are rated on a four-point scale 1-'not true at all' to 4-'very true'. Negative items are reverse-scored and higher scores indicate more positive relationships, with 4 being the highest possible score for each subscale. Cronbach's alpha for the Emotional Engagement scale was .74, and for the Youth-Centered Relationship scale was .70.

Results

Hypothesis 1

To test the hypothesis that participation in the Ismo program results in improved outcomes for young people, paired *t*-tests were performed on the outcomes of interest. Table 6 below sets out the results of the analyses.

As predicted, there were significant increases in social-emotional functioning (Children's Hope Scale and Harter's Global Self-Concept Scale), School Engagement (Harter's Academic Self-Concept Scale and grades) and relationships with others (Social Provisions Scale and relationships with friends). Effect size was measured using Cohen's *d.* Similar to previous research, effect size was small, ranging from .11 to .33 for significant effects. Contrary to predictions, there were no significant increases in attendance or relationships with family.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics and Pre-Post Test Results

N = 293	Time 1		Time 2		*t*	*p*	95% CI	Cohen's *d*
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*				
Children's Hope Scale	3.75	.96	4.03	.93	*5.82*	*<.001*	.91:.41	.33
Global Self-Concept	2.88	.75	2.99	.67	*3.25*	*.001*	.08:.24	.20
Attendance	3.80	1.10	3.83	1.00	*.52*	*.59*	-.09:.16	.02
Academic Self-Concept	2.56	.65	2.65	.66	*2.92*	*.004*	.06:.21	.18
Grades	3.13	.93	3.24	.97	*2.27*	*.002*	0:.22	.14
Social Provisions Scale	3.16	.55	3.23	.55	*2.47*	*.014*	.05:.53	.15
Relationship Family	3.65	1.0	3.73	1.1	*1.50*	*.133*	-.05:.19	.09
Relationship Friends	3.94	.95	4.12	.84	*3.05*	*.024*	.10:.31	.18
Relationship Quality YC			3.39	.44				
Relationship Quality EE			3.55	.49				

Hypothesis 2

To test the prediction that outcomes would be influenced by relationship quality (RQ), change scores on outcome measures were calculated by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post-test scores, with positive scores indicating improvement. Next, partial Pearson's Correlations were computed using the two RQ scales (Youth-Centred and Emotional Engagement) and the change scores on each outcome measure controlling for T1 scores.

This procedure follows that recommended by Goldner and Mayseless (2009) in a similar study, in order to control for possible ceiling effects as well as the possibility of shared error variance between the pre-post scores (Cronbach & Furby, 1970).

There was a weak, positive relationship between Youth-Centred RQ and both hope and social support. There was also a weak positive relationship between Emotional Engagement RQ and hope, attendance, family relationships and social support. The relationship between Youth-Centred RQ and all other outcome measures was not significant. Further, there was no relationship between Emotional Engagement RQ and global or academic self-concept, grades, or relationship with friends. Overall, these results were contrary to predictions, as a strong, positive relationship between RQ and outcomes measures was anticipated, given the focus of RQ in theory and practice. To allow for easier interpretation of the correlation coefficient, the coefficient of determination for significant results was calculated by squaring the correlation coefficient (Taylor, 1990).

Table 7

Partial Pearson Correlations - Relationship Quality and Mentee Adjustment

Variable	*df*	RQ – YC	*r*2	RQ – EE	*r*2
1. Children's Hope Scale	254	.16*	.025	.19*	.036
2. Harter's Global Self-Concept	246	.03		.08	
3. Attendance	242	.07		.18*	.032
4. Harter's Academic Self-Concept	250	.06		.04	
5. Grades	243	.02		-.01	
6. Social Provisions Scale	249	.16*	.025	.15*	.022
7. Relationship Family	243	.11		.14*	.019
8. Relationship Friends	246	.15		.07	

*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Discussion

Overview

This study was a first step in an exploration of an Australian school-based mentoring program (Ismo) from a research-practitioner perspective. The study aimed to determine whether a widely accepted theory of youth mentoring (Rhodes et al., 2006) that was developed in a USA community-mentoring context was applicable in an Australian high-school context. The results of this exploration will be used for two purposes. Firstly, to inform recommendations for practice to improve the efficacy of the Ismo mentoring program. Secondly, to form a framework from which deeper qualitative exploration can be built.

This study examined whether participation in the Ismo Youth Mentoring Program resulted in improved outcomes for participants. Specifically, it was expected that participation in the program would result in an increase in social-emotional outcomes, school engagement and improved relationships. Rhodes' Model of Youth Mentoring was used as the theoretical basis for the study (Rhodes et al., 2006).

Consistent with previous research (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Tierney et al., 1995), overall, the results showed that participation in the Ismo Youth Mentoring Program provides a range of positive outcomes for young people. Also consistent with previous research, effect sizes were small.

Contrary to predictions, and somewhat surprising, given the large amount of evidence that suggests otherwise (Goldner, 2017; Goldner & Mayseless, 2009; Grossman et al., 2012; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Schwartz, Lowe, et al., 2012; Zand et al., 2009), relationship quality did not have a meaningful association with the outcome measures. There were weak relationships between youth-centred RQ and hope and social support. There were also weak relationships between emotional-engagement RQ and hope, attendance, social support and

family relationships. However, while these relationships were statistically significant, care must be taken in interpreting them as important (Taylor, 1990). The strongest relationship was between hope and youth-centered RQ, where RQ accounted for 3.6% of the variability of the hope score. The weakest significant result was between emotional engagement RQ and family, where RQ accounted for just 1.9% of the variability (Taylor, 1990).

I discuss, in turn, the main findings of the study, as well as the study's limitations and introduce the next qualitative stage of the research.

Social-Emotional Outcomes

Mentoring and hope.

As expected, this study showed a significant increase in hope for young people who participated in the Ismo mentoring program. This is consistent with previous literature on community mentoring (Dolan & Brady, 2012; DuBois et al., 2011). Further, while pre-test scores in the current study were in what is considered the 'medium-hope' range, post-test scores were in the top 25 percentile, which is considered the 'high-hope' range (Bickman et al., 2010), suggesting that this improvement is meaningful.

Higher scores on the Children's Hope Scale have been found to be correlated with positive social interactions, self-esteem, and optimism (Snyder et al., 1997). In addition, Valle, Huebner and Suldo (2006) found that hope scores predicted higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of internalizing behaviours in adolescents, and moderated the effect of stressful or negative life events on mental health outcomes. These findings suggest that instilling hope in young people may be important in terms of their psychological functioning. This may be particularly relevant when considering how best to support young people in the current COVID-19 pandemic environment.

Snyder (2002) suggests that while hope can be both situational and trait-like, people tend to have overarching beliefs or appraisals about their ability to set and achieve their goals. In therapeutic environments, Leung, Silvius, Pimlott, Dalziel and Drummond (2009) found these appraisals can be particularly malleable to change; similarly Dowling and Richard (2016) found that helping psychotherapy clients to achieve specific, attainable goals early in therapy increased hope and led to more positive therapeutic outcomes.

This malleability suggests a strong argument for targeting hope in interventions such as mentoring. In a mentoring environment, mentors may be able to focus on collaborative goal setting with mentees (especially those with low hope) to set small, achievable goals that will increase self-efficacy and confidence. Once the mentee realises that they are able to achieve a goal, it is likely that their hope will increase (Dowling & Rickwood, 2016). The positive environment created through this process may facilitate a closer mentoring relationship, as well as increasing the likelihood of the young person seeking help in the future (Dowling & Rickwood, 2016).

On the other hand, young people who enter the program with low levels of hope may be challenging for mentors as they may lack the skills and confidence to engage with even small, achievable goal setting. This could lead to mentor dissatisfaction, impacting the mentoring relationship and further exacerbating the feeling of 'hopelessness' in the mentee. In these circumstances, it seems likely that program support would be particularly important; ensuring that program managers understand the importance of building hope in young people is paramount.

The Ismo mentoring program makes a claim of being 'mentee-led' (Condon, 2015) which begs the question as to how small, realistic goal-setting works within this ethos, particularly if a mentee is unwilling to participate. Qualitative exploration of mentee attitude

to goal setting, and how this influences their experience of hope is needed to answer this question.

In addition to psychological outcomes, hope has also been correlated with academic achievement (Snyder et al., 1997) and grades (Curry, Snyder, Cook, Ruby, & Rehm, 1997; Snyder et al., 1991), which may explain why mentees in the Raise program have higher ratings of their academic self-concept and grades after mentoring (discussed later in this section) even though the intervention itself does not focus on academic activities, despite being conducted in a school environment.

Mentoring impact on self-concept

Self-concept is a construct that can be defined as a person's perception of their own abilities and/or qualities. Self-concept has been shown to be important in adolescence, and is related to academic achievement, social functioning and emotional wellbeing (Harter, 2006) as well as internalising factors such as anxiety and depression (Beck et al., 2001). In the current study, there was a significant impact on mentees' global self-worth.

The evidence for self-concept or self-esteem and mentoring has been mixed. Some studies show that the presence of a mentor has a positive impact on self-esteem (DuBois et al., 2011; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). However, it is important to note that these results are within the context of community based mentoring programs, with a distinct lack of evidence linking self-esteem and mentoring in school-based mentoring programs (Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2003; Wheeler et al., 2010; Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012). One noteworthy exception is an Italian school-based mentoring study (Mentor-UP) that showed higher levels of self-esteem for mentees post-intervention, compared to the control group who experienced a decrease in self-esteem (Marino et al., 2019). Similar to the Mentor-UP program described by Marino et al., the Ismo program in the current study includes a

strengths-based approach with a focus on mentee-led activities, where positive feedback is encouraged. This environment may help to encourage development of positive self-concept (Marino et al., 2019; Schwartz, Lowe, et al., 2012), as providing support in the form of approval is important for influencing self-esteem (Harter, 1999).

Another factor thought to be important in the development of self-esteem in mentoring programs is frequency of contact, with infrequent or disrupted meetings associated with decreased self-esteem. Conversely, frequent and consistent contact is associated with increased self-esteem (Karcher et al., 2005). The Ismo program has a strong focus on commitment and consistency from volunteer mentors, which may have influenced the significant result.

Whilst the result for self-concept was significant, the effect size was small. This could be partly explained by considering the developmental stage of the mentees in the program. When young people have people around them who are responsive and provide positive feedback in a nurturing environment, higher levels of self-esteem are likely (Leary & MacDonald, 2003). In younger children, adults are most influential, however in adolescence young people become more likely to judge themselves though peer approval, therefore positive feedback from a mentor may not be as effective. Another noteworthy explanation is that global self-esteem usually decreases significantly as children enter adolescence (Leary & MacDonald, 2003; Robins, Trzesniewski, Tracy, Gosling, & Potter, 2002), meaning that even a small increase in self-concept could be meaningful.

School Engagement

The study showed significant increases in mentees' perception of their grades and their academic self-concept. There was no significant impact on attendance.

Attendance

As discussed previously, school attendance is important for young people in terms of their overall engagement and achievement. Academic self-concept and self-esteem both predict non-attendance at school, as does a lack of social connectedness to school or peers, negative attitudes towards teachers and mental health concerns such as anxiety and depression (2019). In the current study, while academic self-concept and global self-worth were both significantly impacted, school attendance was not. As discussed earlier in this thesis (see p.37), the evidence around attendance in the mentoring literature has been somewhat mixed, with some studies showing modest improvements (Wheeler et al., 2010) and others showing no improvement (Wood & Mayo-Wilson, 2012).

A viable explanation for the lack of improvement in the current study is that in Australia there is a general decline in attendance from Grade 7 onwards, with Year 10 students having the lowest attendance (ACARA, 2018; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018). It is possible then, that a neutral result (e.g., no decline) is in fact a positive outcome for the young people in this study. Future research that uses hard attendance data from schools is needed to test this theory. In addition, qualitative research can shed further light on the relationship between mentoring and school attendance.

Academic Self-Concept & Grades

This study showed positive outcomes for young people in relation to their attitudes to school as measured by the scholastic competence subscale of Harter's Self Concept Scale (Harter, 2012a). Increases in self-concept often precede performance improvement with higher scores in academic self-confidence being related to greater persistence, more effective goal directed behaviour, and better results (Ferla, Valcke, & Schuyten, 2010). Given the

clear associations between early school leaving and socio-economic disadvantage later in life, this result is promising.

Interestingly, even though school engagement is a focus for Raise Foundation as a measurable outcome for the Ismo mentoring program, there is very little focus on academic outcomes or engagement (e.g., attendance, conduct or grades) in the program curriculum. It is possible that academic self-concept is being influenced by increases in hope and self-esteem, as both of these constructs have been shown to be linked with academic confidence (Curry et al., 1997; Marino et al., 2019; Snyder et al., 1997). Previous research sheds insight into how mentoring results in improved attitudes to school. For example, Rhodes et al. (2000) suggested that mentors influence how young people feel about school both by conveying messages about the importance and the value of school, but also by providing tangible, real-life models of success.

Relationships with Others

Mentoring and Social Support.

Social networks and social support are widely accepted as underpinning health and wellbeing (Berkman & Kawachi, 2000), and can buffer the effects of stress (Cutrona & Russell, 1990) as well as building self-esteem, emotional wellbeing and self-efficacy (Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981). Conversely, low levels of perceived social support can lead to poor psychological, social, academic and health outcomes (Malecki & Demaray, 2003). The guidance subscale used in the current study measures young people's perception of their ability to access advice or information from trustworthy social connections (Perera, 2015). Consistent with the hypothesis, the results of this study showed a significant increase in this type of social support through participation in the Ismo program.

There are many ways that mentoring can create meaningful change in the social support that young people receive. First, providing a mentor whose role is to listen non-judgementally, at a regular, consistent time each week may increase a young person's perception of social support (Darling et al., 1994). Second, the opportunity to participate in small-group activities such as mindfulness and sharing morning tea gives mentees the opportunity to practice social skills and interact with a number of trusted adults (not just their own mentor). These interactions could lead to increased feelings of support and connection. Third, mentors are able to role-model social skills, as well as explicitly teach mentees skills that enable them to seek and ask for help and advice from peers and other adults (Keller, 2005; Pawson, 2006).

Mentoring and Relationships

There are claims that mentoring can help to alleviate some of the conflicts that arise in parent-child relationships during adolescence by valuing the role of the parent, role-modelling conflict resolution skills and helping the young person to deal with everyday stressors (Rhodes et al., 2002). While the results from this study show a significant increase in mentee's friendships, no change was found in mentees' self-reported relationship with their parents. This result contradicts previous literature from the community mentoring field, which shows the opposite effect; that mentoring had a significant impact on parental relationships, but no impact on peer relationships.

One reason for the disparity in results may be that in a community mentoring program, the majority of the time mentor and mentees generally spend time alone as a pair, whereas in the school-based Ismo program mentees and mentors spend time together with other mentoring dyads for part of each session. This time provides an opportunity for developing relationships, gaining confidence in a group environment and learning friendship skills. Likewise, in community mentoring programs the mentor has regular contact with the

mentee's family, thus may be more influential in parent-child relationships. In a school-based mentoring program such as Ismo, there is usually no contact with the mentee's family after initial consent is provided.

This reflection on mentee's social-ecologies gives pause for thought about mentee-teacher relationships. In a school-based program mentors are likely to have frequent contact with their mentees' teachers and be visible in the school environment (Chan et al., 2013). In the Ismo program, teachers have an opportunity to attend the mentoring graduation where they witness mentors speaking positively about their mentees. Future research is needed to specifically consider mentees' relationships with their teachers, as similar effect to that of the mentee-parent relationship in community mentoring programs could be expected.

The influence of relationship quality

Relationship quality (RQ) has been a focus of mentoring literature, with a general consensus that the relationship between a mentor and a mentee is one of, if not the most important factor in positive outcomes for young people in mentoring programs (Dutton, Deane, & Bullen, 2018; Herrera, 2000; Marino et al., 2019; Rhodes et al., 2006; Schwartz, Lowe, et al., 2012). In the current study, relationship quality as measured by the Emotional Engagement and Youth Connectedness scales of The Youth Survey (Jucovy, 2002) had only a weak positive relationship with some of the outcome measures, and overall these associations were interpreted as not meaningful (Taylor, 1990). This was unexpected, considering the consistency of the literature.

One possible explanation for the lack of association between relationship quality and mentee adjustment overall is the relatively high level of satisfaction overall with the mentoring relationships from a mentee perspective, leading to little variance within responses. This is not to say that relationships did not matter in the current study. When

considering these results, it is also important to consider the context of the Ismo mentoring program, where there are several program practices in place that have been shown to support strong mentoring relationships such as mentor training, match support, semi-structured curriculum and regular, consistent meetings. This adherence to best practice may have led to a higher level of mentee satisfaction with RQ overall, precluding a strong, significant relationship with program outcomes.

An alternative explanation for relatively high RQ scores overall is the possibility of demand characteristics bias. That is, young people who completed the survey are aware that the mentoring program is being investigated and thus may have a tendency to answer in a more positive light to support the results (McCambridge, de Bruin, & Witton, 2012). This tendency could be amplified by the fact that the young person has spent the last 20-weeks with their mentor, and may feel a sense of loyalty towards them, regardless of their relationship quality.

Finally, it should be considered that as a school-based mentoring program, it is possible that the mentoring relationship, while important, is less of a focus than in community-based programs. In school settings, programs are generally shorter and more structured than community settings. Thus, it is possible that an instrumental approach to mentoring (e.g. more focussed on curriculum and skill-building) such as suggested by Darling et al (1994) is more effective than an approach that relies on the development of a close, trusting relationship. In this case, adequate relationship quality is a pre-requisite rather than a catalyst for change in and of itself (Lyons et al., 2019).

In the current study, relationship quality was captured using mentee self-report. Thus, a qualitative exploration of how mentees experience (and judge) the relationship with their

mentor can help to answer some of these questions and increase our understanding of the role that the mentoring relationship plays in influencing outcomes.

The Research Practitioner Context

The research-practitioner framework requires these results to be effectively incorporated into practice, evaluated and then the results of the implementation communicated back to research (Harwood, 2016). In this research, the researcher and practitioner are the same person, however outside of an academic setting this may not be possible. Nonetheless, the same principles of the framework can be used, even if the researcher, evaluator and practitioner are three different people (Harwood, 2016), although I would argue that this separation adds additional obstacles to the process.

In evaluating both the strengths and challenges of the research-practitioner approach in this phase of the research, I make three main points.

First, the ability to access participants for this research would have been significantly more difficult had I not been a practitioner in the organisation. There were multiple challenges along the way that were made easier through my pre-existing relationships with key staff members, my intimate knowledge of the program, and my ability to 'take the reins' when things stalled (such as organising interviews, etc.) through the networks that I had within the organisation. Engaging program staff to the purpose of the research project, and overcoming resistance can make or break a study (Brady & O'Regan, 2009) and I was in a unique position to immediately notice and be able to respond to any difficulties as they arose. This is a strong argument for the research-practitioner needing to be the same person, and for the research to take place in the context of practice.

Second, the knowledge that I have of the program under consideration has afforded me the ability to consider the results of this study and the mentoring literature in the specific context of the Ismo mentoring program. For example, when considering the impact of mentoring on self-concept, I realised that my knowledge of the program (e.g. that it was strengths-based, encouraging positive feedback of mentees along with a focus on consistency and commitment) allowed me to make links to other research that may not have otherwise occurred.

The third point, and one that I will expand on further in the final chapter of this thesis, is the ability to take the knowledge gained through this study back to practitioners in a timely and effective way. To illustrate this point, I am putting the final touches to this chapter in 2020 and aim to publish results in 2021. However, the data was analysed in 2015; because of my dual role these early results were able to be communicated directly to those responsible for program implementation five years ago. The subsequent changes to the program formed a continual improvement process that has compounded program improvements over these five years and will be explored in the concluding chapter of this research.

Limitations

The implications of several limitations inherent in this phase of the research need to be taken into consideration. First, as discussed in detail in the Methodology chapter, the lack of a control group means that causality cannot be inferred from the results of this study. Whilst the trend towards significant results with small effects is consistent with previous literature, other factors could have also contributed. In addition, the lack of a control group does not allow exploration of the prevention of decline. The young people who are referred to the Ismo program are deemed to be 'at risk' in some way, and are referred to the program for a variety of reasons outlined earlier in this chapter, including mental health problems,

being socially isolated, lacking an adult role model and being bullied. Along with the normal challenges of adolescence, young people experiencing increased risk could be expected to experience a decline in their psycho-social outcomes (Marino et al., 2019), meaning that a 'null' or 'no-change' effect may actually reflect a positive impact of the program.

Future research utilising a control or counter-factual group would allow considerations of causality. However, the various practical and ethical issues implicit in the use of this method must be considered. Mentoring organisations in growth mode could consider using a 'wait-list' control to mitigate ethical concerns. However, young people at-risk need to access services promptly, and the ethical challenges inherent in not providing the service to some people for the purpose of evaluation is something that should not be taken lightly. While an experimental or quasi-experimental control study may have been more rigorous, the current study was a robust evaluation over time with individuals functioning as their own controls, in order to not increase risk by assigning them to a control or waitlist group.

Second, the outcome measures used were all self-report measures completed by the mentees. While young people have been shown to be able to adequately report on their own mental health and wellbeing, the tendency for them to report on their current state, rather than an overall assessment of their adjustment (Deighton et al., 2014) may skew results. Future studies could include reports by parents, teachers and mentors in order to triangulate and strengthen the data. In addition, 'hard' data such as school attendance records, grades and behaviour referrals such as suspensions and expulsions would help to determine the extent to which self or other-reported changes are manifested in observable behaviours. However, the voice of the young person is particularly important, and is often omitted in research concerning them (Clark, Moss, & Kjørholt, 2005) so high importance on continuing to include and elevate their voice is necessary.

Third, the scales used to measure relationship quality were developed for community mentoring models, and at the time of the current study had not been previously validated. Given the centrality of the mentoring relationship in both theory and practice-based literature, it is essential that a robust, validated measure is designed to assess relationship quality in a school mentoring environment.

Conclusion

Overall, the results show that participation in the Ismo youth mentoring program provides a range of positive outcomes for young people.

The strongest findings from the study are that young people taking part in the Ismo mentoring program are more hopeful, feel better about themselves, and are better supported with mentoring. The study also shows that mentoring may influence young people's attitudes to education and their perception of their academic achievement. These results provide some support for the generalization of Rhodes' Model of Youth Mentoring to an Australian, school-based setting. In addition, consistent with findings by DuBois et al. (2011) that effect size increased systematically with the use of greater numbers of evidence-based program practices, effect sizes in the current study are in the upper range found by DuBois and his colleagues (.22 for programs that utilized the majority of the practices compared to .09 for those who did not).

Contrary to previous research, there was only a weak positive relationship between RQ and some of the outcome measures, which could suggest that a developmental model of mentoring placing a high focus on the mentoring relationship may not be as relevant for the Ismo mentoring program as a more instrumental, skills-based approach. However, there are other valid reasons that could also explain why relationship quality was not related to mentee adjustment. Given the importance of the mentoring relationship in the literature, this

warrants further exploration, particularly as the Ismo mentoring program models the program on a relationship-based theory of change (Rhodes et al., 2006). If in fact the mentoring relationship is not the mechanism for positive change, it begs the question of what is.

The results described in this chapter provide a strong framework for the qualitative exploration. They have, to some degree, provided evidence that the Ismo school-based mentoring program is not just snake oil or 'the dust of the Great Wazoo', but is effective in promoting positive outcomes for its participants. However, whilst these results can be evaluated as promising, by themselves they leave important yet unanswered questions about the processes by which these outcomes have been achieved.

Thus, the next chapter turns to a qualitative exploration of the mentees' experience, to enrich and build upon these findings. In this way, the young people who are the raison d'etre for this project become more active participants than simply filling in a survey, and have the opportunity to have their voice heard (Hesse-Biber, 2010). Denzin (2012, p.86) said "qualitative research scholars have an obligation to change the world, to engage in ethical work that makes a positive difference", and it is in this next phase of research that the possibilities of positive change become apparent.

Chapter 5 – Qualitative Study – Exploring the Processes of Change within a School-Based Youth Mentoring Program

"She was great, you know. She didn't pressure me, she was like 'I'm here to listen to whatever you are comfortable telling me'. She didn't judge me at all, she just listened, and told me to do what I want in life, don't listen to what others have to say. I thought that was pretty cool."

- Rosie, Raise Mentee, 2015

The previous chapter left us with an interesting paradox, in that while there was some evidence for the efficacy of the Ismo mentoring program in terms of mentee adjustment, there was no meaningful relationship between the quality of the mentoring relationship and adjustment. As the Ismo program is based on a theoretical model of mentoring that places the relationship at the heart of the intervention (Rhodes et al., 2006), this warrants further exploration. How, if not through the development of a close, trusting, relationship, is change occurring?

A qualitative exploration of the processes of change for mentees within the Ismo program aims to shed light on this question. Whilst much is known about mentoring outcomes, less is known about the processes and practices that lead to these outcomes. Young people are often not provided with a voice when evaluating the programs that they participate in, with most evaluations relying on survey-based measures as the only form of feedback. The goal of this next phase of the research was to provide an opportunity for young people to reflect on and share their perceptions of their experience in the Ismo mentoring program.

This chapter defines the research questions for this qualitative exploration and reviews the study setting before discussing ethical considerations of consent, assent and confidentiality. Questions of validity and reliability from a qualitative framework are considered before a detailed description of the data analysis procedure. Finally, the findings are presented and discussed.

Research Questions

The research questions for this phase of the research were developed to explore the processes and mechanisms through which change is facilitated in an Australian based school mentoring program, specifically:

1. What attributes are perceived as influencing young people's experience of a six-month school-based mentoring program in Australia?
2. How are these attributes perceived as influencing the mentoring relationship, and the outcomes experienced by young people?

A brief definition of attributes is offered in the context of these research questions. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) an attribute is defined as "quality, character or characteristic ascribed to any person or thing" (OED, n.1.). In the current research attributes are descriptions of personal characteristics, relationship characteristics and program characteristics.

Setting

This research was conducted with young people who took part in a school-based mentoring program called Ismo (In-School Mentoring Opportunity) run by Australian charity Raise Foundation. At the time of this study, Raise Foundation were delivering 41 mentoring

programs in high schools throughout Victoria and New South Wales. A full description of the study setting has been provided in Chapter 4 (p.72).

Ethical Considerations

Low risk ethics approval was granted for all phases of the project by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) on January 12th 2015 (MUHREC LR CF14/3822 – 2014001998 – The Evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (Ismo). As the research was being conducted in public high schools in New South Wales and Victoria, Department of Education Ethics approval was sought from the relevant parties. Approval was received from the NSW Education Department on 29 October 2015. SERAP 2015255. Approval was received from the Department of Education & Training in Victoria on 2nd June 2015 (2015_002717). Copies of all ethics approval documents can be found at Appendix 2 – Ethics Approval.

As a researcher, it was important that I explored and addressed ethical considerations particular to the research design I had proposed. The intimate nature of one-on-one interviews and the complexities around consent and assent when conducting research with young people required careful exploration and consideration to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the research participants.

Consent

As the young people in this study were under the age of 18 years old, parental/carer consent was required. Informed consent is where participants "give their permission in full knowledge of the purpose of the research and the consequences of them taking part" (Piper & Simons, 2005, p. 56).

Assent

As well as parental consent, assent of young people who participated in the study was sought. The concept of assent is an agreement obtained from youth under the age of 18 who are not able to enter into a legal contract in Australia (Ford, Sankey, & Crisp, 2007) and must involve 'more than passive acceptance or non-refusal on the part of children' (Dockett & Perry, 2011, p.233). Kirk (2007) suggests that, like informed consent, assent requires access to enough information to allow an informed decision, voluntary participation and competence to make an informed decision. To minimise the inherent power imbalance present in adult-child relationships, the question of assent was addressed at several stages in the research process.

In the first instance, assent was gained verbally by a third party (usually a teacher at the students' school) prior to a consent form being sent home to parents/carers. At this first stage, general information was provided informally to the child who was asked whether a qualitative interview was something that they would be interested in undertaking. The purpose of this informal 'interest gauging' first approach was to inform the child of the purpose of the research, and what their involvement would require, without them feeling a sense of obligation to take part. If the young person said they were interested, a parental/carer consent form and explanatory statement were provided for them to discuss with their parent/carer.

Once parental/carer consent was received, an interview time was scheduled at a time nominated by the young person, at which time they were given the option to change their mind about participating. Immediately prior to the interview taking place, I again discussed consent/assent, explaining to each participant that whilst we needed their parent/carer's consent for them to take part due to their age, it was important that they understood their own right to either assent or decline to take part in the study. My true purpose in having these

conversations was for young people to feel agency in their decision to take part (or decline to take part) in this study. Whilst these conversations were held in a friendly and non-threatening manner, I was aware that my status as a white, middle-class, middle-age female in a perceived position of power would likely influence their response to me and I worried that my participants felt a pressure or an obligation to take part (Spencer, 2002). Being genuine and open about this with participants helped to alleviate this concern.

One young male participant did not provide assent for his interview to be recorded, however he still wished for the interview to go ahead (without recording). At the end of each interview a final verbal assent was gained from each participant to indicate that they were comfortable with what they had discussed being used as data in the research study. Participants were reassured that withdrawal from the research would not result in any negative consequences for them.

Confidentiality

To protect the confidentiality of participants, data was anonymised as much as possible, including any references to specific events, geographic locations or other features that could be linked to an individual participant. Participants were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym; if they did not wish to choose, I chose a name for them which was used when transcribing the interviews and in all data files and documents.

Limits of Confidentiality

To ensure the safety of the young people who took part in this study, normal limits of confidentiality were in place, and participants were informed that confidentiality could not be upheld if I felt that they, or someone that they knew, were at risk of imminent significant harm.

Validity and Reliability

The quality of traditional, quantitative research is usually assessed using tests of construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability (Pandey & Patnaik, 2014). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that issues of validity in qualitative research are a remnant of a 'positivistic artefact' and urge researchers instead to look at authentic enquiry and trustworthiness of their research. According to Sykes (2019) qualitative research is trustworthy when the researcher makes the whole process visible, including preparation, data collection and data analysis. Thus, I have attempted to document all parts of this research journey without glossing over the uncomfortable and sometimes awkward processes that led to the findings.

A critical understanding in the idea of authentic inquiry is that I, as the researcher, am part of this study; I bring valuable insights and knowledge to the process, along with the bias and assumptions that are part of who I am, and reflect my experience, education, position and values. I do not believe that I can, or indeed should, try to 'bracket' or set aside this knowledge and bias; consequently I have attempted to make the research process visible to myself and to others (Stenbacka, 2001).

Researcher's Position

Reflexivity is the process of examining your own influence on the research design, in the carrying out of research activities and in the analysis of data. It is an explicit exploration of thought processes, assumptions, decision making, and actions taken (Galletta, 2013). Reflexivity is undoubtedly important in all types of research design, however qualitative research demands continual unflinching self-reflection from the researcher to remain aware, always, of the personal bias they inevitably bring to the research.

Galletta (2013) calls for researchers to be reflective and explore their influence in all aspects of research including design, carrying out of research activities, analyzing and reporting data. It was clear from the outset that this was going to be an important process for me. I was heavily invested both personally and professionally in the mentoring industry.

Writing an honest and open vignette (see Appendix 6 – Researcher's Vignette) allowed me to reflect on how my past, present and future selves are intertwined with mentoring and provided the framework for continual journaling throughout this process. What started as a tool to speak to the idea of 'validity' in qualitative research quickly became a significant piece of learning and a way of tracking my development both personally, professionally, and as a researcher.

Peer Debriefing

I was fortunate in the early stages of my research to have a colleague undertaking their qualitative dissertation at the same time as me. We organised regular meetings to 'probe, question, explore, challenge, clarify and deepen the researcher's thoughts and ideas' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As suggested by Lincoln and Guba, the peer de-briefer was neither junior nor senior; they were, like me, a PhD candidate also working as a Teaching Associate and Supervisor at the University. This process was highly beneficial in helping me to understand and acknowledge the bias that I inevitably brought into this research project, as well as bringing in a fresh perspective that helped to ignite new ideas and allowed me to explore the data in different ways.

Reflective Journaling

As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I kept a reflective journal to track my progress and explore how my own values, beliefs and assumptions were influencing this project. My journal entries covered a wide range of topics, ranging from decisions about

epistemology and study design, research question development, notes from supervision, and reflections from the interviews that I conducted. These were helpful and would be similarly helpful in any type of research. Of profound import to this qualitative study were the entries that explored and challenged my own beliefs and assumptions. I had a list on my study wall, drawn from my reflexive vignette and peer debriefing sessions, listing some of the key assumptions I held about youth mentoring which challenged and guided me through the analytic process. I regularly revisited my journal entries throughout the process and noticed a shift from seeking to confirm what I intuitively knew to be true, to a more open curiosity about the experience of my participants.

I was also influenced by Spencer (2002) whose position as a white, highly educated middle-class female was very similar to my own. Spencer reflected on her position, and the differences between her and the young people she interviewed throughout her thesis and this inspired me to explore and attempt to understand how these differences may have influenced the way the participants responded to me, and how I interpreted their stories.

Through these different processes of reflexivity, I was able to acknowledge and understand the influence of my thought processes, personal biases and assumptions on the research process.

Participants

Participants in this study were drawn from the sample population of 493 young people and their mentors who took part in the Ismo Mentoring Program in 2015 (see Chapter 4, p.80 for full description of study sample).

Sampling & Recruitment

The sample was selected with the desired outcome of a maximum variability sample so that the diversity of participants from the mentoring program were represented as much as possible. Patton (2002) suggests that purposeful sampling can yield information rich cases, whereby individuals who are especially knowledgeable or experienced are identified and invited to take part (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

However, also important is the participants willingness to participate in the research, their availability and their ability to communicate reflectively and articulately (Bernard, 2006). I felt some tension between my desire for diversity of participant experience and the criterion for articulate and reflective communication suggested by Bernard (2006). I was concerned that if only participants who were particularly articulate communicators were targeted, that I would not have a sample that reflected all experiences of youth who participated in the mentoring program. Intuitively, it seemed likely that young people who were highly expressive and reflective would find it easier to develop close relationships with their mentors, and this could lead to a lop-sided view of the mentoring program in my research findings.

I also wanted to ensure that my own assumptions about mentoring were not inadvertently being reinforced by selecting a sample who had enjoyed a positive experience of mentoring, as it was important to explore and understand those who had mediocre or poor experiences alongside those with positive. Likewise, I needed to ensure that Raise program staff were not 'cherry-picking' those students who had clearly benefitted from the program. On the other hand, not all adolescents are able to communicate in an 'information-rich' manner, and as I had limited resources (being the sole-researcher in a limited PhD project) and needed to travel interstate to conduct many of the interviews, it was important that all interviews yielded rich information for my analysis.

Thus, after consideration, a decision was made to use maximum variation sampling to ensure a wide range of perspectives were included, including an element of blind selection to ensure that researcher and program bias did not influence which participants were targeted. Participants were not targeted according to their communication skills, however, but were selected according to their availability and willingness to participate (Bernard, 2002). Because of inherent resource limitations, there were some aspects of convenience sampling used in terms of geographical locations making it more feasible to conduct several interviews in one day, to limit time and costs.

To achieve sampling aims, the following steps were undertaken:

1. Raise Foundation personnel were consulted about suitable schools in terms their capacity to facilitate the interview process, as well as the availability of the local Program Co-ordinators and relative geographic ease for the researcher.
2. From this consultation a list of 8 schools in NSW and 3 schools in Victoria were shortlisted. In NSW, Raise Foundation staff contacted Principals on my behalf to obtain 'in principal' agreement. I contacted Victorian schools directly.
3. Of the schools contacted, three schools in New South Wales and two schools in Victoria agreed to take part in the research.
4. All participants in the Raise Foundation mentoring program from each school who had given permission for their data to be used in the research were included in the sampling process.
5. To achieve the aim of reducing bias (both on my part and on the part of Raise Foundation), all participants identified in step (4) were randomly assigned a number using excel using the 'RAND' function, and sorted from low to high depending on the number allocated.

6. The first five participants from each school were matched back to student name and a list was provided to Raise Program Coordinators at the five different schools. Students (mentees) were invited to participate in the program verbally by Raise program staff, starting from the first name on their list. If they accepted, parent consent forms were collected, and interview times confirmed. Once the desired number (12 students) had consented, no further invitations were issued.

Demographic Information

Relevant demographic information is presented in Table 8 below. This sample reflects similar demographics to the overall population from which the sample was drawn.

Table 8

Demographics of Interviewed Mentees

ID	Gender	Age (years)	Year	Living with
Rosie	F	14	8	1 parent
Mabel	F	14	9	1 parent
Ren	M	15	9	Both parents
Deb	F	14	9	Both parents
Amy	F	14	9	1 parent
Harmony	F	14	9	Both parents
Ellie	F	13	8	Both parents
Arabella	F	15	10	Both parents
Tom	M	14	8	Both parents
Bryan	M	14	8	Both parents
Charlie*	M	13	8	1 parent
Troy**	M	16	9	1 parent

* Pilot Interview

** Did not assent to interview being recorded; not included in analysis

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are widely used in qualitative research and were chosen for this study as they provide guidelines for the researcher whilst still allowing participants the freedom to explore other aspects of their experience. This allows for a consistent approach so that comparisons can be made between participants, but still gives the opportunity for new, unanticipated information to be shared.

The interview guide for this study was developed with the aim of eliciting information about the processes and mechanisms within the mentoring program that supported (or hindered) young people's experiences of mentoring, and ultimately the benefits they derived from the mentoring program.

Questions were developed based on the theoretical underpinnings of the study, as well as previous research and discussions with Raise program coordinators. Interviews were purposefully structured to allow time to build rapport with the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Process oriented questions were asked first (e.g., "how was the mentoring program introduced to you?") gradually becoming more personal (e.g., "how did you know when the relationship with your mentor had become important to you?") so that participants had time to feel comfortable in the space, with me, and with the interview process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The draft interview schedule was piloted, and several questions were revised following the pilot interview.

Interviews were conducted between 30 October and 3 December 2015 during school time, on school grounds (see Table *9* for interview schedule). I personally conducted all of the interviews as the sole researcher for this study. Schools were chosen as the location for the interviews so that participants felt comfortable, and so that any safety risk both for

interviewer and participants was reduced (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The space provided by schools differed in terms of privacy, interruptions, and distractions. For example, at [School 1] I was allocated a large classroom with big, open windows to the school corridor, which was noisy, and meant that students were peering into the room to see what was happening. At [School 2] the allocated space was a small interview room with a glass window near the front office that had less passing traffic and was quiet and private. Interviews were recorded using a small hand-held Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-639. I made some minor hand-written notes during the interviews; mostly as 'markers' which as described by Hesse-Biber (2017, p. 128) are 'important pieces of information that respondents may offer as they talk about something else' but avoided extensive note-taking so that I could be fully present and engaged with the person in front of me.

Table 9

Interview schedule using participant pseudonyms

School/State	ICSEA	Mentee	Date	Time
4 (VIC)	1010	Charlie*	30 Oct	10.30am
5 (VIC)	987	Bryan	10 Nov	10.00am
5 (VIC)	987	Rosie	10 Nov	11.00am
3 (NSW)	1076	Amy	25 Nov	9.30am
3 (NSW)	1076	Deb	25 Nov	10.30am
3 (NSW)	1076	Ren	25 Nov	11.30am
1 (NSW)	1095	Harmony	26 Nov	1.00pm
1 (NSW)	1095	Mabel	26 Nov	2.00pm
2 (NSW)	1186	Ellie	3 Dec	10.30am
2 (NSW)	1186	Arabella	3 Dec	11.30am
4 (VIC)	1010	Tom	4 Dec	11.00am
4 (VIC)	1010	Troy**	4 Dec	12.00n

*pilot interview
**interview not recorded (non-assent)

At the beginning of each interview, I briefly explained the research project and reason for the research. I highlighted to participants that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions, that I was interested in learning about their whole experience, positive and negative. I told them that I was very interested in getting their feedback, because the program was for them, and they were the ones who knew what was good about it, and what could be improved, or left out (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Participants were informed, both verbally and in writing, that their responses were confidential, and limits of confidentiality were addressed by telling young people "Just like in the mentoring program, anything you say is confidential – between you and me. The only exception to this is that if you say anything that makes me think that you, or someone you know are at risk of significant harm, then I will need to let the school know so that a plan can be put in place to keep you safe – does that make sense?".

After this introduction, I talked each participant through the Explanatory Statement and Consent Form and explained that their parents had already given consent for them to take part, but that their consent was also important and let them know they could opt out if they wished. After gaining verbal consent, I asked them to sign both forms. I then asked permission to record the interview. Finally, I gave participants the opportunity to ask any questions before beginning the interview. At the end of each interview I recorded observations about the interview space, demeanour of participant and my initial thoughts about the interview.

All participants expect for Troy gave full consent including for the interview to be recorded. Troy did not wish his interview to be recorded but did wish to go ahead with the interview. I was unsure at this stage whether I would be able to use Troy's data given the

potential for misrepresentation of his experience without the ability to analyse the verbatim data. I questioned whether ethically I should let Troy know (that the interview may not be useable) before we proceeded but felt that this may be perceived as coercive. Given Troy's wish to continue with the interview, combined with my belief that talking about an experience can be therapeutic and help to consolidate learning, I decided to go ahead with the interview. The resulting data was not able to be analysed at the same level of depth as the other participants, and so I made the decision to exclude Troy's data from the analysis.

As interviewer, I attempted to build rapport with participants by using active listening skills (eye contact, non-verbal and verbal encouragement such as nodding and 'mmmm') and showing a genuine interest and regard for each participant. I gauged rapport by what I saw as a softening of participants both physically and verbally. A shared laugh or smile; an emphatic agreement (or disagreement); a more generous or detailed response. Rapport was easier to come by with some participants than others – a parallel process with the young people's mentoring relationships that is examined later in this chapter.

In my first (pilot) interview, I became quite desperate as my attempts to put a participant (Charlie) at ease did not seem to be working. I searched in my memory for something – *anything* - to break down the barrier between us "you're the rubix cube guy" I blurted out, apropos of nothing. I was rewarded with a grin, and he reached into his bag "yeah, I've only got one with me today". He forgave my clumsy attempt at connection and as the interview progressed Charlie played with his rubix cube and was able to relax and share a richer story of his experience of mentoring. My wish for Charlie, and for each participant I interviewed, was that they felt valued, safe and comfortable (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

Transcription

As transcription is often viewed as the first phase of data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), all interviews were manually transcribed verbatim into Microsoft Word by the researcher using Wreally (online transcription and dictation software). This process allowed for a full immersion and during this phase I became very familiar with the stories my participants had told me during the interviews.

After this process transcripts were checked against the original recording for accuracy. At this stage participant's' names were removed and replaced with their chosen pseudonym (or a pseudonym chosen by me if they did not have a preference). Other identifying information (e.g. mentor name, name of schools or friends) were replaced with a generic identifier in square brackets (i.e., [mentor]; [school]).

Once each interview had been transcribed and checked as above, interviews were imported into MaxQDA (V12) for coding.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

In choosing an analytic method, I considered the four methods suggested as being suitable for beginners in qualitative research, namely thematic analysis, interpretative phenomenological analysis, grounded theory and pattern-based discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Thematic analysis (TA) was chosen primarily for its flexibility and ability to be applied to the practical, evaluative framework of the current research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In particular, TA lends itself to a pragmatic paradigm and does not rely on a particular epistemology which suited the pragmatic, research-practitioner approach of this research. The TA process has been well documented and a full explanation of how this study undertook each of the six steps as described by Braun and Clarke (familiarisation, generation

of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report) is described below.

Familiarisation

Braun and Clarke (2006) propose that familiarisation with the data is the first step in analysing the data. Indeed, the opportunity to hear my participants voices with the time and space for reflection was invaluable to me in this process. I transcribed each interview as soon as possible after it had taken place; creating notes and memos as I went (Grbich, 2007).

The second phase of familiarisation with the data took place once all the interviews had been transcribed. I printed out hard copies of each interview and reviewed them individually, making hand-written notes, reflections and questions. I then typed a 'case-study' or synopsis of each interview, highlighting key points and reflections. I found this stage of familiarisation incredibly useful; not only did it connect me to the data intimately; it also played an important role in grounding each participant individual narrative in my mind; this was instrumental in allowing me to deconstruct the individual stories into codes in the next step; alleviating some of my concern that I was losing the individual stories that had been told to me.

Another highly valuable step in this process was the opportunity to debrief half of the interviews with a colleague in the USA. She undertook the same process (e.g., reading through the interviews; highlighting key points and reflections); we then met over Skype and spent time discussing, challenging and interrogating our summaries until we had reached agreement about the meaning and interpretations we had given to the data.

General Initiation of Codes

The process that I undertook for coding was what Braun and Clarke (2013) call *complete coding*, where all data that may be of relevance to the research question is coded,

and the process of reducing the data is done later in the process. My research question was relatively broad; I was interested in any of the processes of the mentoring program that influenced mentees' experiences, relationships and outcomes - thus nearly all the data collected was relevant for coding; exceptions were the initial part of the interview (explanation of study and discussions about consent/assent) and occasional rapport-building conversations that were not relevant to the mentoring program.

The codes I made were *data-driven*, that is, they reflected the semantic content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207) rather than a more theoretical interpretation. I chose this method of coding because it was very important to me that the voices of the young people who participated in the study were strongly reflected in my interpretation of their words. The purpose and the intent of this research was to gain an understanding from their own perspective of how a young person experiences the in-school mentoring program, and what it was about the different aspects of the program that influences both the mentoring relationship, and the outcomes they experience. The aim is that this understanding will inform program practices for youth mentoring in Australia in an applied and practical way, using this data-driven coding.

Codes were initially developed using MaxQDA (V12) which was helpful to make sense of the large amount of data that I was coding. Initially over 800 codes were generated from the 10 interviews; these were then reviewed and refined, and similar codes were combined and re-named as necessary. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2013), once the entire data-set had been coded, I went back to earlier interviews and modified codes where necessary.

Searching for Themes

To group the codes into themes, I found that I needed a more tactile, hands-on approach than a computer screen, so I wrote out each code onto a study-card and began the process of organising the codes into themes. I blue-tacked the study cards to my wall and grouped them into categories that seemed to fit together. Themes were generated both from the theoretical framework of the study, and directly from the data.

During this paper-based process, I cross-referenced codes and made notes about where they might fit. For example, the code 'Being Heard' was flagged for the early theme of 'Experience of Mentoring' or 'Mentoring Relationship' and cross referenced with 'Identity' with the note *you know me*, as well as 'Different from Parents/Other Adults' (see Figure 5 below).

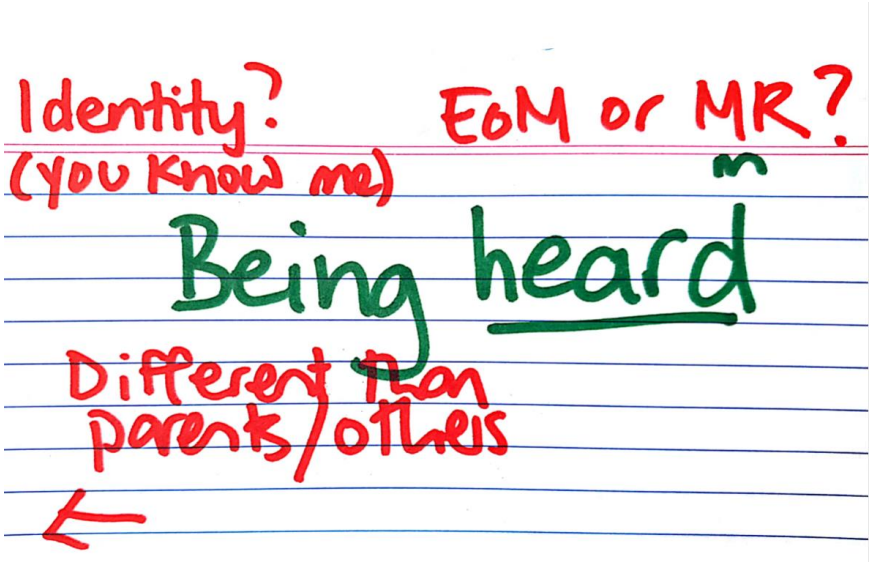

Figure 5. Example of searching for themes.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82), a theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some kind of patterned response or meaning within the data set".

The early 'candidate' themes that I identified were highly structural in nature and had been strongly influenced from the semantic coding method I had chosen. Many of them violated the need for a theme to have a central organising concept that unifies the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 226) and tended to represent features of the data, rather than themes. These early themes were later revised and refined until they were almost unrecognisable, however their importance in the process cannot be under-estimated. They provided a vital 'middle step' without which I would not have been able to keep climbing and were instrumental in sorting and introducing the vast amount of data into a story that I was able to make sense of in a meaningful way.

Reviewing Themes

Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that once initial, candidate themes have been identified that researchers should go back to their coded data to make sure that the themes cover most of the coded data and are relevant to answering the research question. At this stage of my analyses, I went back to MaxQDA (V12) and organised the codes into the candidate themes I had identified. I was then able to generate a list of all codes (including the data extracts), organised together in themes. At this stage I had 165 codes grouped into eight candidate themes. I also had a 'Miscellaneous' theme for codes that did not fit with the themes, but I was not yet ready to let go of as I suspected some of them might be relevant even though they did not fit into the current theme structure. I then reviewed the coded data extracts and re-organised and re-named codes to create a better fit.

During this stage of analysis, I became stuck several times; I knew my themes were not quite right but felt unsure how to proceed. There were three things that supported my progress through this stage. First, time away from the coded extracts was important. Putting aside my coded data and returning to the entire dataset allowed my brain to become more flexible and less fixed on fitting the data into the themes I had identified. I found that it was

very difficult for me to let go of any of the themes (even knowing that they were not yet right) in the absence of anything better! The second thing that helped was returning to the codes written out on student-cards blue-tacked to my study wall. Being able to physically move these codes around and having a highly visual representation of the potential connections between themes was useful.

The final point that helped during this phase of analysis was, at the urging of my supervisors, to starting writing about the themes that I had identified. I had some resistance to this idea, primarily because I was not satisfied with how I had organised the data. However, as the days ticked by with little movement, I decided to leap in. It was in this early writing that I came to understand my data on another level; I was learning through the act of writing and began to develop a deeper connection with the words and their meanings such that I was able to make sense of not only in a meaningful way, but in a way that answered the research question. It was in this stage of reviewing themes that the non-lateral process of qualitative research became truly apparent to me, and it felt highly uncomfortable. I was used to completing one step and then moving on to the next in a structured and disciplined way; to do otherwise initially felt 'wrong' as if I was violating the rules and would therefore produce inferior research. Having now been through the process I understand that moving between themes, coded and un-coded data is an integral part of the analysis process.

Through this cyclical process of reviewing, refining, and writing, I finally came to the conclusion that an optimal solution identified four main themes, each with a number of sub-themes, which told a coherent and comprehensive story about the data in relation to my research question.

Defining and Naming Themes

The next stage identified by Braun and Clarke (2006) is to define and name the themes. Writing short, succinct definitions of each theme was useful to clarify and consolidate the meaning of the themes, ensuring that each theme had clearly defined boundaries, that codes had been allocated to the correct theme, and to determine the relationship between the themes. Further refinement of themes, and particularly codes within each theme were necessary at this stage.

Writing – Finalising Analysis

Consistent with the need to stay as close to the intended meaning of the data as possible, I used a descriptive style of analysis where the data extracts were used to illustrate the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The process of writing up the findings was an integral part of the analysis itself; through the deeper exploration of the themes and data extracts to illustrate each theme, I found significant overlap between some themes, and connections that had not previously been clear. For example, within the theme "Mentee Attributes" during my write-up, I had difficulties separating the initial sub-theme of "Challenges Experienced" from the sub-theme "Help-Seeking Behaviour". Yes, the mentees spoke about several issues that they were experiencing, but on closer examination these issues in themselves did not make up a sub-theme that helped to explain the research question. I realised that it was my desire to have more than two sub-themes under the 'Mentee Attributes' theme that led to my reluctance to merge these two sub-themes rather than them being discrete themes with clear boundaries. Thus, the writing process became part of the analysis itself.

Findings

Four main themes were identified from the data, each with a series of sub-themes. The themes were developed to answer the research questions (a) "What attributes are

perceived as influencing young people's experience of a six-month school-based mentoring program in Australia"; and (b) "How are these attributes perceived as influencing the mentoring relationship and the outcomes experienced by young people?".

The four main themes identified were Program Attributes, Mentee Attributes, Mentor Attributes and Relationship Attributes. An overview of the main findings is provided, followed by a detailed description of each of the four themes and their associated sub-themes. *Figure 6* shows the thematic map detailing these themes and sub-themes.

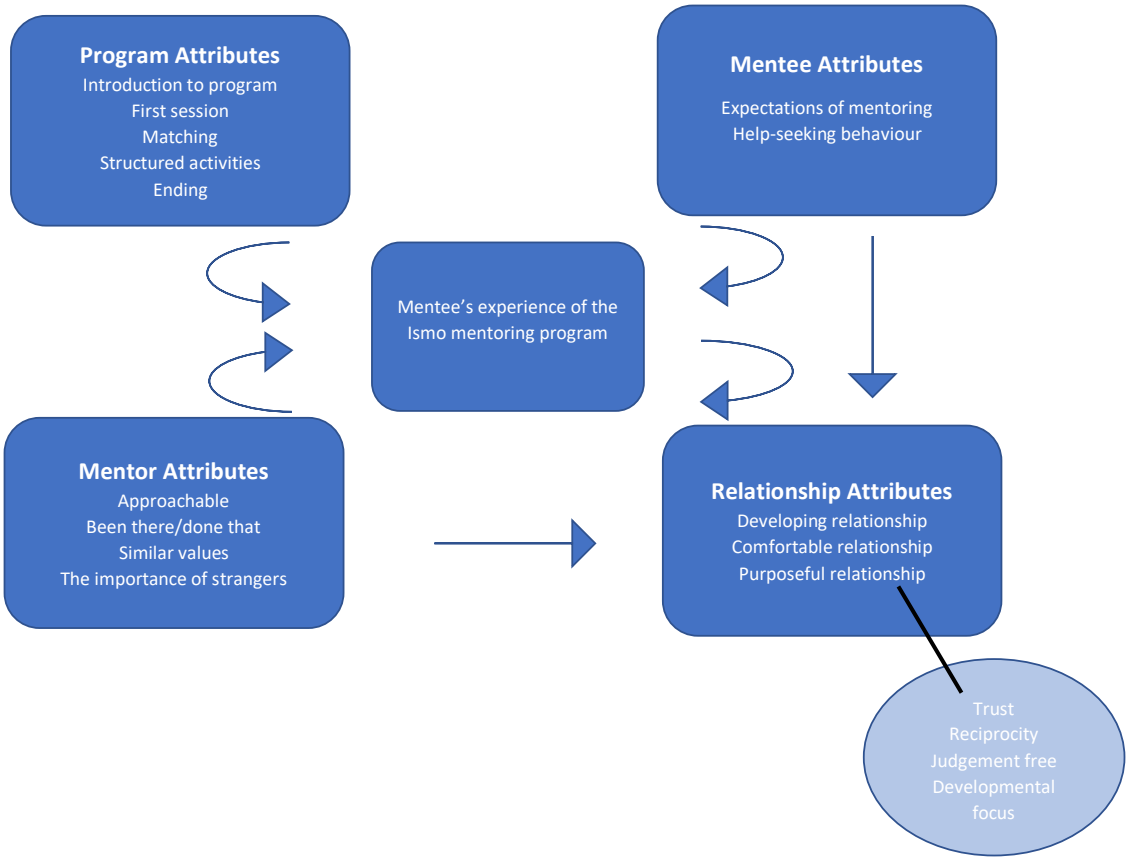

Figure 6. Thematic Map – Mentees

Overview

Overall, these findings provide insights into the benefits that participation in a school-based mentoring program has for young people's positive development. Specifically, the

findings help shed light on particular processes and practices that are important in promoting positive development; as well as aspects of mentoring that may impede positive development. The findings suggest that young people can develop meaningful relationships with their mentors over a six-month period, however not all relationships lead to positive outcomes. Further, the results suggest that there are aspects of Program Attributes, Mentee Attributes and Mentor Attributes that are important in determining the relationship trajectory. Relationships as described by the mentees in this study were classified as either *comfortable* or *purposeful*.

Those categorised as *comfortable* provided a safe space and respite from the school or classroom environment, however, did not appear to lead to further benefits for young people. Conversely, relationships that were *purposeful* were characterised by shared purpose, trust and reciprocity. These relationships provided a more active and explicit type of mentoring, including advice-giving, teaching coping skills, role-modelling and encouraging school engagement. Close relationships between a mentor and mentee provided the opportunity for young people to experience both positive short-term adjustment and longer lasting impact on resilience and hope for the future. Figure 7 illustrates these processes.

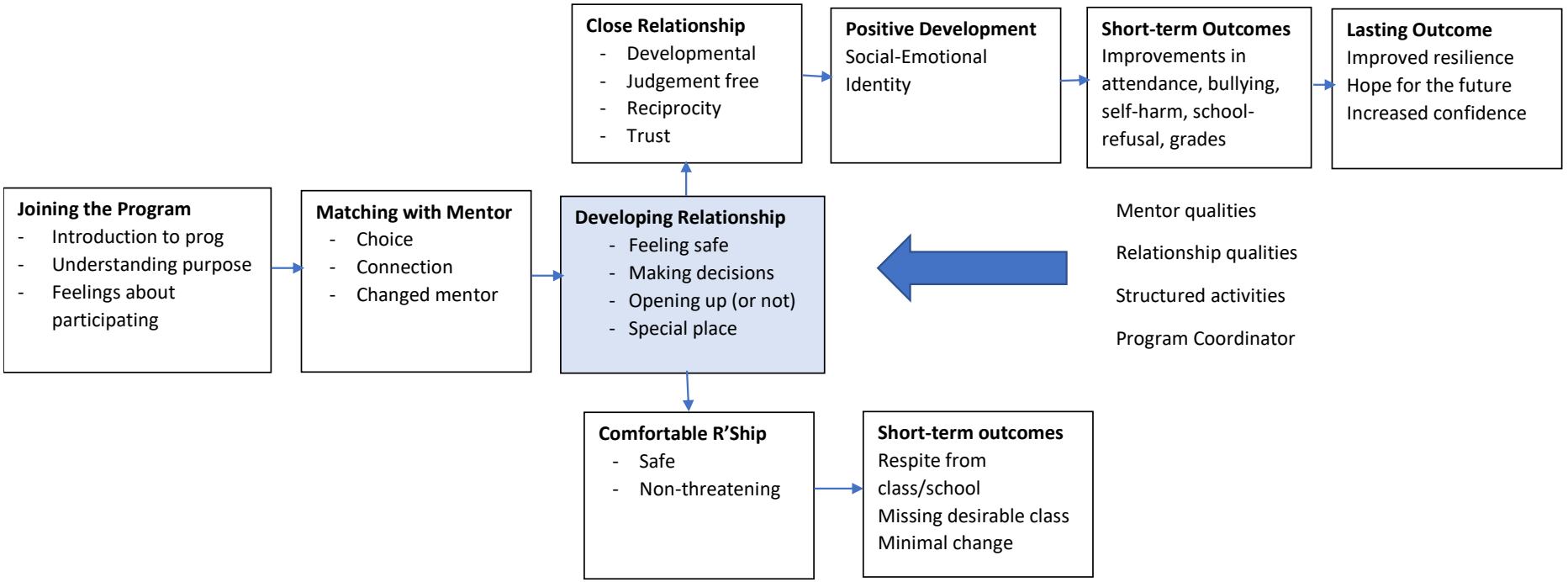

Figure 7. Processes that influence positive adolescent development in a school-based mentoring program.

Theme 1: Program Attributes

The first theme 'Program Attributes' refers to structural aspects of the program that young people described as being important in their experience of mentoring. Sub-themes in this category are Introduction, First Session, Matching, Structured Activities and Ending. Each of these program attributes acted to either support or hinder the young person's positive developmental change. Whilst program characteristics such as program support, mentor recruitment and training, structured activities, length of program and frequency of meeting have been previously shown to improve outcomes for young people (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman et al., 2012), it is rare that program attributes are considered in terms of how they can impact the quality of the relationship that is developed between the mentee and their mentor. Examining program attributes from a young person's perspective sheds light on how the structural aspects of a program can influence both young people's expectations and attitude towards the mentoring program, and how their relationship with their mentor develops.

Introduction to Program

Mentees indicated that the Ismo mentoring program was usually introduced to them by their teachers. Typically, they were called out of class to meet in a group where the opportunity was explained so that they could make an informed choice as to whether or not they wanted to participate. For some, this was a confusing experience "they just called my name over the speaker, like I was in trouble or something" (Rosie, age 14). For others, the mentoring program was presented to them as a positive opportunity and often the reason cited for their nomination was that they had been identified as having 'potential'. This was met with derision by many of

the young people who knew that their own experience of school was not as a student with 'potential'; they also made quick judgements of the other students who had been nominated. This was clearly not the high achiever's group, and young people resented being told otherwise.

> *Um.. they said like the people who were going to "benefit" [finger quotations] from it. But we always, like me and [other participant] were like oh, the 'special' [finger quotations] kids get chosen. (Harmony, age 14).*

Most students were not able to identify a reason that they had been chosen or nominated to participate in the program. Ellie (aged 13) had a common response:

> *Int: So why do you think you were one of the students that got...*
>
> *Ellie: I have no idea [laugh].*
>
> *Int: Oh really? [both laugh]. They don't tell you why?*
>
> *Ellie: Because the mentor doesn't know why.*
>
> *Int: So they don't tell you, and they don't tell the mentor.*
>
> *Ellie: No, I don't think so.*
>
> *Int: Why do you think [you were chosen]?*
>
> *Ellie: Um... I honestly don't know.*

Only one young person in the study was approached individually by his teacher and told explicitly why he had been nominated for the program – to help with his experience of being bullied and his associated behaviours. He had been frustrated by previous attempts to speak with adults about his experience of bullying and saw the mentoring program as *"…. a good opportunity to let a couple of things off my chest*" (Tom, aged 14).

One of the key factors in working with young people is that they should be willing to engage in interventions designed for them. Crane (2013) describes engagement as being more than simply attendance or showing up; they suggest that a young person should be actively interested and committed to their involvement in a program, through an initial level of trust. In the youth mentoring literature, lack of motivation and unfulfilled expectations have been shown to contribute to failed mentoring relationships (Spencer, 2007). Of all the young people interviewed, only Tom felt that the reason given to him for participating was authentic and relevant; for the other young people in this study, they entered with a sense of distrust which appeared to impact on their willingness to truly engage with the program, at least in the initial stages.

First Session

This feeling of uncertainty and distrust through the way the program was presented to them meant that young people described feeling unsure, awkward and anxious going in to the first session and some young people questioned their decision to attend.

> *Like the first day when we all met together, everyone was like 'what the hell - this is kind of shit... different. This is kind of sh..different! (laughing). Like, why are we doing this, whatever. (Mabel, age 13).*

Amy's (age 14) description of the first mentoring session charts her feelings at the very start (*scared, daunting*) through to feeling more comfortable at the end of the session.

Yeah, the first session I had, we all had, we played this game, we all sat in a circle, and it was kind of like speed-dating, but we weren't on a date we were just getting to know everyone, and at first it was a bit daunting, like even the mentors were scared, and like some of them didn't open up as much, and it was like a minute, and that minute felt like it was like 10 minutes, you just kind of stand there and like 'oh yeah, my name is..' and there were like subjects, topics to talk about and one of them was like what was a Christmas present that you have regifted, and I was just kind of like sitting there and then I thought I was just going to make one up for the fun of it... so yeah, it's interesting to hear what other people have to say about like families and stuff.

Several of the young people interviewed understood that it was not only them who were feeling nervous and empathised with the group of adult mentors. Knowing that the mentors were also nervous appeared to give them some confidence and efficacy – the first sign that reciprocity may be an important part of the mentoring process (a full discussion on reciprocity is covered under the theme 'Relationship Attributes', subtheme 'reciprocity').

It was really weird, like talking to someone that you don't really know… But, like I tried to make them feel comfortable as well, so I kind of like opened up, and then it was ok. (Rosie, age 14).

Matching

After the first session, young people were usually given the opportunity to choose a mentor who they felt a connection with and felt ownership over that choice,

often describing their mentor as the 'best' mentor. Matches that were chosen by the mentee, or where the mentee was given a reason for the match, were more likely to be 'close' (for a discussion about the difference between close and comfortable relationships, see theme 'Relationship Attributes', sub-theme 'Developing Relationship').

Matching has been afforded a great deal of attention in the literature as playing an important role in influencing mentoring outcomes (Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Grossman et al., 2012; Matarazzo-Moran, 2011; Spencer, Gowdy, Drew, & Rhodes, 2019), however there is little agreement on what consists of a good match; or what aspects of the mentoring process are important to the ongoing success of the match (Pryce, Kelly, & Guidone, 2014). It has been previously demonstrated that young people want to have a say in the matching process, and are more likely to engage in the process if they have a say in who they are matched with (Spencer, Gowdy, et al., 2019). In the Raise mentoring program, theoretically young people were able to choose their own mentor, however in practice this was not always the case.

Some young people described an instant connection with the person who would become their mentor, deciding immediately that this was someone that they would enjoy working with *"like I knew straight from the start, I want to be with this chick"* (Rosie, aged 14). Being able to choose a mentor felt empowering, particularly as these young people did not feel they had a lot of agency in the school environment. Agentic engagement, where students are able to contribute constructively to their learning experiences, have been shown to be important both in how a student experiences a particular lesson (in this case the mentoring program) and has also been linked to increased autonomy and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006; J. Reeve & Tseng, 2011). The "voice and choice" framework which relates to youth having agency in

program components such as matching has been associated with increased engagement, as well as motivation and skill development (Pryce et al., 2014). This sense of agency is demonstrated by Rosie:

> *I liked it [choosing a mentor] because we never get to choose anything for ourselves, our teachers, who we sit with half the time, yeah, it was good [Rosie, age 14].*

Whilst the process of choosing a mentor was valued, it was stressful for some young people who were worried about whether they would get the mentor they wanted, and how this would impact on others in the group who wanted the same mentor.

> *Yeah, I was kind of scared because [student] really wanted her, and I was asking if we could swap because [student] really opened up to her the most and got to know here the most as well, and so um, but no [Program Coordinator] said, I think the mentors chose us as well, I'm not too sure how it worked, because if they had like the preferences that we had, they matched us up like that, but I'm not too sure. [Amy, age 14].*

Matching was not always successful, and three of the young people interviewed were dissatisfied with their initial match. Students did not feel empowered to speak up when they were not happy with their match and relied on the Program Coordinator to notice and re-match them with a more suitable mentor.

> *We just didn't really like get along that well, like what she would talk about wasn't interesting at all to me and it just wasn't enjoyable that much. I wouldn't have said anything, but the head of the*

program must have noticed I wasn't getting along, so she said 'oh, I've got someone new for you' … and she was really good.. (Ellie, Aged 14).

Some young people did not choose their mentor and reported that they were unsure why they had been matched with their mentor, "I think it was just random, I don't know" (Charlie, aged 14). For Charlie, this lack of engagement with the process continued from when he was introduced to the program and continued to be evident throughout the program.

Structured Activities

Young people described a range of activities that took place during mentoring. The main activity of mentoring as described by mentees was talking, which is discussed fully under the theme 'Relationship Attributes'. The current section relates to structured activities that were initiated by the mentor or the program coordinator. Previous research has found that structured activities are important in predicting outcomes (Dubois et al., 2002; Karcher, Kuperminc, Portwood, Sipe, & Taylor, 2006; McQuillin et al., 2013; Parra et al., 2002) however less is known about how this occurs.

As discussed when reviewing the literature on p.29, there are two main schools of thought in relation to mentoring theories; developmental (or relationship-based) and instrumental (curriculum-based) mentoring (Lyons et al., 2019). It has been suggested that school-based mentoring is more amenable to a structured, curriculum-based approach because restrictions on program length and meeting time may not be conducive to developing close, trusting relationships (McQuillin et al., 2013). Although the Ismo program is based on a relationship model of mentoring,

there is also a structured curriculum in the form of a mentoring handbook, which covers different activities and topics each week. The curriculum is based on the NSW PDHPE curriculum (NSW Education Standards Authority, 2015) and is based on social-emotional learning development. While there is some evidence to suggest that mentors can support skill-based learning, the structure or content of skill-based development remains largely untested in the literature (McQuillin et al., 2013).

In the current study, most mentees described the handbook provided in the Ismo program as being only marginally useful; at best a prompt for discussion; at worst it was perceived as patronising and childish.

> *Some of those activities were like 'oh, what the hell? I think it was like at one stage every single week we would do something like 'get to know your mentor' and we were like 'we've already gotten to know our mentor'. (Mabel, age 14).*

Mabel's lack of engagement with the structured curriculum was echoed by several of her peers and is reflected in youth engagement literature that suggests activities should have a clear purpose and should be relevant to young people in order to be effective (Youth Affairs Council of SA, 2016).

This lack of engagement with the prescribed curriculum may be problematic if the proximal goals of the program rely on skill development intended to be derived through the provided activities. In fact, rather than hitting a "sweet spot" between instrumental and relationship-based mentoring (Lyons et al., 2019) it is possible that for some mentees this could be the worst of both worlds. Specifically, a program that is time-constrained and therefore not conducive to close, trusting relationships, and additionally does not have fidelity of implementation for the structure that may be

more suitable for school-based interventions. Indeed, some mentees described the structured curriculum as a distraction that got in the way of the main event of mentoring – the talking.

> *We never... well like they have us do the page in the book, but we never really talked about that we always went off topic for the whole thing and then just rushed through [the page]. (Ellie, age 13).*

On the other hand, two students described the handbook as being useful; interestingly these relationships were 'comfortable' rather than 'close' (see discussion under theme 'Relationship Attributes', subtheme 'Developing Relationship); it is possible that the handbook was being used as a barrier; a way of not having to engage on a deeper level with their mentor.

Int:	*Did you like it? (referring to the handbook).*
Charlie:	*Yes. Some parts of it are hard to answer, but I think it helps.*
Int:	*Helps?*
Charlie:	*It can help to start a conversation*

Other than the handbook, group games, icebreakers and food sharing gave mentees the opportunity to develop connections with other mentors and students from the group.

> *We used to come in and eat at the end, because a mentor would bring in one thing one week and another mentor, and so when it was your mentors turn you would tell them what you liked and they*

would bring it and then you would take it all yourself (laughing) and that was when we all got together and spoke about nothing really, we just had food and were like laughing. (Amy, age 14).

For several mentees, the program meant more than just the opportunity to have one-on-one time with their own mentor; connections were built with the whole group and they felt supported even when their mentor was not present.

Everyone was very friendly, very friendly. Even if [mentor] wasn't there that one week, like I had two or three mentors come up and say 'do you want to join us?' sort of thing. So everyone was very, very friendly, because everyone was up for a chat, even the kids. Everyone was up for a chat, everything, yeah. (Tom, age 14).

Overall, the curriculum-based activities in the Ismo program were not described as effective by mentees and in fact may have distracted from the program aim of close relationship development. However, the games, activities and food-sharing were enjoyed and appeared to contribute to social-emotional learning skills such as social awareness, self-management and relationship skills (Sancassiani et al., 2015). This finding is discussed further in the context of relationship attributes later in this chapter (see 'Relationship Attributes', subtheme 'Developing Relationship).

Endings

Supported relationship endings, both in mentoring and other similar relationships such as therapeutic relationships, are critical for ensuring positive adjustment benefits are maintained (Spencer, Keller, et al., 2019). The Australian Youth Mentoring Network benchmarks (AYMN, 2012) include recommendations for match closure, including a formal match closure policy, a process to assist mentees to

define their ‘next steps’ and acknowledgement and celebration of the mentoring relationship.

In the current study, most participants appeared pragmatic about the ending of the mentoring program, acknowledging that it was sad; but understanding that the program was only for a finite period. This understanding appeared to help students to cope with feelings of sadness that the program was ending, although overwhelmingly they wished it could go for longer.

> *I knew it was going it end, but I was sad that it wouldn't go on for another term, until the end of the year. It was a bit short. (Charlie, age 13).*

For some young people, the ending was more difficult and left them with a definite sense of loss; a sense of nothing, where there had been something.

> *Yeah, it was actually quite upsetting. I'm not the type to get emotional, but I sort of did, and like... because I'd bonded with him so well and all the other people and like everything and I was like 'oh, now I've got no-one to talk to' and like, 'I've got nothing to do on a Thursday now'. (Tom, age 14).*

For Arabella (age 15), who had given up a desired class to attending mentoring, the end of mentoring felt natural and right. Rather than feeling a sense of loss, she articulated a sense of enrichment that she took with her after the program ended.

> *For me it felt like that was the next chapter in my life. Like I’m taking that wisdom, I’m taking it with me… I feel that everyone had*

> *the sense that it was time, and we were going to move on with our lives.*

The final session of mentoring involved a celebration where mentors were given the opportunity to share their perception of growth that their mentees had experienced. This ceremony drew mixed responses from students; some appreciate the opportunity to hear their mentor speak about them "*it was… it was very touching what he said*" (Tom, age 14). Others felt a pressure to talk that was unwelcome.

> *Yeah I had to [speak], because like my Principal was there and she was just staring and me and everything and I didn't want to get suspended again so I just got up and I was like 'aahhh'. (Amy, age 14).*

Some mentors gave their mentees a card, or a small memento which were valued by students:

> *He actually wrote me this big letter. And I've actually still got it, I read it sometimes. It basically said, 'don't freak out when things happen' and he just gave me dot points on what to do if stuff happens. (Tom, age 14).*

Overall, the match endings as described by young people in this study aligned with best practice suggestions for a supported, celebrating ending (AYMN, 2012; Spencer & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2014). However, some young people did not have a clear understanding of their 'next steps' and, during the interview, described missing their mentor's support. Due to the importance of positive closures in maintaining program benefits, particularly with young people who may have experienced

disrupted relationships prior to mentoring, close attention to this aspect of the program should be prioritised.

Theme 2: Mentor Attributes

The theme ‘Mentor Attributes’ focusses on the attributes of individual mentors, and how they impact positive development for young people. Several personal qualities that young people valued in a mentor were identified. First impressions were important, and those mentors who were perceived as ‘chill’, approachable and non-threatening were appreciated in the matching process. Once matched, students who had been able to choose their mentor (or who had been explicitly told the reason their mentor had been chosen for them by the Program Coordinator) felt a sense of pride and ownership, feeling that their mentor was the ‘best’ mentor, and that they would not have had the same experience with any other mentor.

> *Yeah, it was someone that I was fine with, so yeah it was really good. She was great. If I got like a mentor that wasn't like Bianca and wasn't like me, then I reckon the whole, the whole like experience would have just been completely different. [Mabel, Aged 14].*

Most young people were able to develop a meaningful relationship with their mentor over the twenty weeks and identified several important qualities of mentors that facilitated the development of their relationship.

Approachable, easy-going

Unsurprisingly, mentees identified with mentors who they perceived as warm, friendly and approachable. This was important in the matching process, where two mentees described feeling intimidated by mentors' formal dress style *"they were kind of suited, and um yeah, I found that pretty unapproachable. I was like oh, step back!"* (Rosie, age 14). This was also important in the getting-to-know-you stage, and when a mentor demonstrated that they were 'chill', mentees were able to relax.

> *She was really nice. I don't know, she was really chill. I thought she'd be like, you know like a psychologist like 'oh' and then she was just like a person. But like, yeah, we could just talk about stuff. And she was pretty chill [laugh]. (Harmony, age 14).*

Ellie had experienced poor relationships with some of her teachers and had also attended counselling which she disliked intensely and had a distrust of adults generally. She was drawn to the fun, child-like qualities of her mentor.

> *I guess... she was like more friendly and she wasn't like those really mature adults, she was still like a kid inside kind of. So... yeah, that made it better. (Ellie, age 13).*

Morrow and Styles (1995) found that mentors who were able to combine trust, support and fun were more successful than mentors lacking this quality. This may be because of the contrast with other adult relationships (see Figure 8) where young people often feel defensive of their privacy and distrustful of the reasons that the information is sought, as described by Mabel when talking about the school counsellor.

I don't reckon like, personally I don't think the school needs to know anything unless I go to them and tell them, they are not going to get anything out of me. (Mabel, age 14).

Been There / Done That

The notion that a mentor can be of greater benefit when they have walked the path before has been explored in the literature, with evidence suggesting that when mentors have experienced (or were *perceived* to have experienced) similar issues to that which their mentee is currently facing, the benefits derived from mentoring are greater (Pawson, 2006). In the current study, young people reported feeling a sense of safety and trust when their mentor was also a parent, inherently believing that this meant the mentor would be able to understand them better, as they had been through it before.

I think that her kids are older, so like she's seen them at my age doing some silly things that me and my friends do, so like she could be oh, well when this happens, this and this is the plan. [Mabel, Aged 14]

Mabel elaborated further on this sense of trust later in the interview, when she was contrasting her relationship with her mentor to that of her parents in the context of feeling understood. In her opinion, her parents didn't 'get her', because they hadn't experienced her particular issues before; her perception was that her mentor *did* get her, because she had been through it all with her own daughters.

Like my mum's plan, she doesn't have one, like my brother is only a year older than me, and I'm like the wild child, she hasn't had to

deal with it until me. So like I don't think her or my dad… I don't talk to them about anything.

Being a parent of an adolescent also served to break down communication barriers as they were seen to hold 'insider' knowledge that other adults did not. *"...her having a kid that was my age, and understanding most of the stuff that I was saying which makes a nice change"* (Harmony, Aged 15) which aligns with Pawson's assertion that mentor experience and life history are important predictors of match success (Pawson, 2006).

Similar Values

As well as experience with young people, mentoring literature suggests that shared interests can help to build a trusting relationship between a mentor and a mentee (DuBois et al., 2011). However, in the current study, mentees identified shared *values* as being important. Mabel (age 14) saw herself reflected back in her mentor's non-nonsense 'call a spade a spade' approach and found it easy to relate to this style, rather than some of the softer approaches that other adults used with her.

Like I'm the kind of person I'm not going to get offended if someone doesn't like what I do, or if someone has got a different opinion that doesn't offend me at all... so it was just good that she was honest, and not just like 'oh it's alright Mabel, just do that, do that, oh do you need this?' You know, she was just really straightforward and that's what I really enjoyed.

When a mentee perceived that their mentor held similar values or similar qualities to them, they were more likely to feel safe within the relationship to open up and be themselves. Conversely when a mentee perceived that a mentor was dissimilar

in their values and outlooks, they would either put up immediate barriers "*I wasn't going to tell her nothing*" (Chloe, Aged 15) or simply not evolve to sharing beyond the superficial "*we just talked about our weekends and what we'd been up to and stuff*" (Bryan, age 14).

The Importance of Strangers

Mentoring literature generally agrees that a quality relationship with a trusted adult is an important protective factor to mitigate risk and promote resilience in young people (DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes et al., 2006; Schwartz, Rhodes, Chan, & Herrera, 2011; Spencer, 2002, 2007, 2012; Zand et al., 2009). Current thinking suggests that natural mentors in the form of non-parental adults are ideal to play this role, with formal mentoring programs being important to fill the gap when at-risk young people have limited access to a natural mentoring relationship (Dang, Conger, Breslau, & Miller, 2014; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005; McDonald & Lambert, 2014; Raposa et al., 2018). However, the young people in this study differentiated mentors from other adults in their lives by noting that a key part of their relationship was that they did not know each other. This was important because they perceived their mentor was not going to pre-judge them, or their situation. This gave young people a sense of safety and of freedom to explore the person they wanted to become.

> *Yeah, because they have just met you, and so your expectations, their expectations of you are the first impressions, so they don't know anything about you, they don't know your past until you want to tell them, so how you meet them is how they think of you, because they don't know any of your past, they don't know your parents... (Amy, age 14).*

Charlie (age 13) described enjoying the mentoring experience; however, my perception of his relationship based on his interview responses was that he did not have a particularly close relationship with his mentor. For example, he did not choose to share personal information with her, or ask her for advice, and struggled to describe a time when he felt close to his mentor. His *experience* or perception of the mentoring process may have been different though, which he indicated when he was explaining to me what was different about his relationship with his mentor.

Int: *What was different about it?*

Charlie: *I don't really know her, really.*

Int: *You don't know her?*

Charlie: *Yeah, so I can just tell her like everything.*

Charlie's response was less articulate perhaps than some of the other participants; however, it stood out to me in its simplicity; he felt free to tell his mentor 'everything' *because* he did not know her. This feels counter-intuitive in some ways, and at first glance may seem to contradict the later finding (discussed in theme 'Developing Relationships') that young people need time to get to know their mentor before they are able to open up. I think what Charlie was saying, was that it was the *separation* of his mentor from his life, from other people he knew, and perhaps even from earlier versions of himself, that made him feel as if he was able to talk to her about everything. An important part of this separation is that what young people say to their mentors will remain confidential; that teachers, parents and others will not become involved. For Tom (age 14), the formal process of signing a mentoring contract gave him trust in the process.

Well, I thought when I did sign the papers, and he did, then I thought obviously this person has to be trustworthy because

obviously they wouldn't be signing someone up who would be telling everyone about the program and what this kid's done and what this kid doesn't do and stuff.

Another aspect of the relationship being with an unknown adult was the perception of authenticity about their interest and liking of the young person. Not because they had to, as their parents did; not because they were paid to, as their teachers were, but because the mentor genuinely wanted to be there. This was very powerful for young people, who were able to hear and perhaps absorb strengths and qualities from someone who did not have a vested interest in them, or their outside lives.

We did strike up a relationship where she was very proud of me and I was really just kind of in awe of her um devotion to making this complete stranger enjoy life a bit more, when I couldn't quite see it myself. [Arabella, age 15].

This theme has described the different Mentor Attributes that were important for young people in choosing, getting to know and trusting their mentor. Being approachable and easy-going was important, particularly during the matching process. Mentees valued mentors who had 'walked the path' before, whether as a past young person, or because they were parents to young people. When a mentee identified with a mentor's values, and felt that they were similar to their own, this was beneficial for their relationship. Finally, the fact that a mentor was a 'stranger', and not associated with the school, counselling or their parents, was important to young people. It allowed them a sense of freedom in being able to open up without the fear of

themselves or their families being judged; and without the fear of an unwanted outcome.

Theme 3: Mentee Attributes

The theme 'Mentee Attributes' acknowledges that all students come into the mentoring program with their own unique set of experiences; and that these experiences can influence a mentee's capacity and/or willingness to engage in and benefit from the program. The sub-themes are the expectations that young people had coming into the mentoring program and their help-seeking behaviour.

Expectations of mentoring

Expectations and motivations for mentoring have been found to be important from a mentor's perspective (Wu, 2014). However, this been little explored from a mentee viewpoint, with the exception of Spencer (2007), who looked at unmet mentee expectations in the context of failed mentoring relationships. In the current study, many of the participants were initially wary of the program, believing that it was going to be like counselling, of which they had a negative judgement. They also reported that some of their peers had chosen not to participate in the mentoring program because of their early perception.

> *Because I know some people wanted to do it, [mentoring] but they thought it was counselling so they didn't bring their notes back. (Bryan age 14).*

Students had different reasons for choosing to participate, including feeling that they had to; to get out of class; and because they thought it would be a good chance to have someone to talk to.

I was just like 'oh yeah, alright I'll give it a go'. I thought it will be better than sitting in the classroom for a day anyways like I'll be doing something else, so that's kind of... (Mabel, age 14).

For Harmony, who was a chronic non-attender at school, the thought of mentoring was stressful, particularly the idea of talking with a stranger. She agreed to do it because she felt that it would at least be better than attending class.

So, I didn't want to do the mentoring, ok. I didn't want to talk to anyone. But then I thought, it's sort of like a bludge lesson, like for a day I don't have to do school work, and I hate school work, so I sort of decided that, you know, it shouldn't be that bad because school is pretty awful anyway. And then, the stuff that we spoke about was just like me talking anyway, or her talking about her family or ways to help me, and I was like 'oh, this is fine'. And then the work that we did in the booklet we didn't do much of that anyway and it wasn't hard stuff anyway. So it was fine, it was good.

Young people's expectations of mentoring had some relationship to how the program was introduced to them; as previously discussed, students who understood why they had been nominated to participate in the program had more positive expectations of what the program would be like and what they wanted to get out of it (see p.135).

For example, recalling Tom, whose teacher had recommended that he join the program to help him cope with bullying and anger management issues. Tom was open to the experience and could articulate what he wanted to get out of mentoring *"a good opportunity to offload some of the stuff going on in my head"*. This contrasted

with Mabel, who had been told that she had been chosen because she "had potential" but had indicated a strong distrust of this reason. Mabel was initially wary of the mentoring program *"I was like 'what the hell – this is kind of shit… different! This is kind of sh..different! (laughing). Like, why are we doing this, whatever!*'".

It is possible that the position of distrust in which she entered the program impacted the relationship she had with the first mentor she was matched with. This match was not successful, and Mabel was consequently re-matched. Mabel's response below reflects some of the ambiguity she felt coming into mentoring, along with a softening in her positioning.

> *Like mentoring, you tell people that you do mentoring, you are like a weird kid or something, but like um, it was really different to what I thought it would be, and it was better than I thought it would be. So... yeah.*

Spencer (2007) found that unmet mentee expectations were associated with unsuccessful mentoring relationships, however in Spencer's study, mentee expectations appeared to be focussed on the mentor themselves. For example, mentees described feeling disappointed that their mentors were not a 'good fit' or did not share the same interests. In the current study, mentees spoke about their expectations and understanding of the program itself, indicating that it may be important to ensure that program expectations are clearly articulated and understood by young people at the commencement of the intervention.

Help Seeking Behaviour

Overwhelmingly, participants described an inability or an unwillingness to seek help from other adults in their lives. Most young people in the study described a

positive and supportive relationship with their parents, however despite this, major barriers to seeking help from parents about their issues existed. This is somewhat contradictory to results from Mission Australia's 2019 Youth Survey, which suggest that parent/carers or other relatives and family friends are the primary sources of help with important issues (Carlisle et al., 2019). It may be that while young people feel that their family is the most likely place they would go to for help with important issues, when they actually need to ask for that help there are barriers that prevent them from doing so. This gap between help-seeking intentions and actual behaviour has been documented previously (Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, & Ciarrochi, 2005).

These barriers as described by young people provide important information about the role that mentoring may play in providing them with what they perceive as a safe space to talk. Figure 8 below depicts the important relationships discussed by young people in this study, and the barriers to help-seeking that they described.

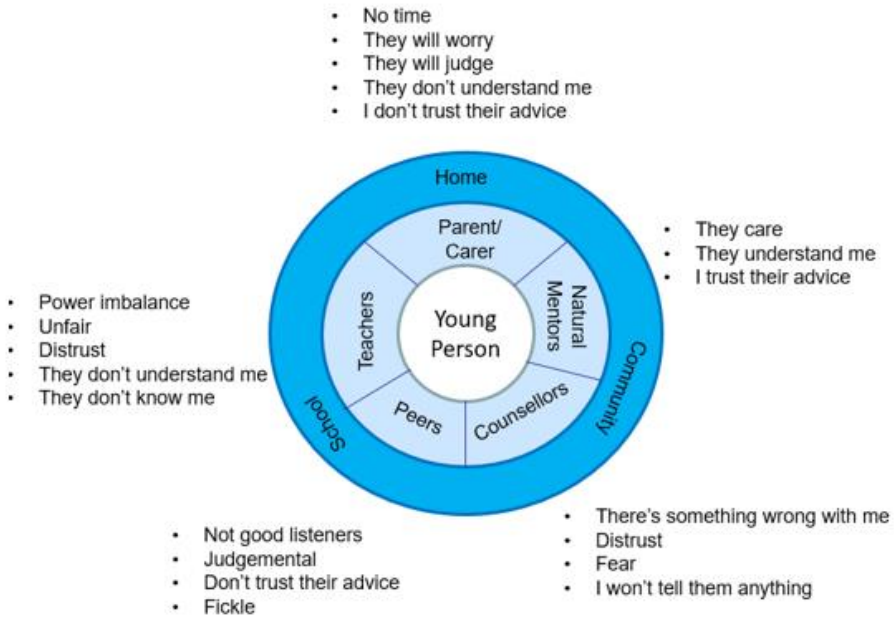

Figure 8. Barriers to help-seeking in important relationships

One barrier discussed by three participants was their concern that they would worry their parents or add to stress that parents/carers were already experiencing, feeling that they were already under enough pressure without adding to it.

> *Well like my Dad, he is always working. And my mum... I don't know. Because then, she would think there was something really really wrong with me and then she would send me to the doctor or something and I don't want that. (Ellie, age 13).*

Knowing that they had a discrete amount of time for mentoring each week, and that the mentor was there specifically to listen to them over and above any other purpose contrasted with the feeling that they were a burden to their parents/carers. Arabella (age 15) describes some of the issues she faces when she has 'had a rough week' and wants to talk to someone about it:

> *It was wonderful [mentoring]. And it was a bit of a mid-week pick me up. If I was having a rough week I could talk about it with someone you know, and not be worried about whether I was delaying mum with dinner, or getting a typical mum response or... um, trying to find a friend I could trust who I didn't really have at the time. Or just worrying that I was going to bother family, knowing that there was allotted time, for me.*

Another barrier to help-seeking described by participants was the feeling that they were not going to be listened to or taken seriously; that the problems that felt overwhelming to them may be dismissed as being silly, or irrelevant. At a time when young people are striving for autonomy, fear of stigma and embarrassment can be a

major barrier in help seeking (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010), as demonstrated by Ellie.

> *I'm terrified [of being judged] of it. And I'm scared they won't believe me, or they will say 'oh, you are just exaggerating it, it's probably nothing. (Ellie, age 13).*

Tom (age 14) was being bullied at school and found it difficult to talk to anyone about his experience; he describes a time when he retaliated after a bullying incident.

> *Yeah, because I punched it like that [mimes punch] and it didn't turn out very well. And no one knew why. I didn't tell my teachers, I didn't tell my mum, I didn't tell nan. I didn't even tell my dog sort of thing. But - all this anger, no one knew why I did it. And I still didn't tell anyone why I did it. I just said I was angry.*

Tom's silence may indicate a deeper shame about being bullied; a shame so deep he felt it could not even *"be shared with my dog"*. Shame research suggests three components of shame; being trapped, powerless and isolated (Brown, 2006) and Tom's experience of bullying incorporates all of these components. According to the research, when shame is shared with someone supportive, there can be many positive effects including the development of what Brown terms 'shame resilience' (Brown, 2006). In Tom's case, he was not able to speak to any of his usual supports *because* of his shame, putting him at risk of being stuck in a cycle of shame. By being able to share his experience with somebody outside of his close relationships, he was able to exit the cycle and move forward. This idea of the importance of support being

separate from other relationships is explored further in the theme ‘The Importance of Strangers’.

Most participants did not have a good relationship with teachers at their school; they felt that there was a power imbalance inherent in the way that they were treated, often feeling that they had been pre-judged, and that nothing they did would make any difference, so they may as well act (e.g., misbehave) in the way that was expected of them. Teachers were not seen as being authentic in their care of students, in contrast to the authenticity that was described in the mentoring relationship. (discussed further in Theme 4: Relationship Attributes).

> *And then it's obviously always like the teacher's word over the students. They always have that power, like the Principal is going to believe what the teacher said because you know why would the teacher lie? (Amy, age 14).*

Peer relationships become increasingly important during adolescent years (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). For some mentees in this study, relationships with their peers provided meaningful support when things were not going well, as Amy (age 14) describes:

> *I just kind of sit there, and then like my best friend, and I try to tell her what's happening and she goes 'stop worrying about it, you overthink everything, nothing is even going to come of it' and I just try to think like that, and eventually it goes away...*

For others, the same distrust that is present with teachers, parents and counsellors also blocks communication with friends. Mabel (age 14) didn’t trust that

her friends would respect her trust, and worried that she would become the source of gossip.

> *Because like I'm not going to sit there and talk about my personal stuff with three other teenagers - because they will go off and go 'oh, Mabel said this today, Mabel said that today'. So it was just really good having just me and [mentor].*

While young people report that they are more likely to seek help from peers than anywhere else (Carlisle et al., 2019; Lubman et al., 2017), as shown in Figure 8, mentees in this study perceived limitations in their friend's ability to help. For example, Rosie (age 14) described being doubtful that her friends would provide her with advice that she could trust; feeling that '*they will just tell me to do it, whatever*". The difference between what young people say they will do in terms of help-seeking and what they actually *do* when faced with a challenge highlights the importance of a consistent, dedicated time such as mentoring to enable support.

This theme described the individual differences that the young people in the current study bring to the mentoring process, and seeks to explore how these characteristics impacted their experience of mentoring. Mentees entered the program with different expectations; some thought it was going to be like counselling and resented having to attend; others appreciated the opportunity to talk about the issues they were experiencing; many were not sure what to expect and didn't understand why they had been chosen. Expectations were influenced to some extent by how the program was introduced to them; likewise, expectations influenced how they approached mentoring, particularly first session.

The mentoring relationship is just one, short-term relationship in a number of longer, more important relationships such as those with parents/carers, teachers, counsellors, and natural mentors. Young people's past experiences of relationships with adults influenced both how they chose their mentor, and the process of getting to know their mentor.

Young people described several barriers to help-seeking from adults and other important people in their lives, which may provide valuable information in understanding why a mentoring relationship is beneficial.

Theme 4: Relationship Attributes

The three themes already discussed 'Program Attributes', 'Mentee Attributes' and 'Mentor Attributes', all played a role in the quality of the relationship that was developed between mentees and their mentors. The theme 'Relationship Attributes' describes aspects of the relationship *as perceived by the young person* in being important in developing a relationship with their mentor that led to positive developmental change. Whilst all young people who were interviewed for this study reported that they enjoyed the experience of mentoring and described positive aspects of their mentor, just four of the ten relationships could be described as 'purposeful'. Two had some, but not all of the characteristics of a purposeful relationship and the other four relationships are described as 'comfortable'. Importantly, it was only the purposeful relationships that were described by young people as being instrumental in promoting positive change. After a discussion about the developing relationships and components that made a relationship either comfortable or purposeful, I focus in on the important characteristics of a purposeful mentoring relationship.

Developing Relationship

Once matched, young people were cautious at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, biding their time to see whether this adult stranger was someone they were going to be able to trust. The first two to three weeks were spent deciding how the relationship would progress. Early sessions were characterised by 'small-talk' where mentees gathered information to help them assess how much they were willing to trust their mentor. As stated previously, Mabel was first matched with a mentor who she did not feel a connection with. Here, she describes the process of getting to know Bianca, her permanent mentor after the unsuccessful match.

> *Um, the first week I had with her was like just like 'hi, I'm Mabel, nice to meet you' kind of talk but then... I didn't start telling her other things until maybe like two weeks or something. So it would have been like the third week of the program. Like, because I don't know, it was just. I'm not going to be like that first time, so I just like waited and sussed it out and stuff and because I didn't really click with the other mentor. But yeah um when I met Bianca everything was fine and me and her got pretty close. (Mabel, age 14).*

Amy appreciated the space her mentor provided at the beginning of their relationship and considered it important because it was different to how she usually approached new relationships.

> *Amy: Because not a lot of people do it like that, like a lot of them go straight in, like I've sat next to girls on the bus and I don't even know them that well and they have told me their whole life story and*

I'm like 'wow, I don't even know you that well'. But in another way I think it's kind of cool how people can open up like that, but I think I'd prefer to get to know you beforehand…

Int: And Gabi gave you the chance...

Amy: Yeah, to get to know her.

Int: So you didn't feel like she was like 'tell me everything'

Amy: Yeah, it didn't feel like she was creeping in, she was just kind of like sitting there she's like 'oh hi, I'm Gabi and I was like 'oh yeah hi'.

In these early weeks of mentoring, young people were making deliberate decisions about whether they wanted to trust their mentor. Arabella describes how she gave a somewhat whitewashed description of a situation to her mentor to see how she would respond:

Obviously at first, there would have been kind of, I didn't know quite what to say at first - I'd start off with kind of the introduction of what's going on in subtlety, kind of summarised, not exaggerated in the least.. kind of, a bit understated, ever so slightly reserved.

Mabel described herself as having 'mad trust issues' and held back from telling her mentor anything she considered personal or important in the first two weeks. However, during this time she was making assessments about mentor Bianca and decided early on that she was someone she would get along with "…*because I reckon I can just tell with some people, some people if I get along [or] if I don't. And me and her, we were like fine, so*".

All the young people in the study described a process of getting to know their mentors, and it was generally a few weeks into the program before they felt comfortable. Young people felt comfortable in the relationship when the conversations became more natural, and they began to look forward to seeing their mentors.

> *I started looking forward to going there every week to talk to him. Like before the program it would just be dull and I wouldn't tell anyone sort of thing, but as soon as the program started and a couple of weeks went by and we were doing it, I really warmed up to him, and then I reckon it was when I was getting excited for a Thursday it was like 'oh yay, I've got this on Thursday, I'm pumped for it'. (Tom, aged 15).*

One young person describes a deliberate decision to give his mentor access to who he was.

> *I just became more comfortable with her… spending a lot of time with her, getting to know her and **letting** her know me. (Bryan, aged 14) (emphasis researcher's own).*

Comfortable Relationships

All participants in this study reported an overall positive experience of mentoring and described a similar process of getting to know their mentor. For three of the participants (Deb, Ren and Bryan), the mentoring relationship plateaued at a 'comfortable' stage and was not perceived to progress past this stage. Interestingly, none of these participants expressed a preference or a need for the mentoring relationship to be any different than it was; and there was a tendency for them to

focus on process-oriented aspects of the relationship. For Deb, consistency from her mentor was highly valued:

> *Deb: Well, she always came. I didn't go once. I mean twice. But I never jigged, I was sick.*
>
> *Int: Ok, so you always came on mentoring days?*
>
> *Deb: Yep.*
>
> *Int: And she always came?*
>
> *Deb: Even if I didn't go! She thought other people might end up not coming.*
>
> *Int: So you liked that no matter what, she was always going to be there?*
>
> *Deb: Yeah.*

Deb's mentor turning up even when she herself wasn't there conveyed to her that she was important and cared about, and that her commitment to the relationship remained. The importance of commitment and consistency has been echoed in the mentoring literature (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005; Dubois et al., 2002; Wu, 2014). Bryan, age 14, appreciated the opportunity to talk about the things that were important to him, and valued that his mentor enjoyed hearing him talk, and was not 'all protective and stuff' like his parents. *"...she liked hearing what I was doing on the weekend and like riding my BMX and stuff like that*".

Likewise, Ren, age 15, valued the time that he spent with his mentor and saw it as a respite from issues that he was experiencing at school.

> *I guess it just made something that I could look forward to for school… I was just mucking up in class and stuff and getting talked*

to and not doing my work and [mentoring] days it was like 'oh, it's going to be a good day'.

Each of the young people in the 'comfortable' relationship category described some of the same type of qualities in their mentors as other participants in the study, namely that their mentor was approachable and a genuine, authentic person. However, the other two sub-themes from Mentor Attributes were absent in their descriptions. The sub-theme of 'been there/done that' where a mentor was valued because of their perceived experience; of having trodden the path before was not present. Likewise, the sub-theme 'similar values' where a mentor was perceived to hold the same core values was also missing. This aspect appears to be important in building a deeper trust between a mentee and their mentor; and gives the mentee a sense of being known and being understood.

Aside from Mentor Attributes, it is likely that *Mentee* Attributes also played a pivotal role in the developing relationship. Halting the relationship at the 'comfortable' stage appeared to have been mentee-led; none of the young people in this group expressed any dissatisfaction or wish for a different type of relationship. In reflecting on the differences between these young people and those who went on to develop 'close' relationships with their mentor, there were some parallels with my experiences during the interviews.

Deb, Ren, and Bryan who all had 'comfortable' relationships with their mentors, did not offer up any information beyond the purely descriptive; whilst they all appeared happy enough to be talking to me, they found it challenging to answer some of the more reflective questions that I asked them. During transcription I noticed that their minimal responses to these questions made it less likely that I would

probe further; in part because I did not wish to make them feel uncomfortable or lacking in any way; but also perhaps in part because I did not believe that I would get a response beyond 'I don't know' or 'I don't remember'. My own judgement of their responses and my abilities as an interviewer prevented me from persisting or asking questions in ways that were more meaningful to them. It is possible that a similar process played out in the mentoring relationship. Future research should consider how to draw out responses from young people who are not as comfortable in answering questions or volunteering information, for example online communication, text chat or peer-to-peer interviews.

Purposeful Relationships

For some young people, the relationship developed beyond comfortable and became purposeful. Relationships that were purposeful, rather than just comfortable, were characterised by reciprocity, trust, being free of judgement and having a developmental focus. For the mentees in the current study, only four of the relationships included all the sub-themes described below (Rosie, Chloe, Ivy and Tom). The remaining three had some, but not all of the 'close relationship' characteristics (Harmony, Arabella and Ellie).

Trust

Trust is the cornerstone of relationships, particularly those that aim to facilitate growth (Bernath & Feshbach, 1995; Spencer, 2004), and there is strong evidence in the mentoring literature about the importance of trust for a mentee to be willing and able to fully engage in a mentoring relationship (Dallos & Comley-Ross, 2005; Dutton et al., 2019; Leavey, Rothi, & Paul, 2011; Levine, 2016; Spencer, Gowdy, et al., 2019).

Trust in mentoring relationships has been described as "youth relying on and confiding in their mentors based on experiences of mentor reliability, honest, and emotional sensitivity and protection from emotional harm" (Levine, 2016, p. iv). Notably, Levine's definition of trust encompasses both 'deed and word' (p.6) suggesting that trustworthy behaviour (e.g., consistency, adherence to rules, being present) and being emotionally trustworthy (e.g., displaying empathy, understanding, non-judgemental) are both important. Similarly, in the current study, trust was experienced in many ways and appeared to underpin all aspects of mentoring. Trust was evident in every theme discussed; from the distrust at the start of the program in the reason for being chosen, through to a mentees own ability to trust, and whether or not their mentor was 'trustworthy', authentic, committed.

Mentees in this study talked about two types of trust: trust in the program, and trust in their mentors. Mentees who developed a purposeful relationship with their mentors continued to talk about trust as being important throughout their relationship which is consistent with research that suggests trust is a dynamic process that changes over time in interpersonal relationships (Lewicki, Tomlinson, & Gillespie, 2006).

Mentees had a certain expectation that the program was trustworthy, and, by extension, that they could trust the mentors. Bryan (age 13) described 'just knowing that they wouldn't tell anyone unless it endangered someone that I know or me'. For Tom (age 15), the formalities of the program (signing papers) gave him a certain feeling of trustworthiness.

> *Well, I thought when I did sign the papers then I thought obviously this person has to be trustworthy because obviously they wouldn't be signing someone up who would be telling everyone about the*

program and what this kid's done and what this kid doesn't do and stuff.

Despite this expectation of trust, it was only getting to know his mentor that led to a greater certainty "*it was different [with mentor] because I trusted him more than I thought I would, and he trusted me".*

Mabel (age 14) was less sure at the beginning and took some time to develop trust that her mentor was not going to judge her or talk about her behind her back.

I think the first week, like why I never said anything to Bianca was I was still unsure, like she could just go home to her family and go 'oh, I had mentoring today and like the girl I've got she's crazy...'.

Later in the interview, Mabel describes a feeling of trust that had been built through a reciprocal sharing and vulnerability with her mentor. "Yeah, I just had this trust with her, this great trust, because she was like me, and the things that she told me as well, yeah just this trust for us both". This statement from Mabel reflects the importance of trust, which had been built through shared values ('she was like me') and reciprocity ('the things that she told me as well').

Both Mabel and Tom described trust as a process where they needed time in order to judge whether they were able to trust their mentors, and it appeared that reciprocity played an important role in the building of trust.

Reciprocity

Mutuality has long been thought to be important in mentoring relationships (Rhodes et al., 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006), with appropriate, intentional self-disclosure facilitating trust and close connections (Lester et al., 2019; Levine, 2016). Consistent

with this evidence, in the current study one of the key elements of a purposeful relationship as described by mentees was *reciprocity*. Reciprocity was spoken about in three different ways. Firstly, when there was a sense that the relationship was helpful and useful to both parties. Secondly, when mentors shared personal experiences and insights with their mentees. Thirdly, where there were shared experiences that were authentically valued by both parties.

Young people felt valued in the relationship when they were able to share their skills or experiences with their mentor. Likewise, the feeling that the relationship was valued by the mentor in an authentic way was important.

> *I think... I taught, I introduced her to TED talks, so there is an impact! I think that we were honestly both very excited to see each other, and you know, we gave each other homework at different points in time, and she always did hers, and... (Arabella, age 15).*

When a mentor opened up to their mentee and shared details about their personal life or past experience, it had a profound impact on the relationship. Young people described the feeling of being trusted, which led to a feeling of safety with their mentor.

> *But... I do believe like she trusted me as well. Like, she told me like heaps as well, like not too much, but like, still some stuff about herself, which I found was pretty cool. (Rosie, age 14).*

Later in the interview, Rosie reflected on the impact that their relationship had on her mentor:

I think she needed someone to talk to as well, yeah I think she had her own troubles as well. So I think she thought it was nice to have someone else to be able to talk to. It might not have been in the age group, but it was still someone.

In some cases, disclosure of personal information by a mentor allowed the mentee to talk about aspects of their life that they had not previously been able to share with an adult. Tom (aged 14) opened up about a friend's drug use after his mentor spoke about a family member using drugs at a party. Tom described his sense of surprise both that his mentor shared this information with him, and his reciprocal disclosure.

I was like 'wow, he's trusting me with this'. And then I told him 'oh, I know this person he's a teenager and he sells drugs'; and I was like 'oh, I didn't know I would be telling anyone this'. But obviously I trusted him.

The third aspect of reciprocity were shared experiences which were authentically valued by both parties. This aspect of a relationship is often absent in traditional adult-adolescent relationships, where the adult usually holds a position of power or perceived power, such as a teacher or counsellor. The voluntary nature of mentoring may have contributed to the perception that mentors genuinely wanted to be there and benefitted from the experience.

...and then [mentor] and I made a deal um because she hates nail polish, I don't understand why, because she hates wearing it because it always chips off her fingers when she is doing something…. so I made a deal with her that I would stay at school

for two weeks straight if she wears nail polish two weeks straight as well. (Amy, age 14).

Many of the young people in this study described knowing that their mentor was important to them when they would get a feeling of excitement about seeing them when it was mentoring day at school. They recounted knowing that their mentor would be a receptive space for whatever was going on in their lives – from choosing a dress for formal, to sharing anxieties about friendships or stress about an upcoming test. Some students would attend school on mentoring day specifically because they did not want to let their mentor down. "*I would feel bad if you don't go. They always go for us*" (Deb, age 14).

Judgement Free

The concept of being free of moral judgement within growth relationships was popularised by Carl Rogers (1962) who thought that approaching therapeutic relationships free from judgement was an ethical approach that should be embraced by therapists. Rogers believed that the therapeutic relationship would be undermined if therapists made internal or external personal judgements about the client (Winslade, 2013). Fear of judgement is a barrier to help-seeking for young people, and trusting that mentors will be non-judgemental has been shown to facilitate positive relationship development (Spencer, Gowdy, et al., 2019).

Indeed, the young people in this study spoke about living in a world of constant judgement - judgement from their teachers, judgement from their parents, judgement from their friends. Their perception was that they were constantly 'lacking' in some undefined way; mentoring seemed to offer a respite from this pressure. Overwhelmingly, young people described their relationship with their

mentors as being judgement free, which allowed them the space to explore who they were. Ellie (age 14) describes how in relationships with her friends and family she lives in constant fear of negative judgement; she fears their reactions if she discusses her feelings with them, and she fears being dismissed or not being taken seriously: "I'm terrified [of being judged] of it. And I'm scared they won't believe me, or they will say 'oh, you are just exaggerating it, it's probably nothing'" whereas she could simply enjoy being with her mentor and feel safe that she would be accepted "I really like just having someone to talk to. And I *know* she won't judge me" (emphasis from Ellie).

Rosie (age 15) was able to take tentative steps towards exploring her sexuality with her mentor which she had not felt comfortable doing with her parents. She was experiencing some bullying in the playground, being called a 'fat dyke' and described feeling of shame and confusion which she was able to discuss with her mentor, safe in the knowledge that she would not be judged.

> *She was great, you know, she didn't pressure me, she was like 'I'm here to listen to whatever you are comfortable telling me'. She didn't judge me at all, she just listened, and told me to do what I want in life, don't listen to what others have to say. I thought that was pretty cool.*

Developmental Focus

Unexpectedly, relationships which had a clear developmental focus where the mentor gave explicit advice and skill-sharing were all close relationships. This is in contrast with the literature which suggests that the focus of mentoring should be solely on the development of a positive relationship between the mentor and the

mentee (Li & Julian, 2012; Morrow & Styles, 1995). However, the directionality of the relationship is unclear. It is possible that relationships where the mentor gave advice were viewed as close; likewise, it is possible that because the relationship was close, mentors felt comfortable giving advice, and mentees felt comfortable receiving it. This directionality should be explored in future research.

In the current study, mentees welcomed advice from their mentors, however it was important that it was the *right* type of advice. Purposeful advice-giving from mentors was valued where it was perceived as legitimate, and where mentees felt a genuine sense of efficacy as to whether or not they would accept the advice from their mentor.

> *Every now and then I would take it [advice from mentor] and I would trust that it would be like 'oh, I'll try it this time, [mentor] said it would be a good idea that I try it'. It's like a trial and error thing. Some of them worked, some of them didn't. (Tom, age 14)*

> *Like I'd sit there and I'd listen to what she had to say. Like she goes 'you don't have to take it all in, but just think about it'. And I think that was good. (Mabel, age 14)*

Some mentors were explicit in teaching particular skills to their mentee; for example, Tom's mentor gave him advice and coping strategies to deal with the bulling that her was experiencing such as strategies to avoid the bullies; identifying a trusted teacher who he could talk to about it and defending himself where necessary.

> *I'd say 'oh, this kid pushed me into the lockers and I didn't do anything, what should I do?' And he would give me a legitimate answer, like 'oh, you could tell the co-ordinator, push him back if*

you have to, defend yourself'. And I'm like 'yeah, alright'. So like anything, he would have a very confident answer for me. Yeah.

Relationships where mentors were able to connect young people to their strengths were also valued, and young people were able to absorb and reflect on these strengths when they felt that the mentor was being genuine and authentic.

I felt smarter, [when with mentor]. She said I was really bright. And then, oh, when I'd tell her about my skating or my drawing or something she would always be like really interested and like really impressed by it. And I've been playing guitar for 9 years, and she was like 'wooow' and tell me I had persistence and stuff. And I'd always be like, I felt better about myself, I guess. Um. yeah, I felt like, smarter, because I felt like I understood things more as well. Like, I don't know [laugh]. (Harmony, age 14).

She helped me to reconcile with my flaws. Um, and to love them in return. She taught me to embrace them, and that they were my strengths. And that really it was just the way I saw things, it was just my perception that told me that I wasn't good enough and that's a lie... because if I, I've always done better than I think I have - that's just the way my head works. (Arabella, age 14).

Many young people set small goals with their mentors as part of the program structure. In many cases the importance of goal-setting was dismissed by mentees, however, there were clues in their discourse that goal-setting did have some benefits.

In particular, they described the role of goal-setting in developing a relationship with their mentor, and learning new skills.

For example, Rosie (age 15) was generally scathing of the prescribed activities and considered them a waste of good talking time. For her, a goal had to be meaningful to her to be worthwhile. What she really wanted to achieve was personal, and so could only be disclosed after a trusting relationship was built with her mentor. Rosie's mentor helped her to define her goal and put some structure around it so that it could be celebrated when achieved, providing Rosie with the skills to set and achieve future goals, and positive reinforcement of her achievement.

> *Rosie: So I had to ask her like you know, how do I get back on track, how do I do this, how do I do that? I asked her, like, how do I feel confident eating in the yard, how do I feel confident eating in public?*
>
> *Int: Yep. So you were asking her for advice and for help*
>
> *Rosie: Yeah. So we wrote, we fully wrote like this form thing, saying "I Rosie will, you know, eat properly and do this and that'*
>
> *Int: Like a contract?*
>
> *Rosie: Yes. And we both signed it, and by the time I ate lunch here for the first time we ripped it up and threw it in the bin.*
>
> *Int: Oh wow. So you had something really specific that you were working towards and then you did it. How did it feel?*
>
> *Rosie: It felt really good. She was like "oh, I"m so proud of you". And I'm like "ohhh"."*

Several things appear important in order for goal setting to be a successful part of the mentoring relationship. First, the goal should be clearly defined and should be meaningful for the young person. Second, a written contract that was signed by the mentee and the mentor appeared to make the goal more tangible and fostered the third point, which was that the mentor needed to actively follow-up with the young person (e.g. by bringing along the contract every week and checking in with them how it was going). Fourth, young people enjoyed and responded to mentors who were willing to set goals themselves as part of the process, and this appeared to build the feelings of reciprocity and fun in the relationship. Finally, encouragement and positive feedback on completion, or part-completion of the goal was important. Where these attributes were present, goal setting contributed to fostering close relationships, as well as providing developmental outcomes for mentees.

Summary – Relationship Qualities

In line with mentoring literature, the findings from the current study suggest that the relationship that developed between young people and their mentors played an important role in influencing outcomes for young people. Consider Rosie, who rejected the structured activities in mentoring, preferring to spend time talking and building trust with her mentor. It was only after this trust was developed that Rosie was able to engage with setting a goal – because the goal was highly personal and therefore meaningful to her. Through the process of defining and achieving her goal with her mentor's support, Rosie was able to experience success, and internalise the feelings of self-worth that her mentor had been encouraging. For others, while the mentoring relationship was enjoyable and satisfying, it did not lead to perceived change.

These findings align with recent evidence from the mentoring literature, which suggest that mentoring which is school-based and time-limited should not rely solely on a developmental or relationship-based model of mentoring. Rather, a balance between a relationship model and one that focusses on instrumental gains such as goal-setting, anger management and communication skills as described by participants is more likely to be effective (Lyons et al., 2019; McQuillin et al., 2013).

Conclusion

This chapter has described the attributes of the program and its participants that influence young people's experience of the Ismo mentoring program in Australia, and how these attributes are perceived to influence the mentoring relationships from the mentees' perspective.

The results of the previous study described in Chapter 4 left unanswered questions, both about the mechanisms of change that lead to positive outcomes for young people, and about the mentoring relationship and its influence of those outcomes, and its role in a school-based program.

This study has shown that there are several attributes of the program and its participants that influence how young people experience mentoring. Program processes such as the way the program is introduced to them, the matching process, the types of activities undertaken and the way the match or program ends were all perceived to influence experience. Further, mentees' expectation of mentoring and their help-seeking behaviour both within and external to the mentoring program also contributed, as did certain attributes of mentors.

Unlike the first study, where relationship quality had only a weak relationship with some outcome variables, in this qualitative exploration the mentoring relationship was described by mentees as being central to whether or not they experienced positive, lasting outcomes from the program. Specifically, when mentoring relationships were reciprocal, judgement free, trusting and had a developmental focus they appeared to catalyse both short- and longer-term outcomes. Conversely, mentoring relationships that did not share these attributes, whilst still valued by mentees, plateaued at a 'comfortable' level and did not appear to lead to meaningful change.

These findings shed light on the somewhat unexpected results of the quantitative study in that *all* mentoring relationships were valued by mentees. However, here we find that only relationships with certain attributes led to positive adjustment. These findings highlight the importance of the mentoring relationship in influencing positive change yet indicate that the relationship itself is not the catalyst of change. Rather, there are many different aspects of mentoring that influence how the mentoring relationship develops - and certain qualities of the developing relationship that need to be present in order for it to move to a place where positive change can occur.

Wanting to understand more about the mentoring relationship in the context of the Ismo program, the next study in this research project was designed to build on these findings. The focus is shifted to the mentors experience, and exploring what aspects of this experience influence the mentoring relationship, and ultimately contribute to mentee outcomes.

"The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, not the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when you discover that someone else believes in you and is willing to trust you with a friendship."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson highlights the importance of reciprocity in relationships; suggesting that the true gift of friendship is not in what is said, or done, but the joy that comes from knowing that another person trusts and believes in you. In the previous chapter, this was articulated by mentees who described feelings that can be likened to Emerson's 'spiritual inspiration' when their mentor was willing to show them that trust and belief.

Emerson could just as easily be speaking about the mentor's own experience, for mentoring is not a one-way relationship with a giver and a receiver; mentors can and do, experience fulfilment and positive outcomes of their own through mentoring. Moreover, they bring to mentoring relationships their own individual differences, expectations and needs.

Thus, this chapter now turns the focus to the mentor's experiences of mentoring, and how their perceptions of these experiences influence the mentoring relationship.

Research Question

The research question for this phase of the research was developed to build on previous findings focussing on the influence of volunteer mentors in the mentee-derived theory of change. This phase thus focusses in on *mentor attributes* and how they may impact the mentoring relationship, specifically:

> *What are the different attributes of mentors that are perceived to influence the mentoring relationship?*
>
> This research question is explored inductively from the mentor's perspective.

Ethical Considerations

Low risk ethics approval was granted for all phases of the project by Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) on January 12th 2015 (MUHREC LR CF14/3822 – 2014001998 – The Evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (Ismo). Copies of all ethics approval documents can be found at Appendix 2 – Ethics Approval .

Consent

Mentors of the mentees who consented to take part in the qualitative interviews (see previous chapter) were sent an email requesting them to indicate interest, along with an explanatory statement and consent form (see Appendix 3 – Consent Forms and Explanatory Statements). This consent was obtained shortly after the mentoring intervention had taken place. All mentors initially consented to taking part, however one mentor did not attend the pre-arranged meeting and was unable to be contacted to follow-up. After informal consent was obtained via email, mentors were each contacted by the researcher to organise an interview time. Prior to commencement of the interview, the explanatory statement was explained by the

researcher and the consent form signed by the mentor. Participants were advised that they could withdraw consent at any stage of the research process.

Confidentiality

To protect the confidentiality of participants, data was anonymised as much as possible, including any references to specific events, geographic locations or other features that could be linked to an individual participant. Participants were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym; if they did not wish to choose the researcher chose a name for them which was used when transcribing the interviews and in all data files and documents.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability for the qualitative research component of this thesis are discussed in detail in the previous chapter (see p.115). These discussions include researcher's position, peer debriefing and reflective journaling.

Procedure

Semi-structured interviews

The interview guide for this study was developed with the aim of eliciting information about mentors' experiences of the mentoring program focussing on exploring how mentor attributes influenced the mentoring relationship, and ultimately impacted outcomes for young people.

As per the previous study, questions were developed based on the theoretical underpinnings of the study, as well as previous research and discussions with Raise program coordinators.

Interviews were conducted between 30 October and 3 December 2015 at various locations that were chosen by mentors. These locations included Raise Foundation's office in Sydney, a school, mentor's workplaces, mentor's homes, a café and the researcher's own home. These spaces differed in terms of privacy, interruptions, and distractions. For example, the interview undertaken at a café had frequent interruptions (meals being delivered, distractions from other customers); interviews undertaken at the Raise office in Sydney were in a private meeting room that was quiet and private. Interviews were recorded using a small hand-held Olympus Digital Voice Recorder WS-639. I made some minor hand-written notes during the interviews; mostly as 'markers' which as described by Hesse-Biber (2017, p.128) are 'important pieces of information that respondents may offer as they talk about something else' but avoided extensive note-taking so that I could be fully present and engaged with the person in front of me.

Table 10

Mentor demographics using participant pseudonyms

State	Name	Gender	Age	Parent
1 (NSW)	Laura	F	31	No
1 (NSW)	Bianca	F	52	Yes
2 (NSW)	Troy	M	25	No
2 (NSW)	Betsy	F	72	Yes
3 (NSW)	Gabi	F	39	No
3 (NSW)	Tania	F	48	Yes
3 (NSW)	Nicole	F	53	Yes
4 (VIC)	Jolene	F	49	Yes
4 (VIC)	Steve	M	38	Yes
4 (VIC)	Barb	F	40	No

Transcription

The transcription process was described on p.125; there were no differences in the process for this phase of the research.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

The qualitative method of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to interpret the interview data. This approach has been well documented and a full explanation of how this study undertook each of the six steps described by Braun & Clarke (familiarisation, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report) was described in the previous chapter and so is not repeated here, however points of difference in the process are noted below.

General Initiation of Codes

As with the previous research study, the process that I undertook for coding was what Braun & Clarke (2013) call *complete coding*, where all data that may be of relevance or interest to the research question is coded, and the process of reducing the data is done later in the process. The research question for this study was more focussed than the previous study as I wanted to hone in on what influences mentors themselves had on the mentoring relationship – their personalities, their expectations, their experience and their needs. Unlike the previous study, where most of the data collected was *relevant* for coding, I quickly found that this was not the case for the current study, and large chunks of my mentor interviews were not necessarily related to the research question. This presented a potential problem - if I did not code the

data, it would not form part of my analysis, and might mean that I miss valuable information that could help to make sense of the data. Going back to Braun & Clarke's (2003) recommendation for complete coding to include data that was relevant *or interesting* to the research question, I decided to code more, rather than less, knowing that I could become more discerning later in the analytical process (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This approach felt clunky initially, as it was difficult to remain focussed on the research question. In response I created two high level codes 'relevant' and 'interesting' which helped bring clarity and focus to the coding process whilst allaying my fears that I would be missing important information.

Codes were developed using MaxQDA (V20) which was helpful to make sense of the large amount of data that I was coding. Initially over 750 codes were generated from the 10 interviews; these were then reviewed and refined, and similar codes were combined and re-named as necessary. As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2013) once the entire dataset had been coded, I went back to earlier interviews and modified codes where necessary.

Searching for Themes

Through the process of coding, I began to organise the codes into early themes. As with the previous study, this process was iterative, and involved moving backwards and forwards between each interview to ensure consistency and minimise double-up of codes that meant the same thing.

Once I had developed the crude initial themes through the process of coding, I used a feature of MAXQDA called 'creative coding' to further develop the themes. This feature allowed me to graphically organise codes to visualise, test and refine relationships. This was similar to the manual process that I described in the previous

study, with the additional benefit of being able to easily save individual coding maps such as in Figure 9. The ability to go back to earlier thought processes was an important part of the refining process.

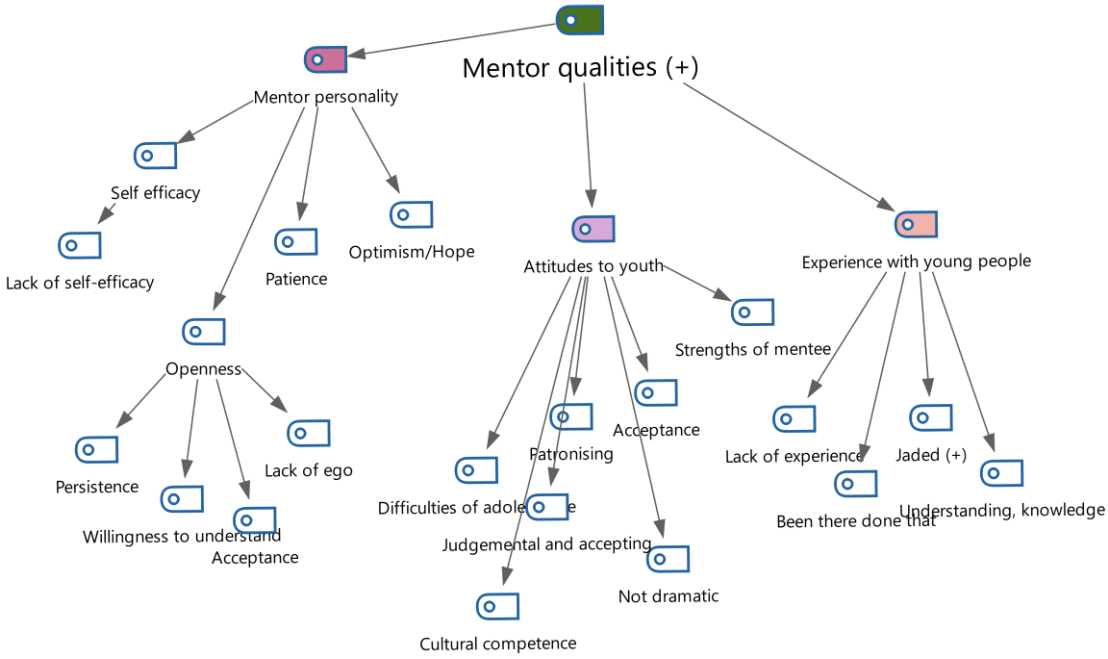

Figure 9. An early creative coding map for initial theme 'mentor qualities'.

Reviewing Themes

Through this process I had sixty-five codes grouped into fifteen candidate themes. I then began the process of refining the definition of existing codes, and re-mapping the potential themes and sub-themes. While the creative coding feature of MaxQDA had been extremely useful to date, I found that I needed to return to the tried and true method of writing down the themes and codes onto index cards and blue-tacking them onto my study wall. Explaining the process to subject-matter

experts helped to crystallise the flow and grouping of the data in a way that made sense.

At this stage of reviewing the themes, I returned to groups of codes that I had clustered together under 'interesting but not relevant to the research question'. One of these groups described program processes such as matching, the amount of information provided to mentors about their mentees, and support from the program coordinator. Whilst this data was not immediately relevant to the research question, it was evident that these program practices interacted with mentor attributes to influence the trajectory of the mentee-mentor relationship, and thus they were included as a theme.

Defining and Naming Themes

See p.131 for a description of this process, which did not differ from the previous study.

Findings

Four main themes were identified, each with a series of sub-themes. These themes were developed to answer the research question *"what mentor attributes are perceived to influence the mentoring relationship?"*

The four themes identified were "Program Practices", "Who they are", "How they felt" and "What they did" Themes and their sub-themes are shown at Table 11.

Table 11

Themes, sub-themes and descriptions

Theme	Sub-theme	Description
Program Practices	Matching Knowing Why Support	Structural aspects of the program that were referred to by mentors in a way that indicated that they had influenced their experience in some way.
Who they are	Dispositions Experience with young people	Mentor attributes that were relatively fixed (e.g. that they entered the program with and were not influenced by program practices).
How they feel	Motivation Attitudes to youth	Mentor attributes that contributed to how they felt about the role and/or their mentee
What they do	Pre-Trust	Pre-Trust; how mentors acted in the relationship before indicators that trust was present as perceived by mentors
	Post-Trust	Post-Trust; how mentors acted in the relationship after indicators that trust was present as perceived by mentors

Overview

Overall, these findings provide insight into how different mentor attributes influence the quality of the relationship developed between mentees and mentors in a school-based mentoring program. This research aimed to shed light on what role mentor attributes played in the development of close, purposeful mentoring relationships that provide the opportunity for young people to experience positive development. Figure 10 below presents a thematic map that describes the process through which mentor attributes interact with the program structure to influence how the mentoring relationship develops.

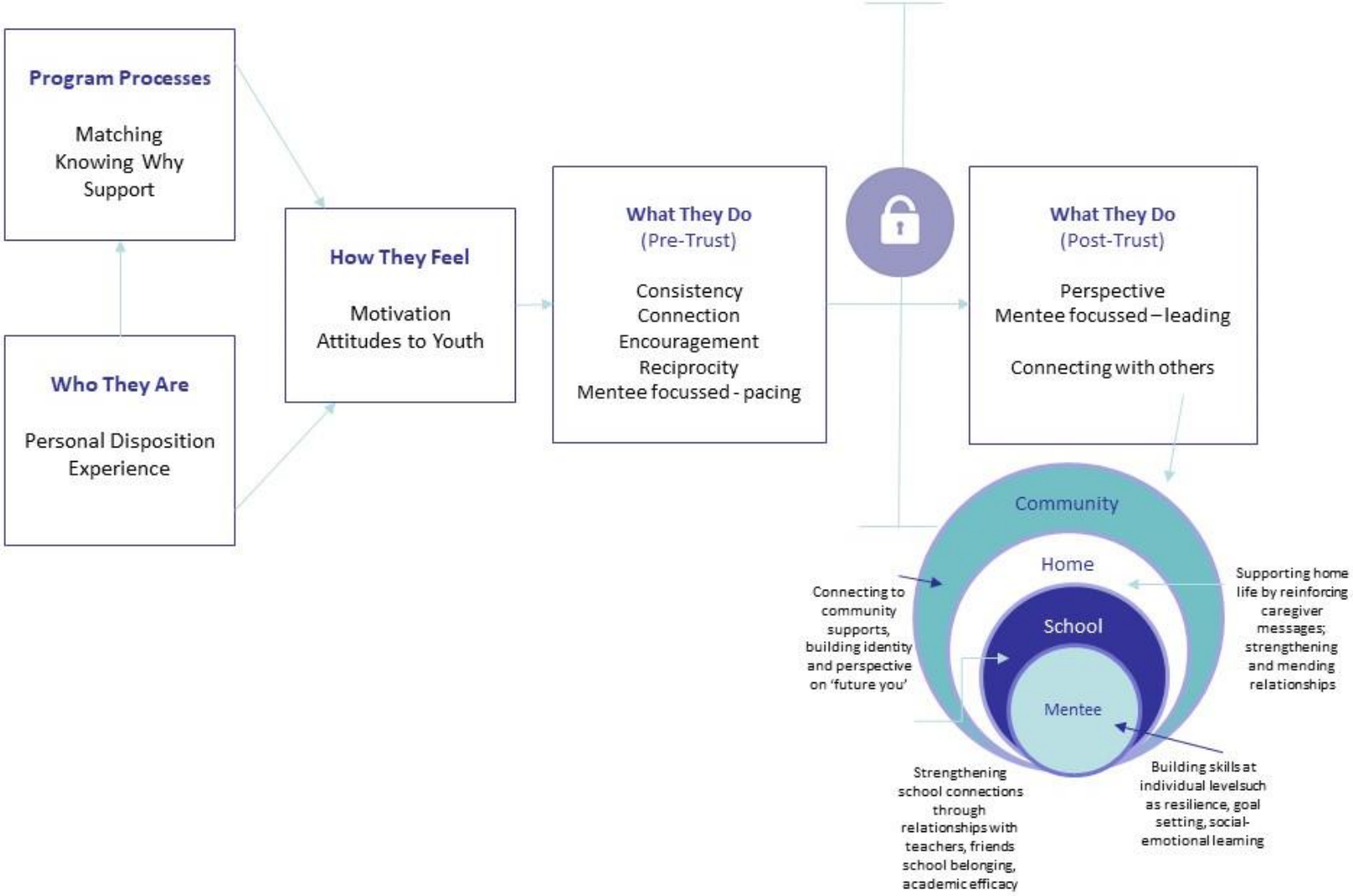

Figure 10. Thematic map: how mentor attributes are perceived to influence the mentoring relationship

Theme 1 – Program Processes

As mentioned previously, while this theme does not relate directly to the research question, it was developed through the coding process where *interesting* data but not necessarily *relevant* data were coded alongside data that was relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One of the strengths of inductive qualitative research is the possibility of finding answers to questions that have not yet been asked (Green et al., 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2017). From a research-practitioner perspective, it was certainly of interest to consider how aspects of the program interacted with the mentor experience, and ultimately influenced the relationship with their mentee. Further, program administration and supervision have long been demonstrated to be important in influencing stronger, longer lasting outcomes for young people (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Herrera, 2000; Pryce & Keller, 2012).

Matching

In the mentee interviews, it was found that young people were more likely to feel positive about mentoring if they had been able to have input in the matching process, or have some understanding of why they had been matched with their mentor (see p.138). This supports the "voice and choice" framework described by Pryce, Kelly and Guidone (2014) where youth involvement and shared decision making is linked to better outcomes. Empirical evidence on mentee-mentor matching suggests that programs that have a systematic approach to mentoring that includes matching based on interest achieve better outcomes for mentees (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011), as well as programs where mentees or mentors had a say in who they were matched with (Pryce et al., 2014). This was reflected in the current study, where Troy

and Jodie appeared to be unaware of either any type of systematic approach to matching, or the reason they were matched with their mentees.

> *I think it was random allocation. Like I think the facilitator said the students can nominate who they would like to be paired up with, but I don't think Ren chose me... (Troy, Ren's mentor).*

> *Well at first because we weren't really aligned. So I think we were both hesitant to show our true selves to each other. So it just took us a little bit longer to get there. If we had of known we were going to be together from the start... but I was meant to have um, some girl, and he was meant to have someone else. And his mentor didn't turn up, and my mentee didn't turn up. So we went together. (Barb, Bryan's mentor).*

In contrast, Laura describes the 'meet and greet' when she first met Rosie, which led to an instant connection and a mutual, informal 'choosing' of each other

> *And then I told her something about... like ... something about when Easter comes along, it was something I hadn't told anyone before, but when Easter comes along I sometimes buy stashes of little eggs, just in case I don't get any eggs! And I always do [both laughing] but just in case I want to have my own stash. And she was like 'oh my god, I do that as well!' and I was like 'no way!'. And then I had to move on and she was like 'I really like you' and I was like 'Yeah, even if we don't get matched up, we have to talk a lot' [laughing]. Yeah, and I felt that connection straight away. And I*

saw her later in when [Program Counsellor] was going around and talking to people, and I saw her talking to [Program Counsellor] and I was kind of hoping that she would look in my direction and she did [excited]. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).

There was both vulnerability and reciprocity here for Laura and Rosie, and an immediate connection where they both wanted to be matched with each other. They had an instant, and easy connection – unlike Barb and Bryan and Troy and Ren who were just 'randomly allocated' which may have impacted the way that their relationships developed. The lack of communication to Barb and Troy from program staff may have also been a factor here. When Gabi was matched with Amy, the program coordinator discussed the decision with her, asking for her input 'are you ok with it?', and sharing the reason, e.g., that she 'might be a calming effect'. This conversation appeared to be important in building Gabi's trust, and also supporting her efficacy in the relationship.

Ah, so [PC] did pair us together, and then afterwards she said to me are you ok with it, and she said her thinking was that I was a bit of a hyper personality so I might be the calming effect there. There's a great trust that [PC] knows what she is doing. Even though it was her first year, that she knows what she is doing and she gets it and she is making informed decisions and I was like yes, cool. And I was like 'thank god' [to be paired with Amy].

Knowing Why

Similar to the matching process where understanding the reason for being matched with a particular mentee was important, knowing why their mentee was in the program appeared to be helpful for some mentors. Program processes appeared variable in relation to how much information was shared with mentors about their mentee.

In most cases, mentors were not provided with specific information about their mentee, however it often became obvious through the process of getting to know them. For example, Harmony disclosed to Nicole that she was self-harming, giving Nicole a clear understanding of why she was in the program. Rosie, after a period of time also disclosed to Laura that she was experiencing bullying and disordered eating.

> *But you know, she openly discloses so there's a truancy issue, I think that as all she disclosed at that first session, basically she just didn't go to school and you could obviously I'd already seen the Deb/Amy connection [another mentee in the group], and they were quite disruptive and all this sort of stuff. So that was first, so as we grew on, and obviously there was still this level of, you know, being a 14 year old girl, um, it turned out she was quite a thinker, and quite a worrier. And so she had all these situations where even though her Dad is super supportive, he's just never there. Um, doesn't like the step mum, you know, massive family. Like all these sorts of things that you think, you know that she just kind of hides. And then she had all these issues with her friends, like one of her friends while I was there tried to commit [sic] suicide (Gabi, Amy's mentor)*

Jolene did not feel a strong need to know why her mentee was in the program, but as she got to know her, she could definitely see reasons why

> *I didn't know how much of that was meant to be divulged to us as the mentors, um... I gathered along the way that she'd certainly had issues with attendance at school, she was often not there, um, certainly very obvious anxiety issues, um and yeah, just confidence, just being able to get the work done, I think is a big part of it. She gets so caught up in probably this perfectionist state as well, and wanting to do it just right, but getting so bogged down in that..*

When the reason for participation was unclear, even as the relationship progressed, some mentors, such as Nicole and Troy struggled to understand why they were in the program.

> *She's happy, you know, she seemed like a classic teenager. I can't sort of - you know - she's, she er, wasn't sort of covered in piercings or anything, you know about the wildest thing that I could tell, she's pretty conservative as far as I could see, on the spectrum, and she um, the wildest thing that I could see was to go and get her hair coloured [shrug] (Nicole, Ellie's mentor).*

Nicole's mildly confused and questioning tone in the above quote, ending in a shrug of her shoulders may have been an indication of a deeper dissatisfaction with their relationship. The primary reason given for volunteering is 'a sense of purpose' and 'wanting to make a difference' (Condon, 2015) and where mentors cannot even see that a problem exists, it may be very difficult for them to see that they are making

a difference. Research shows that one reason that mentoring relationships fail, is that mentors are disappointed that their expectations of the mentoring experience were not met (Spencer, 2007).

Support

Another important factor in mentoring programs is training and support (Drew, Keller, Spencer, & Herrera, 2020; Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011). DuBois and colleagues found that while there was no impact of *initial* training on outcomes, the presence of ongoing training and support could double the effect size of mentee outcomes from .11 to .26 (Dubois et al., 2002). A meta-analysis of over 500 community interventions had similar results (Durlak & DuPre, 2008), suggesting that ongoing program support is equally, if not more important than initial training (McQuillin, Straight, & Saeki, 2015).

At first glance, the Ismo mentoring program appeared to 'tick the boxes' in terms of program support, providing qualified counsellors to supervise all programs, including a one hour group supervision following each mentoring session to provide support and ongoing training. However, mentors were confused about the purpose of this session, and unclear of how much they were able to say about their mentee in the group setting. Gabi demonstrates a somewhat typical ambivalence to the formal support session, in her view that it would be useful if there was a 'serious issue' to discuss, but not feeling that it was entirely relevant to her.

> *So we had clinical supervision, debriefs. So if you had a kid that did have any serious issues, then you needed that sort of support. But for me, I was like 'I don't know what to say... what do I tell everyone? She's alright, she just talks a lot!'. Um.. so yeah, I*

think, I mean. I know we talked about it and stuff, but I think even for the mentors, if you talked about it [confidentiality] at the beginning, by the end you had kind of forgotten how it worked? (Gabi, Amy's mentor)

Steve expressed concern over the perceived lack of confidentiality and felt that the support sessions were a 'wasted' opportunity.

It was sitting around the table with 15 people - at times it felt wasted. On top of that, the hardest part which it often comes back to is you know, the confidentiality. After telling them that it's meant to be 'cone of silence' - we are now going to talk about what we talked about. And I felt at times you know there could have been a number of them [mentees] that would turn around and go 'oh, they are talking about me'.

Jolene also expressed her confusion about the purpose of the support sessions.

I mean I don't think really any of us had major kind of issues, which probably made it easier, um, and I guess I was always a little unsure as to the real aim of that debrief. (Jolene, Arabella's mentor)

Several mentors spoke about informal support being important, and potentially more helpful than the formal support offered by the program. The opportunity to debrief informally with peers and connect over shared experiences 'did you talk about this, or did you talk about that?' was beneficial for Steve in a way that the formal support session had not been.

So for a number of us especially the [corporate] staff, the 5 or 6 that I would commute with, for us there was the 10 minutes of driving where we would often chat anyway. Again we were not speaking specifics, but we were talking about 'oh, this happened or.. phew, that was really quite heavy' and then we would cover off 'well, did you talk about this, or did you talk about that'. A lot of that sort of chat happened there. So for us, it was sort of well we are getting as much if not a little bit more just in our own little between 2-4 people in the car (Steve, Tom's mentor)

Likewise, Gabi was able to connect with a friend who was mentoring in the same program but a different school location, which allowed her to bounce ideas around, and also gave her the opportunity to share her excitement about mentoring with someone who was having the same experience.

And I have a friend who was doing it at [another school]. And we'd have our own sort of debrief because she was doing the full day. It was nice for us because she'd be like 'oh, I did this was this ok?' And I'd be like – I think so, you know, it's a little bit unchartered waters, so you just sort of want to test that someone else is like 'yeah, I think that's ok, I would have said that' or whatever. So it's nice to have that follow on conversation as well outside, because I was quite excited about it (Gabi, Amy's mentor).

For some mentors, particularly those who had limited experience coming into the program and did not have external, informal support, the formal session was valuable. Despite not having any *"serious conflict"* with Rosie, Laura found it useful

to hear about others' experiences and receive ideas and validation from the group to support her relationship.

> *Oh that was great, it was really helpful. Um it was .. sometimes you kind of wanted a bit more time to go into a bit more detail. But the fact that [PC] was there and willing to listen and go into more detail if we needed it, that was fantastic. Um, yeah it was great hearing about what it was like for other mentors and how those relationships were going. Particularly the things that they were struggling with. Even though I never really faced some of that really serious conflict or stuff with Rosie, it was really helpful to know what other people were coping with just in case something like that happened and you could go 'oh, I remember so and so talking about this' or 'oh, I could try that out'. Or the fact, you know if we were ,, a number of times Rosie mentioned something that I didn't quite know where to go with, or how to take it into the next session or whether I should take it into the next one... And taking it into supervision and getting everyone's opinions was just so invaluable. So invaluable. Yeah, so it was essential to have that afterwards. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).*

The role of the program coordinator outside of the support sessions was also valuable. Nicole describes how the program coordinator noticed that a match was struggling and was able to facilitate a change of mentor.

> *Yeah! And I think it all turned on the fact that they were both um... ... Eastern European and um, so was the lady who was a bit older*

who was mentoring her. And I think, in a funny sort of way, it sort of reminded her of her mother, or a family member or something? And there was something about it. And apparently, she was just ... very unhappy, and [PC] was just, you could see in her body language and things. And [PC] said to me, um look, I'd like you to try, I'm going to move this girl to somebody else, she [the mentor] can only come every second week now anyway, so how about you slot in and see how you go with this, and I said great, OK (Nicole, Ellie's mentor).

Nicole also talks about the role that the program coordinator played in bringing the group together and helping the young people and mentors to all feel comfortable, but also ensuring that the group dynamic was respectful. The role of program staff in noticing 'mis-matching' and supporting positive relationships has been noted in previous research (Pryce et al., 2014).

Oh, [PC] was marvellous, she's fantastic, I love her. We had worked before together and she's just brilliant. Makes you feel very comfortable and supported right on top of everything. The kids also just really loved her as that sort of figure you know who is in charge and kind and just open to anything and not strict but doesn't allow silly buggers to go on to much. If the boys are wrestling after too much sugar [laughing] (Nicole, Ellie's mentor).

Gabi didn't feel that she needed a lot of support, but when she became worried about an issue that Amy had talked to her about, she was able to get support from her

PC, meaning that she didn't take on board the worry of it herself – she could hand it over to an 'expert'.

> *So there are a couple of things that I mentioned to [PC], for example, I just said to her 'I just have this concern, about Amy, it's happened a couple of times, about sexual predators'. She's had a couple of incidents. One, you know, stuff happens. But two, it starts to become a 'thing'. I just needed someone to know that. It might not mean anything, it might just be bad luck, but I didn't want to be the one making that call. (Gabi, Amy's mentor).*

Overall there were mixed feelings about the support session, however it appeared that the PC plays an important role, both in the group dynamic and being able to support mentors with issues that are beyond their training and/or expertise. However, the lack of clarity about the purpose of the formal support sessions may contribute to mentor dissatisfaction, and distrust of program processes.

This theme has explored the aspects of the program that mentors spoke indicated were influential in the way that they experienced the program. It appears that these program practices vary across individual programs, however it is likely that there are other attributes that contribute to their influence, not least what the mentor brings to the equation.

Theme 2 – Who They Are

This theme describes the personal attributes that a mentor brings with them into the mentoring relationship that are relatively fixed. These 'fixed' attributes include personal dispositions of the mentor as well as their experience. They are

likely to influence how other aspects of the program are experienced, including the structural aspects of the program discussed above, but also how mentors feel about their experience of mentoring, and how that influences what they do in the mentoring relationship which are discussed later in this chapter.

Personal dispositions

Mentors all bring individual differences in disposition to mentoring which influences both their experience, and their relationship with their mentee. Dispositional traits such as personality and self-efficacy have been explored in the mentoring literature, primarily in terms of how mentors approach and engage with mentoring (Bozionelos, Bozionelos, Polychroniou, & Kostopoulos, 2014; Niehoff, 2006). However, there is little research into how these dispositional traits impact the mentoring relationship.

There were three main dispositional characteristics that were evident in the data, these being openness, persistence, and self-efficacy. Openness is a personality trait that has previously been shown to be influential in the mentoring relationship when looking at mentee personality (Goldner, 2016).

Mentors who displayed openness demonstrated an ability and willingness to be flexible with their experience of mentoring, and in particular with their mentees. At times this was evidenced by a willingness to 'go with the flow' and trust in the process of mentoring, as described by Barb who spoke about a kind of alchemy at work in the matching process.

> *Sometimes, you know, I don't know whether you believe in God, or spirit, or the world, but I think somehow you just end up matched perfectly! You know, everyone seemed to be matched really well*

with who they got. I looked at who was matched with who and thought 'oh yeah, that's a good match' (Barb, Bryan's mentor).

Openness was also demonstrated through a mentor's ability to accept that they were not responsible for a mentee's behaviour during the session. Mentors demonstrating the trait of openness tended not to take credit or blame for their mentee's behaviour, because the focus is on the mentee rather than themselves. This is embodied in Jolene's acceptance of Arabella's changeability and could help to explain how she was able to distance herself, or not take it personally when Arabella was not in a communicative mood.

How the session went very much depended on her mood. If she was in a good mood that day, then you got more from her. If she wasn't doing so well then sometimes I got nothing! (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).

Jolene also spoke about a deliberate focus on being open and non-judgmental with their mentee, along with an understanding that this would be an important part of developing trust in the relationship.

And little bit by little bit her finding out who I was, and me finding out who she was, and how I could best relate to her and perhaps her learning that she could ask anything of me and that I wasn't going to.. be judgemental in any way (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).

Also present in this trait was the willingness to accept difference. Laura, Rosie's mentor, reflects on an internal struggle over a clash of values between her and Rosie relating to racism. Ultimately, Laura's ability to suspend judgement and

remain curious and open meant that this clash became an opportunity for growth rather than a roadblock for their relationship.

> *She ... she talked about some of the views she had about some um things that I didn't agree with. Um and I could see why she had those kind of views, but I kind of naively thought that because we got along so well and we shared so many experiences that I thought we would share similar opinions about things and it didn't turn out that way, and I just in myself really kind of struggled to come to terms with that. And to reconcile that you can get along with someone really well and not have the same opinion about things. But that's alright. I didn't have to change her opinion, it didn't make her a bad person or anything like that. And it was kind of.. um.. it was really integral to my experience to learn how to sit with that. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).*

Self-efficacy was another identified mentor characteristic, with a number of mentors citing the reason they were drawn to mentoring as being that they felt that they had something to offer, and that mentoring a young person was within their realm of expertise. There was a sense that they would be able to manage what was required of them.

> *And I thought, you know well maybe if I can just be a set of ears for somebody who doesn't have that anywhere else in their world, um then that's great. I can easily do that! (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).*

Self-efficacy has been conceptualised as a belief in one's ability to complete a given task (Bandura, 1977) and has a common theoretical foundation with as

dispositional optimism, a general predisposition to positive interpretation and expectations of positive outcomes (Scheier & Carver, 1992). Both optimism and self-efficacy are linked to higher commitment and engagement with goal attainment and coping in the face of challenges and setbacks (Bandura, 1977). Self-esteem may be important in the mentoring relationship to overcome obstacles, and has been previously demonstrated to enhance mentor's feelings of closeness towards their proteges (Parra et al., 2002).

Self-efficacy was related to mentor-described characteristics of persistence where there was a demonstrated ability to keep going even when things felt difficult or uncomfortable.

> *The best thing about our relationship I think, just the fun that we had each Wednesday, it was always fun.* ***It was hard at the start, the first few weeks...*** *but after that, it was just fun (Barb, Bryan's mentor)*

Laura described how she learned the skill of persistence through her commitment to Rosie, and the mentoring relationship. This focus on the mentee is found to be important in the theme *Motivation* described later in this chapter, and may buffer uncomfortable or negative feelings that arise in the relationship.

> *I feel more capable in my ability to see things through, to commit to things that make me uncomfortable. Because there were lots of times, even though we got along so well, um that it was uncomfortable. Particularly when she was talking about things that make you want to whisk her away and take care of her yourself! And knowing that there was so much that you could do if*

the relationship was allowed to continue past the two terms, and that sort of thing (Laura, Rosie's mentor).

As demonstrated in the previous chapter (see p.163), mentees will sometimes 'test' their mentors to see whether they are willing and able to accept them without judgement. Leaning into a conversation that feels uncomfortable is important, and mentors need to have the ability to persist despite their discomfort.

I mean I think if they start opening up to you about something, they are opening up for a reason, they want to talk about it, so you know, to avoid that discussion, even though it might be a bit sort of awkward is not what's best for them (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).

On the other hand, too much persistence or focus on tasks that were not valued by mentees could be detrimental to the mentoring relationship. For example, if a mentor is focussed on completing assigned tasks and fails to pick up on their mentee's cues, this could lead to disengagement. Jolene describes a stage in her relationship with Arabella where she was trying to connect her with the structured program activities, to no avail.

When we did come to the goal setting session, um, we went away and I could tell already she didn't really want to look at the book or whatever was written in the book. And so I said 'let's just pick something really simple - just to give it a go'. And so, she chose, she wanted to read more. So I tried very hard to work with her on that, because I didn't know if she was a big reader, and so I thought well this is a good one because she'll be enthusiastic about it and she might be able to come up with something. But even that, you know

> *we started to work our way through it, but it was almost like this glaze-over and she sort of withdrew from that. And I did re-visit it a couple of times. I'd go 'oh, how are you going with your reading, what are you up to? I know we talked about this many books by this amount of time, how's it going?' And so, yeah, if it sounded like work then... (Jolene, Arabella's mentor)*

While Jolene persisted to some extent, she demonstrated the ability to pick up on Arabella's non-verbal cues *"I could tell already she didn't want to look at the book"* and adapted the activity to suit *"so I said let's just pick something really simple"*. However, even this simple, mentee-led task was not engaging for Arabella: *"it was almost like this glaze-over and she sort of withdrew from that"*. At no stage did Arabella verbalise her preferences. Jolene's ability to read and respond to her body language allowed her to navigate the space between gentle encouragement to learn the skills that were being taught, and going too far into something that felt boring and 'school-like' for her mentee.

Personal characteristics such as openness, self-efficacy and persistence were evident in the data, and as suggested previously, may not only influence the way that certain aspects of the program are received, but are also likely to impact the trajectory of the developing relationship. Something else that mentors bring with them to mentoring is their experience (or lack of) with young people, or similar mentoring roles in their communities or workplaces.

Experience

Mentors bring with them varying degrees of experience – some have volunteered or worked with young people in the past, or are currently studying

psychology, youth work or another related field. Others are currently parenting or have parented adolescents themselves; some have no experience with young people at all. Mentor experience has been found to be important, with mentors who have experience or come from helping professions being more effective than those with little or no experience (Dubois et al., 2002).

Pawson (2006) has previously discussed the importance of mentors being experienced in a way that mentees can relate to as being an important component of a strong mentoring relationship from the mentee's perspective. In the current study, having 'walked the walk' and come through the other side of parenting a teenager helped mentors to feel efficacy in the relationship. They were able to use their experience to give perspective, and not to take things personally or panic about the issues that their mentees were experiencing.

> *And I know that she's so much like my daughter, same sort of rebellious tough attitude, my daughter was the same. So I get that there is that sort of love/hate thing that happens there for a while. Give her two years, she will be a different person (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).*

> *I love kids, I love teenagers, I've got two teenagers myself, so.. yeah. I know what all of the issues have been that their friends have dealt with (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).*

Likewise, Nicole found that the knowledge she had gained from bringing up her own children was helpful in making connections with her mentee.

I have teenage kids; I know what they are interested in. It's music, it's the phone, it's your apps, it's sport, it's movies, it's tv shows um... you know, you've got to find what's their thing.

As suggested by Pawson (2006), another type of experience that appeared to be useful was whether mentors had 'been there, done that' in relation to their mentee's issues. While Nicole had experience in raising teenagers, she wasn't able to relate to the challenges that Ellie had, explaining that she was "different from my kids" and that left her feeling unsure of how to help. On the other hand, Steve's children were still very young, however his own experiences as a teenager helped him to understand and support Tom who was experiencing bullying at school and found this very useful.

I also was able to talk to him about bulling, and that I had been through similar sort of things. Most of the topics I was able to give a personal experience to. Not all of them, but a lot of them. So that was easy. (Steve, Tom's mentor)

Likewise, Laura did not have any children, but her lived experience of mental health meant she was able to respond with empathy and confidence when Rosie brought up feelings of depression and anxiety. Similarly, Gabi was able to use her memories of being a teenager to direct where the conversation went (and did not go).

I just didn't want to hound her about school, you know. Because I know when I was in high school that was the worst thing you can do, right. Oh like 'you don't understand'. And school sucks, right! (Gabi, Amy's mentor).

Gabi was also able to use her own experience of educational pathways to encourage her mentee to keep attending school despite Amy's assertion that her grades were too low to be able to get into the University course that she wanted, and that she might as well "give it all up".

> *And I just said 'Amy, you've just got to get through to the end of next year, then you can go and do whatever you want! You don't have to go to school, you can go to TAFE or Pathways'. And I just said honestly - school is just about getting through at this point. At a pass level is all you need. And it doesn't, I told her I never went to Uni. In reality it can be harder, but there are ten different paths, you know! I have a sister who is like 'it's only this way'. And I'm like.. yeah, see how you go with that [laughs]. You know. But you know that's just experience that there's not just one path to anything. (Gabi, Amy's mentor).*

The other level of experience that mentors talked about was general life experience, both in a mentoring capacity through their workplace or communities, or by demonstrating a high level of understanding about life's challenges in general.

> *I've always done tutoring and um a lot of academic stuff to help in general, whether through university or work or what have you (Steve, Tom's mentor).*

Experience was also demonstrated in the ability to be able to look beyond the semantics of what mentees were saying to make sense of what was happening. For example, Harmony's mentor was able to make the link between her truancy issues and her perfectionism and anxiety. This was helpful not only because she was able to

be non-judgemental of the truancy issue, but she was also able to help Harmony to understand her anxiety about coming to school.

Jolene demonstrated a similar level of understanding with Arabella as described in the quote below.

> *I think she wanted to be diligent, I think she had all wonderful intentions of getting everything done, but I'm not sure that she was capable of driving that and sticking to that without the anxiety kind of getting in the way of it and getting caught up in 'oh how am I going to do this?'. And then procrastinating because of it.. and time slipping by... and all of those sorts of things (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).*

In contrast, Troy and Betsy who took their mentee's 'bad' behaviour at face value rather than being able to consider and understand what was driving it which led to greater judgement and frustration with their mentees. Jolene and Tania's willingness to look beyond the behaviour to see what could have been driving it gave them more efficacy in terms of being able to help them.

> *I mean she sort of knows what she wants to do, the first time we met she said 'oh, I want to be a surgeon and I want to do this and that'. And, 'I know I'm smart. People keep telling me I'm smart'. So she knew she kind of knew all of that, it's just that her head was so full of stuff that she couldn't, it was just all spinning around and she couldn't really put it all together. And the truancy and missing school was a function of just getting into that cycle of missing school.. not doing your work... not wanting to hand it in..*

failing... well I might as well not go, and it just kept on going round and round. So, that's where we focussed [on the perfectionism]. (Tania, Harmony's mentor).

Overall, mentor experience appeared to be important in a number of ways. There appeared to be a strong interaction between experience and self-efficacy, particularly in relation to those mentors who had parented (or were parenting) adolescents themselves.

Theme 3: How they feel

As well as their personal dispositions and experience, mentors also bring with them certain motivations, expectations, and attitudes to young people. How they feel has the potential to be influenced by program processes such as matching, understanding the purpose of the relationship and program support, as well as their own personal dispositions and previous experience.

Motivation

Motivation for mentoring appeared to play an important role in predicting both mentee and mentor satisfaction and was also related to how the mentoring relationship develops. A study by Wu (2014) looked at how volunteer motivation predicted relationship approach, and found that a mix of self-oriented (egoistic) and other oriented (altruistic) motivations predicted the best relationship approach. Likewise, in the context of the current study, it was found that motivations could be (and usually were) a mixture of ego-driven *and* altruistic, a combination that has been argued is the most realistic, and ultimately the most desirable (Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1998).

For example, Steve describes having few expectations of mentoring, however noted that he would like to *"get something out of it",* in terms of understanding teenagers better in preparation for his own experience of parenting (e.g., ego-driven motivation). Steve was also motivated by the thought of supporting a young person through their own journey, demonstrating a mixture of egoistic and altruistic motives. Interestingly, previous research has shown that when motivation for mentoring was to enhance a mentor's understanding of youth, there was an increase in quality of relationship despite the seemingly 'egoistical' motivation (Spencer, Collins, Ward, & Smashnaya, 2010).

> *So what did I expect... I don't think I expected to have any major wins or anything, I guess I expected to have a kid that you would get a connection with by the end of it, and that it would have been a journey for them rather than just for me. But also I expected to get something out of it, a bit of insight for me bringing my kids up, to understand what teenagers are going through now (Steve, Tom's mentor).*

In the current study, the key differentiator in motivation was found in the mentor's focus, which was either (a) fulfilling a need, (b) making a difference or (c) supporting a young person. Mentors who fell into the "I'm here for me" category had a specific purpose for volunteering that was related to their own needs (for example, wanting to learn more about young people to equip themselves with skills to better relate to young people in their own lives, either currently or in the future). In the second category, "I'm here to make a difference" mentors were motivated by their intrinsic need to contribute to some kind of transformation for mentored youth. The third category, "I'm here for the young person" describes mentors whose focus

throughout the mentoring process was on supporting the individual mentee who they were assigned to.

In the first category "I'm here for me", mentors tended to be pragmatic about mentee outcomes. In general terms, these mentors were generally satisfied with their experience, and persisted with the relationship even when there was no visible or meaningful change for the young person. However, they were less likely to take a proactive role in relationship development, being content to let the relationship plateau and stay at a 'comfortable' level rather than encouraging their mentee to develop.

> *He loved playing Uno, and he didn't really want to talk about other stuff. I was happy to play, although I wasn't happy when he cheated! We had fun, and he turned up every week which must have meant he was getting something out of it (Barb, Bryan's mentor).*

> *But you know, I mean the sheer fact that I couldn't see any massive difference, it didn't bother me, because I also didn't see any major decline - so that's a good thing [laughing] (Nicole, Ellie's mentor).*

Nicole's response was typical of this somewhat passive attitude towards the mentoring relationship, where mentors felt that turning up and having their mentee turn up was all that was required for a successful relationship. This contrasts with the second category of motivation which is 'I'm here for the young person'. This category was defined by motivations being not only altruistic (some mentors in this category also had egoistic motivations) but very clearly focussed on the needs of the young person they were assigned to, whatever those needs were.

"There were many times when I had to bite my tongue. Um, but look I guess, you know I just tried to go in with a very set mindset, ***which was it's about Ivy****". (Gabi, Amy's mentor).*

I mean you could tell from the first session right, she was a talker so that was ok. So then ***my job was to step back and listen*** *(Gabi, Amy's mentor).*

"I don't know. I think I was just on her side. I wasn't saying 'oh, good on you' for doing something bad. But I didn't come down hard on her or anything like that. I mean I can't imagine any mentor doing that, coming down hard on a mentee, that's not our role. ***Our role is to be there for them****. I just um, I was just on her side. Interested, and talking about stuff". (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).*

Mentors in this category were able to persist through challenges by staying very focussed on the needs of the young person. Whilst they appreciated feedback and knowing that they had made a difference, this was not their driving force.

Well it's probably often the case of it doesn't really matter who it is. It's just someone that is paying them that attention that they don't get elsewhere. So.. it's... I guess they are going to be receptive to it. (Tania, Harmony's mentor).

It appears that when mentors were focussed on their mentee's needs as motivation for volunteering, they took a more proactive role in the developing relationship and actively sought ways to deepen connection and foster growth for their mentee. Being motivated by the needs of their individual mentee, means that

they don't *need* to see change, or be the creator of change, but were able to accept them as they are.

> *Now that I think about it I am surprised at the amount of insight that I had in the program [laughing]. Um, I kind of felt like um, that wasn't even an option. Because it wasn't about me, it had to be about her. And if I held back then she would lose out. And it was my job to make sure that the separation was ok for her. And if I was going to fall apart that was my business, but I couldn't let that influence her and how she reacted (Laura, Rosie's mentor).*

The third type of motivation was a broader kind of altruism, where mentors signed up for the program because they wanted to *make a difference*. Mentors in this category were more focussed on mentee outcomes, and more likely to become dissatisfied if relationships did not become close, or they did not understand why their mentee was in the program. Troy became involved in mentoring through a work program and was motivated to volunteer by the thought of being a pivotal, or important change in someone's life. His intentions were clearly good; however it was difficult for him to reconcile his motivation with the reality of his mentee Ren, who did not appear to have any obvious need for Troy, and from Troy's perspective was not particularly engaged with the mentoring process. Troy acknowledged that he would have liked to see a more tangible result "being a solution to a particular problem" and suggested that mentors were encouraged to find out about issues early on in the mentoring process, even though this may not be in the mentee's best interests.

I think the only reason I did it was I would hope that it makes a difference in someone's life. And if at some point or another he goes 'oh, I remember a conversation I had with this guy years ago' and that pushes him in a certain direction in life, and hopefully a good direction, then that is something good that I got out of it. I guess in terms of direct - I'll never know, like he was never under any kind of self-harm or any kind of life... critical issues right now that I know that I've made any difference to, so it's just more if it changes or shapes his future direction in life, into a good way. I just have to hope that's the case, but I'm not sure – I don't really know why he was there.

I think most mentors would say that would be a positive thing to take from mentoring [being a solution to a particular problem], so maybe we should be pushed to try and put ourselves in that situation where you can, early on, sort of try and find out if there are any issues or problems and be a part of a solution. It's quite intervening and meddling I suppose, to some extent. It's almost like you would want to say to the mentors 'look if you could push a conversation in this way, you would probably find something very positive out of it'. ***And I don't know if it would necessarily help the mentee as much, but it would be a way to give the mentor something*** *(Troy, Ren's mentor).*

Tania also articulated a need for attribution: to be recognised as the person who had made a difference.

> *Like you might have done something, but are they going to be six months down the track and still feel that sort of sense of gratitude... not gratitude, but acknowledge that that person actually helped them navigate their way through. (Tania, Harmony's mentor).*

This focus on making a difference has been shown to be detrimental in cases where no discernible difference was present. Spencer (2007) looked at 'failed' mentoring relationships and found that when mentor motivation was focussed on experiencing positive feelings through the process of helping someone else, that early termination featured when there was no perceived benefit, or when the benefit was too small compared to the time and effort it took to mentor.

All mentors came into the program because they wanted to help young people in some way. Most mentors had a mixture of egoistic and altruistic motivations; however the *focus* of their motivation was a key differentiator. Mentors whose purpose or motivation was self-focussed were less likely to take an active role in the developing relationship. Where a mentor's motivation was more broadly altruistic, in that they 'wanted to make a difference', their motivation and self-efficacy was more fragile in relationships where they could not see both a need and clear progress from their mentee. There was a subtle but clear difference in the third category of mentors, who spoke about their motivation and purpose being very clearly for the mentee with whom they had been matched. For these mentors, it did not seem to matter *why* the mentee was in the program, or whether there were clear reasons for participation. This group of mentors were willing to meet the mentee where they were at, along with taking an active role in the developing relationship.

Attitudes to Youth

Another aspect was the way that mentors felt about youth in general. The literature suggests that mentors who have general positive feelings about youth are likely to be more emotionally engaged in the relationship (Karcher, Davidson, Rhodes, & Herrera, 2010; Yoviene, 2014). Indeed, most of the mentors in this study had an overall positive attitude towards youth, with an understanding that adolescence can be a challenging time for many reasons.

> *I really feel, especially these kids who have come from, you know, unhappy families or difficult family situations you know. I've had one child who lived with a gay mum and then her partner and her partners parents and I just thought 'oh my goodness'. That's a lot, that's a lot for a teenage child to take on. It's hard. (Nicole, Ellie's mentor)*

> *I think it's hard for everybody [school], it's like a jungle. You are sort of thrown in with a whole lot of personalities. (Tania, Harmony's mentor).*

However, subtle differences in mentor's attitude to youth were noticed. Whilst most mentors understood and demonstrated the need to be non-judgemental, there was a theme of 'patronising' that crept in at times, even with mentors who had developed close, effective relationships with their mentees. For example, Gabi recalls her initial meeting of Amy:

> *Look, um the first time I met her, I mean apart from the thank god, she just talked the whole time. Because she just kind of goes blah,*

here's my life! And I thought ok, and it was all quite superficial and frivolous (Gabi, Amy's mentor).

Despite this initial judgement, Gabi was able to remain open to Amy, and was soon able to see another, deeper side of her.

So that was first, so as we grew on, and obviously there was still this level of, you know, being a 14 year old girl, um, it turned out she was quite a thinker, and quite a worrier. And so she had all these situations where even though her Dad is super supportive, he's just never there. Um, doesn't like the step mum, you know, massive family. Like all these sorts of things that you think, you know that she just kind of hides. And then she had all these issues with her friends, like one of her friends while I was there tried to commit suicide. So at face value it was you know, partly normal teenage rah rah rah, kind of stuff, but there was a lot more behind it and she was taking it quite hard and didn't know what to do. And so out of that came that she's clearly got a massive heart and she is very kind and she wants to help people. (Gabi, Amy's mentor).

Likewise, Bianca's attitude to Mabel appeared patronising at times, however their relationship was close, and she was clearly focussed on Mabel's needs, and looking up from their relationship to see how she could help her connect with other things/people in her life that would be able to help once mentoring was over – for example baseball, and encouraging her to repair her relationship with her mother.

Um, she's... well, she's quite selfish at the moment she's quite sort of, you know ego-centric at the moment, self-centered. Um, yeah,

she's I don't know, she's not that soft, she's not a soft person I don't think. Not really. Um, lives off a drama, and this whole thing with the boys being in trouble I think is, you know, sort of adrenaline pumping for her, she finds it quite exciting. Um, I think she actually is quite bright, but I don't think she has ever used her brain. (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).

On the other hand, Troy, whose focus was more on making a difference to someone rather than his mentee's actual needs, felt frustrated by Ren and what he perceived as a lack of authenticity.

He got up and spoke [at graduation]. He seemed quite willing to... I guess that's what is frustrating. He knows what is expected of him, and he knows the right things to say that will make people go 'oh yes, very good Ren'. So he got up at the graduation and said all the things that he could possibly say that were positive. So that's fine.

Some mentors displayed a deep respect and understanding of their mentee's strengths. Steve's comment below displays a deep-seated belief in Tom – that he is both intelligent capable, and just needs a little support and guidance along the way.

But he thinks so swiftly around areas of danger, of what people are doing right and wrong, he has a lot of that sort of.. he's very, he's got a great, a very adult mind in a lot of those sort of ways, of how he should be handling himself, and he's probably, his parents are clearly involved in his life... they are very caring of him and his brother, they no doubt instill a lot of the right virtues and values in

him. And so he accepts those as being the right thing to do in the first place (Steve, Tom's mentor).

Although Jolene did not always find Arabella easy, and felt that they had some different values, she was able to recognise and respect Arabella's ability and determination to act in a way that was congruent with her values.

But you know, I really respected that she could remain true to those values that she obviously felt very strongly about. (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).

As well as this underlying respect, she remained very focussed on her mentee's strengths.

Oh, she's an incredibly thoughtful girl. She brought beautiful cakes for our party, we of course, all the mentors had brought all of our stuff, but she'd been to the patisserie, and she'd brought all these divine cakes, and a massive box of chocolates for the entire group. Very, very thoughtful, very kind, very sincere. You know, just everything about her was just gorgeous. (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).

The attributes that mentors brought with them to the mentoring program *who they are* and *how they feel* have been explored into how they interact with each other and with some key program attributes. The focus now turns to the influence that they have on the developing relationship with their mentee, looking at what mentors do.

Theme 4: What they do

What mentors *do* in the mentoring relationship is influenced by many of the things already discussed in this chapter – the program processes (matching, support, communication), who they are (their characteristics and experience) and how they feel (their motivations and expectations). In turn, it appears that what they do has a major influence on the developing relationship, and whether it will progress into either a *purposeful* or *comfortable* relationship, as identified in Chapter 6 (see p. 168). When analysing the things that mentors did within the mentoring dyad, it was useful to look at them in terms of this developing relationship. As shown in Figure 7, (link to mentee thematic map), there is a stage in mentoring where mentees appear to be making a clear decision about whether or not they are willing to trust their mentor, and fully engage in the process of mentoring. Here, the relationship process is divided into two phases; *pre-trust* and *trust* to demonstrate the influence that mentors have in this process.

Pre-Trust

In the pre-trust phase, mentors take a more passive role while building the foundations of the relationship. In this phase, consistency, reciprocity, and connection were important, and necessary to create an environment where the relationship could progress to 'trust'. Without these qualities, relationships tended to plateau, staying at a comfortable level rather than progressing to a more purposeful and active phase.

Consistency

In the *pre-trust* phase, consistency – turning up on time, every time, was an important part of the trust-building process. When mentors understood the

importance of consistency, they were able to overcome challenges such as conflicting priorities, work meetings and having to work later to make up for the time lost at mentoring.

> *Oh, look. I mean, the only reason I missed a session was because I was at jury duty and I couldn't get out of it. You know, I work from home but I work long hours, so - sometimes that middle of the day… it was a bit of a struggle sometimes. But there was no way I wasn't going. Like I LOVED it (Gabi, Amy's mentor).*

The importance of consistency has been demonstrated in the literature, and appears to be an important condition for positive outcomes (Dubois et al., 2002; Wu, 2014), with inconsistent attendance impacting mentee self-esteem, even when the relationship lasted the agreed upon length of time (Karcher et al., 2005). In a recent study, it was found that mentor commitment was impacted by program practices such as setting expectations, pre-match training and matching based on mentor preferences (Drew et al., 2020).

> *Yes, and once you get over those first few weeks where they know... you're coming back. You're definitely coming, it's not going to be someone else turning up. You said you were coming and you are coming (Nicole, Ellie's mentor).*

In the current study, the importance of consistency was noted by over half of the mentors who demonstrated their understanding of the need to turn up on time, every time. Interestingly, the previous phase of this research showed that lack of consistency was noted by mentees as being detrimental to the relationship however this was not acknowledged by mentors. This could indicate a lack of insight into the

potential damage that inconsistency can cause in the trust-building process, resulting in a cycle of dissatisfaction and loss of trust in both parties.

Connection

Along with consistency, an early connection seemed to enhance mentor commitment and self-efficacy. As discussed in the 'match' sub-theme of *program processes*, shared interests and goals have been shown to be important in the development of the mentoring relationship (Dubois et al., 2002; Pryce et al., 2014). Others have highlighted the importance of developing a strong foundation of trust, rapport and friendship (Morrow & Styles, 1995) .

For some dyads, connection was clear – a shared sport, a love of cats, an interest in gaming. These types of commonalities were relatively easy to find, and helpful in aiding conversation in the early weeks.

> *Um, it was.. most of it was instantaneous, like we kind of fell into the first couple of sessions talking about you know things we were interested in and we found out quite quickly that we shared a lot of common interests - you know, TV shows, films and other things.. and um so, kind of that surface stuff, hobbies and likes and dislikes we bonded on quite quickly. So I think that helped a lot when we got into a bit of the deeper stuff. It helped a lot that she was already pretty comfortable sharing things with me. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).*

> *I just talked to her about the things that she is interested in. Baseball, you know we talked about the friends and what is going on at home, with mum and dad and you know I just let the*

conversation just meander wherever it goes but try to keep it pretty much on her the whole time. And I don't seem to have much trouble connecting, with. My tactic is I just talk to them about them. (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).

However, a lack of obvious connection or common ground could be overcome if the mentor was willing to take an active interest in seeking out less obvious connections, or taking an authentic interest in seeking to find out what the mentees interests are and attempting a connection from there. Barb had spoken about the first couple of sessions being quite awkward, as she and Bryan had been matched pragmatically when both of their respective matches had been absent in the second week of mentoring. In the absence of anything obvious in common, she describes using interests to draw Bryan out and create rapport.

I asked him what he was into, so I learnt all about you know, Fast & Furious [laughs]. Which I actually know nothing about and still haven't watched! But yeah, just try to find something they are really keen and really interested in to get them talking about something they are passionate about. And he was also into the BMX bike riding - so, once you find out what really makes them tick, or what they are passionate about, then they will tell you a story. (Barb, Bryan's mentor).

Others struggled to find a true connection that was helpful in progressing the relationship. Troy was able to talk about soccer (Ren's passion) with him, however Troy often felt bored by the conversations, which he described as functional rather than on a deeper, connected level.

Um... it was... I could talk to him a lot I guess about school, I could talk to him about soccer.... but not a lot else. I wouldn't, we had a little bit of a discussion about who his parents.. you know, what his parents are, what they've done, where they are from... his brother and a few other small things like that.. but I guess we've never really had conversations like 'oh yeah, how are you feeling' or anything like that. It was more sort of functional conversation you know 'what have you done this week, how are things going'.

Moving past the 'hygiene' characteristics of consistency and connection, some mentors described deliberate attempts to build trust in the relationship through reciprocity.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a concept that has received a lot of attention in the mentoring literature (Lester et al., 2019; Rhodes et al., 2002; Rhodes et al., 2006), and it is often posited that a close relationship characterised by trust, respect and mutuality is the mechanism for change in mentoring relationships (Rhodes et al., 2006). Delving into the construct of mutuality, it has been described as a function of two dimensions, being shared relational excitement (a genuine desire by both parties to invest in the relationship) and experiential empathy (the sharing of relevant experiences with mentees) (Lester et al., 2019). Consistent with the literature, reciprocity or mutuality was demonstrated to be important to mentees in the previous phase of the research (see p.170) and this was also evident for mentors.

Pryce (2012) suggests that mutuality needs to be driven by mentor interest in the mentee, rather than an expectation of a mutual relationship to meet mentor needs, which was evident in Jolene's decision to share her own experience with Arabella.

> *To help her see... you know, this happened to me as well. So I did talk about you know some of my own childhood experiences and that sort of thing. Which was kind of fun. (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).*

Steve also demonstrated a willingness to share his own experience with the expectation that it would be beneficial for Tom.

> *I also was able to talk to him about bullying, and that I had been through similar sort of things, and most of the topics I was able to give a personal experience to. Not all of them, but a lot of them. So that was easy. (Steve, Tom's mentor).*

Highly mutual or reciprocal relationships are those which are characterised as relationships where both parties are excited to spend time together, and willing to engage in 'deep reciprocal sharing' (Lester et al., 2019, p. 151). Laura and Rosie's relationship embodied both of these characteristics, although the focus of the reciprocity was notably on meeting Rosie's needs rather than Laura's (Pryce, 2012).

> *But I did kind of, at the start I did kind of make a point of um. I felt like it was important to make a point of... [sighs] it's kind of hard to describe how I ... [hesitates]. It's kind of like... not putting myself down, but humbling myself a bit with her, and trying not to come across as a wise older person that was just going to sit there and give her advice or tell her what to do and that sort of thing. I felt*

like I needed to bring myself a bit down from adulthood and remember, and put myself in the position literally of being like a high.. and remembering what I was like in high school... and be a bit more immature [laughing] with her, like allow that part of me to come out. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).

Encouragement

Another way that mentors built trust and strengthened relational bonds was through encouragement of their mentee. This involved both noticing their strengths and articulating them out loud. Mentees who experience being seen in a positive light by their mentors may be more likely to open up and engage more deeply in the mentoring relationship (Spencer, 2012) . In the following excerpt, Bianca describes how she used encouragement to keep Mabel connected with sport; feeling that Mabel's interest and aptitude for sport was a positive influence in her life.

Mmmm. She's good at it though. She's really good, a national player. So I encouraged her to think. She hasn't been doing it.. this year she hasn't been doing so much with it. She trains up at the Central Coast which is where her mother lives, but she's living with her father down here now so that means that she can't get to training so easily or play in the country team.. I really encouraged her to make sure that that happens, because she needs that. She needs something that makes her feel good. Because on all other fronts, I think she hasn't actually got much security.. you know her friendships are.. not great, not solid. One of her friends as moved schools, but she wasn't such a great friend. Um, she hangs out with kids from other schools and a bunch of boys that, you know... I

don't know if she told you but they are all in trouble with the police. She's not involved - she was arrested with that bunch of boys but she wasn't involved so they let her go (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).

Laura also demonstrated unconditional positive regard for Rosie throughout their relationship, taking every opportunity to encourage her 'I praised her whenever I got the chance'. Here, Laura describes her perception of how her positive support of Rosie helped to build her skills.

I praised her whenever I got the chance, and I meant it. I feel like with Rosie, she kind of used my praise of her as like a buffer. I feel like it's she's got this amazing capability of when she believes in something, or when she believes something, she holds onto it. And it becomes like this barrier of if something is affecting her negatively - she can turn this belief and transform it into something that would protect her. Um, without sort of - she doesn't have to rebound off in a negative way. She doesn't have to be aggressive anymore, she can sort of insulate herself. And with adults, now that she has had this experience with me, and with the PC, and knows that there are people out there who are willing to be mentors - and that she's had this experience with me where she has felt accepted and not judged, and that I've seen this amazing side of her - that she might be able to draw on that experience.. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).

Encouragement needed to be the right type of encouragement, and it needed to be related to what was important to the mentee. Some mentors gave encouragement

that was value-laden from their own perspective; consider the example below where Nicole is urging Ellie to stay focussed on her goals, which may be more aligned with Nicole's values and needs than Ellie's. This is an example of a mentor not being 'youth-centred' (see theme below), as Nicole appears to be giving Ellie encouragement from an 'I know better' perspective.

> *And I really said with all sincerity, you know, you're, you know, just, you know, get your goals, keep your goals in mind and go for that French scholarship, and all those sorts of things, and enjoy your music and your dog and you know, you've got such lovely friends and family, you know, you're a really lucky girl (Nicole, Ellie's mentor)*

Youth Centred (Pacing & Leading)

Throughout the entire process of mentoring, it was important that the mentors' focus is on their mentee. Intuitively this makes sense, and the idea of mentoring being 'youth-centred' has long been demonstrated in the literature as being a crucial component of successful mentoring (Jucovy, 2002; Newburn & Shiner, 2006; Pryce et al., 2014). In the current study, *youth-centred* in the 'pre-trust' phase of the relationship was a more passive construct, which became more active once the relationship had progressed to 'trust'.

This finding differs somewhat from the mentoring literature, where a youth-centred relationship has been described as a relationship that has a high focus on fun, has friendship-like qualities, and places low importance on skill-building and changing behaviours (Pryce et al., 2014). In the current study, the two played an equally important role, that needed to co-exist to be effective. A youth-centred

approach in the ‘pre-trust’ phase had a focus on fun, connection, and encouragement of mentees, with other characteristics such as consistency and reciprocity also being important. However, once the relationship had progressed through to ‘trust’, it was the more active youth-centred focus that appear to be the main drivers of positive change for young people, such as skill-building, perspective and connecting young people to other important resources in their lives; these aspects are discussed later in this chapter.

There are parallels here to Milton Erickson’s work on ‘pacing and leading’ which suggests that rapport and empathy need to be in place before any type of ‘leading’ or suggestions for change can be made (Wexler, 1999). This was a difficult balance to find at times in the mentoring process. Mentors needed to be willing to go at the mentee’s speed until enough trust is developed. Likewise, they needed to be skilled in recognising when to gently coax their mentees out of their comfort zone, and be open to both stepping back, and stepping in again. Leading too early, or on a topic a mentee is not ready to broach can be detrimental to the developing relationship, as Barb found when she tried to tackle the subject of bullying with Bryan.

> *When I asked him about bullying, he said 'I don't know why they keep going on about it at this school, there is no bullying here I haven't seen any!'. And he shut right down. And to me that says that there is something there, but I ... do you push further, or just wait a bit longer, and see if he will open up? So yeah, so. But he didn't actually ever open up on that. He just shut down. And I was like oh, I've still got 10 weeks to go...*

This interaction impacted Barb's confidence, and she did not make any other attempts to draw Bryan out, being content to keep their relationship on a lighter level. Perhaps a mentor with more experience with young people, or a higher self-efficacy would have been able continue 'tapping at the door' or trying again with a different angle. Jolene had a similar experience with Arabella, who struggled to engage with the prescribed handbook, however was able to gently persist - she describes below the 'failed' first attempt to engage Arabella in a goal-setting process, followed by a second, more successful attempt later in their relationship.

> *And you know, we would always start off, I'd say 'ok, this week, we are going to, everyone is talking about goals... up to you, if you want to do that, or we can just, you know talk about anything you want'. And the first couple of weeks we tried it a little bit but it was also like, it was like this blind just came down. Whenever there was anything that involved thinking a little bit harder, or the 'how to'. She pretty much put the, put the shutters across.*

Jolene's experience as a parent and her focus on Arabella to bring purpose to the mentoring experience for her, may have contributed to her ability to step back when Arabella "put the shutters across", but also step back in at a later stage of their relationship when she felt that it would be beneficial for Arabella. This type of interaction demonstrates what Pryce (2012) calls 'mentor attunement' which she describes as being "both an attentive and flexible approach to the relationship guided by the mentor and informed by mentee needs" (p.289). Gabi demonstrates this attentive yet flexible approach in her interaction with Bianca below, noticing when Bianca was ready to step in, and being flexible from session to session to accept where she was at, but be ready to 'push' a little when it felt warranted.

Because obviously you get a good sense, quite easily. And you know she wants to talk about stuff, and you could even see sometimes she was like 'I've got to tell you something!'. And other times she would just be like 'la la la la la, you know, this happened, this happened'. So yeah, it was just, it was just spending time together really and talking to her, that you just got a sense of where the trust level was at and how much you could kind of push.

This continual need to be both present and adaptive has been recognised as a challenge for parent/carers of adolescents (Kobak, Abbott, Zisk, & Bounoua, 2017). Adolescence can be a challenging time for the child-parent relationship (Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016). The ability to accurately read the young person and respond in a non-reactive way, as demonstrated by Jolene and Gabi may be important in understanding the mentee-mentor relationship. It can be difficult for a parent/carer *not* to react negatively to perceived hostility or negativity, particularly in times of familial stress (Kobak et al., 2017). Likewise, when a mentor is not able to notice or respond appropriately to a mentee's needs, trust is not able to develop.

Trust

Trust is an important component of many different types of relationships including romantic (Campbell, Simpson, Boldry, & Rubin, 2010), parent/child (Kobak et al., 2017) teacher/child (Wooten & McCroskey, 1996) and therapeutic relationships (Westergaard, 2013). In her exploratory study about 'what works' in therapeutic relationships between counsellors and young people, Westergaard found four aspects of the relationship that were perceived to be important, these being safety, therapeutic alliance, flexibility in theoretical orientation and creativity (Westergaard, 2013). Therapists believed that these things needed to be in place for

therapy to be successful. Parallels can be drawn with the current study when considering the components of the 'pre-trust' phase of mentoring. Mentors needed to demonstrate their commitment to the relationship through consistency, using connection, encouragement, and reciprocity to build up the 'therapeutic alliance'. Finally, mentor attunement and the ability to 'pace' appropriately allowed flexibility of approach to meet the needs of mentees.

When the ingredients of consistency, encouragement, reciprocity and connection were in place, the mentoring relationship could progress from pre-trust through to trust. At this stage, mentors were able to take a more active role in the relationship, moving from 'pacing' to 'leading'. As we learned in the previous chapter looking at the mentee's experience, if the relationship did not progress to the stage of trust, mentees did not experience much change (see p.165). It was only when the strong foundations were built in the pre-trust phase that the relationship progressed to trust, and it was only in this 'trust' phase that mentees were willing to engage in more active, purposeful work with their mentors.

For those relationships that progressed through to the 'trust' phase, a more active style of mentoring took place. Steve reflects on a time when he had been asked to take a group of boys as well as his own mentee, because of absentees. Rather than writing off the session, Steve actively sought ways to bring positive development into the session for all the students.

> *I'm working at getting them to develop a relationship [between the boys] as well as pluck individuals out at certain times to talk about their issues. And I think, that day in particular I thought was very helpful. It was hard engineering timing for chats because the ball*

was moving, so you sort of have to go [mimes kicking] oh look the ball is over there... so you have to slide in... slide out [laughing] not be too much with one person. (Steve, Tom's mentor).

On the other hand, Troy, (whose relationship with Ren's did not progress to the 'trust' phase) lacked experience with young people which may have contributed to his reluctance or inability to step into a more active mentoring role. Further, his motivation was driven by a need to 'make a difference', which meant he became frustrated with the passivity of the relationship, without having the skills to move it beyond.

I mean, we didn't really come across anything that was too controversial between our views to sort of argue over - I guess there could have been more opportunity to create those... there were certain things that he said which I just thought were wrong, a lot of the times I just thought 'sure, if you want to think that, it's fine' (Troy, Ren's mentor).

Int: Would you have been comfortable if he had wanted to talk to you about that stuff [we had been discussing difficulties of adolescence]?

Troy: Yeah? [rising inflection]. I would have been um.... I guess I never steered the conversation that way... I guess if I had, maybe... you know, if I'd have said to him, do you have any problems or anything like that. Um, but I just didn't.

Perspective

A strong theme developed around the mentor's ability to provide their mentees with a fresh perspective, which was only evident in the 'trust' phase of mentoring. An example of where perspective may be helpful is influencing mentee's attitudes to school. School engagement was an issue for several of the mentees in the program and is important because of the strong links between school completion and social and economic wellbeing (R. Reeve et al., 2016). Mentors were able to provide mentees with reasons to engage with school that made sense to them. Steve drew on Tom's dreams of becoming an engineer to help him stay connected with his education.

> *Another thing I said to him, I said school doesn't define who you are, but it helps where you are going…. So it's important that you don't just dismiss it. Put in as much as you can. If you don't understand it, seek the help you can. Because especially... maths mate, maths is everywhere in life. And you might not be standing there at the supermarket, trying to do the second derivative of one over x... but the core stuff, even if it's just geometry... if you are wanting to get into an engineering area or construction or those sorts of things, I said guess what you have to work out - load bearing, angles... and you need to know how to work that stuff out. You can't just give it to somebody else and say 'can you sort it for me and I'll just go and apply it'. You also need to know how to check that what they have done is right.*

Gabi's approach was to direct Amy's attention to the future *"you've only got three more years"*, planting the seed that things would be different once she left high school.

> *So I guess I was just not trying to push her, I was trying to give her a different perspective on what it's like. And I said to her... also the truth - everything changes when you leave high school. You know, so don't worry too much about it, you've only got three more years.*

Jolene tried to provide perspective for her mentee Arabella in relation to friendship difficulties and feelings of doubt and shame by normalising those feelings.

> *And I felt like she really needed to know, that she wasn't the only one who ever felt the feelings that she was going through. That it was really important for her to understand that probably 99% of the girls in her year all had the same kinds of doubts that she did, and the same kinds of you know feelings and it's just that they didn't necessarily all kind of talk about it and share them amongst themselves. (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).*

For some young people, mentors were able to provide perspective on behaviour that was considered normal, or even desirable amongst their peer or family groups, but could be problematic in the school environment. Laura talks about a conversation with Rosie about violence, where her authentic response to Rosie's disclosure about hitting another girl at school led to Rosie's understanding and acceptance that there may be better ways to deal with conflict.

> *She used to talk about things that happened to her like they weren't a big deal. Like she'd talk about getting into fist fights with girls at*

footy... and she would talk about it like it was not a major deal, like it was something that happened all the time. And a lot of her friends were of that sort of calibre as well, they all got into fights and were aggressive young women in that sense, even though they were really supportive of each other. But she'd.... she'd never really got the response of 'really? like fist fights, oh my god!'. You know, I've never been in a fist fight in my whole life, so when she said that I was like 'no way!' That blows my mind... how do you get into a fist fight, particularly at 14. Like I've never known a girl... no-one I knew in high school that wasn't a boy got into a fist fight. And when she first told me about it she was surprised by my reaction, but then as the program went on she would talk about her family and her family didn't really make a big deal of it either, like they would just pull her off the girl and go 'yeah, you landed a good one there'. And you know, it's kind of a normal... kind of like, if you get angry... you know, she would say things like 'I don't know what this chick expected... you make me angry, I'm going to fight back'. And I was just 'well, could you try fighting back with words instead of fists straight away?'. Because she'd see red and just go 'bam' - you know, there was no talk just fists straight away. And she was like 'nuh'. And she would talk about... someone would diss her, and she would just run straight in - from zero to a hundred. And so, the reactions she got from me were very different to what she normally got. And, you know, she opened her mind to the possibility of other opinions and that the way she'd been reacting to things - or the way

her family or friends, her little circle react to things, is not the only way. (Laura, Rosie's mentor).

When a relationship had not progressed through to 'trust', attempts to provide perspective were not so well received. Betsy took a more authoritarian approach to Deb's disclosure of violence, presenting herself as the 'expert' in a way that did not seem to resonate with or engage Deb.

That was one thing I always used to say to her, 'cause she was ready to punch someone. She'd say 'see, can I go and punch her' and I would say no, and she said 'why, she said this this this about me and its not true, that's why I want to punch her head in'. And I asked if she liked that girl, she said 'I hate her', and I said, 'fine, why are you letting her opinions of you matter'. I just told her don't get involved, why get yourself into trouble or suspended over someone you hate (Betsy, Deb's mentor).

Similarly, Troy's attempt at providing perspective had undertones of lecturing, or imparting knowledge rather than an authentic attempt to provide a different point of view.

But when he's doing like his maths studies, he doesn't do any of the homework. He's basically... he's obviously bright enough to get through it, and so then he finds it... um, maybe frustrating then, that he has to actually do the work, and I said to him, I said you know - the thing is, if you are like that, the teacher is always going to see you as a trouble maker. (Troy, Ren's mentor).

Connecting with others

How mentors can influence a mentee's social ecology of relationships may be one of the most important roles they play (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; MacCallum, Beltman, Coffey, & Cooper, 2017). A mentoring relationship is brief, fleeting – in the current study, approximately twenty hours of a young person's life. However, if that relationship can be used to encourage, create and strengthen connections with other social ecologies in the mentee's life, positive outcomes are more likely to be sustained.

Schools play an important role in fostering young people's resilience; on the other hand, they can create further damage if the environment is not supportive (Masten et al., 2005). In particular, the student-teacher relationship has the potential to prevent the actualisation of risk (Osher et al., 2020). However, often teachers do not have the skills, resources or ability to respond appropriately to young people who display behaviours that they perceive to be unacceptable (Osher et al., 2020). Thus, a negative cycle begins, where a student (who may also be struggling in other environments) is rude, skips class, or fails to hand their homework in. Mentors in the current study felt that once teachers had made up their minds about a young person, that they were unlikely to change them and their attitude and interactions with that young person were unlikely to be positive.

> *I could see that the school administration, and the teachers, purely just go 'he's trouble'. Look at him. Look at him. Instead of actually saying 'listen to him'. They just look at him (Steve, Tom's mentor).*

Once a teacher's respect and trust had been lost, it was very hard for a young person to gain it back.

And even though he would go to the teacher and say 'I don't understand, could you help me', they go 'you don't want help, you'll always mean trouble, you are always in trouble' (Steve, Tom's mentor).

All too often, as demonstrated by Steve's comment above, a teacher builds a picture of a young person as being a troublemaker and either consciously or sub-consciously sets expectations for behaviour based on that assumption. The student responds accordingly, and the ensuing negative interactions can lead to decreased motivation and disengagement with school (Masten et al., 2005).

Mentors have an opportunity to break this cycle and help young people to foster positive connections with teachers that will sustain them well beyond the mentoring intervention. Take this example where Jolene was able to support Arabella to connect with her teachers after she had skipped a day of classes. Arabella was able to seek individual meetings with each of her teachers to explain her absence and negotiate how to make up for the work she had missed. This interaction is likely to have positive effect for Arabella in several ways including decreased anxiety, improved relationships with her teachers and increased engagement with her schoolwork.

Um, she was asking for help, with her subjects. Because we did talk about that, she hadn't turned up to class... she came to one session, and said 'oh, I haven't been to class all day, I've just been in the library, and I just don't know what to do' and .. so we talked about a way forward through that. And then she went and saw each of the teachers individually and I know she'd done that; she got an

extension and things. I think she needed somebody to kind of prompt her to do that. Um. She said she really liked [school counsellor] and she said she knew that she was always there... for her to talk to as well.

Likewise, Gabi recalled a time when her mentee asked her to come and see the Vice-Principal at the school with her. Gabi was able to both support the interaction between Amy and the Vice-Principal and was able to give her some perspective about the interaction.

I mean, there was a difference in what she saw and what I saw. And I said look, I don't think he's doing a great job at communicating but I do think he is trying to be fair and do the best he can with the situation. And she sort of went quiet and 'oh'. So we'd have a lot of these conversations. You know 'sometimes you just have to think about where someone else is coming from'. And she'd sort of go yeah, yeah yeah. And then she'd sort of come back and say something a couple of weeks later and I would go 'ohhhh. she listened!'. So that sort of stuff I think she needed.

Betsy described an interaction with the school Principal where she was able to advocate for her mentee.

And one day, the Principal was coming through the garden and he comes over and says, 'ah this young man, I hope he's been polite – we have our problems with him' and I said 'excuse me, we have no problems, we are fine'. The Principal said 'oh so he is never rude to you?', I said told him 'no, he's a wonderful young man'. He

[mentee] said to me afterwards, 'you know who that was'? And he told me 'that was the Principal'. I think it was important, you know, that the Principal heard that, and that [mentee] heard that too. (Betsy, Deb's mentor).

Although school was the most proximal environment for mentors to have an influence, mentors who were able to look beyond themselves as the conduit of change and understood the importance of other relationships for their mentee were able to influence these relationships. For example, Bianca took an active role in encouraging Mabel to repair her relationship with her mother and saw this as a vital part of her role in making a difference for Mabel not only now, but in the future. Likewise, Jolene sought to help Arabella to see the positives in her relationship with her mother, even though they were going through a difficult stage

And we did talk about, when it came to the end of the program, or drawing near the end of the program, well look who else do you have for support, who else is out there for you, who is it you can go to. And her parents were the first ones that she said. And I encouraged that. And at the same time, I know she did argue with her mum, particularly, and I would try to help her work through that too (Jolene, Arabella's mentor).

Most mentors acknowledged and understood that the role they played with mentees was different from that of other adults in their lives, primarily because they were in a unique position where they both had the time to listen, and the distance to provide perspective in a non-judgemental way.

I think because it's one on one... and, the mentee is in the right frame of mind and they are wanting to talk and talk through their things, whatever is going on. And they see you as a non-threatening influence and you are not judging them and you are not going to scold them or come down hard on them, because you just don't. You just listen and you just, you know maybe if you don't agree you can ask them if they would think about doing something in a different way, whatever they are talking about. So I think you can have a - I don't know, I just find that the rapport that you get with the mentor/mentee relationship is a different type of relationship than you would have with your own children (Bianca, Mabel's mentor).

One of the key tasks of adolescence is to be able to separate from key caregivers and learn to become independent, however it is not correct to say that young people need adults less; in fact this is a transitional time when adult support may be even more important (Osher, Cantor, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2018). This tension between independence and need can be a difficult time for caregivers and adolescents alike as both try to navigate the necessary adjustments in their relationship (Luthar & Ciciolla, 2016). Adults may mistakenly believe that adolescence is a time when they can step back from the parenting role, whereas parental support is important for overall wellbeing well into adolescence (Luthar, Crossman, & Small, 2015).

And so, she had all these situations where even though her Dad is super supportive, he's just never there. Um, and she doesn't like the step mum, you know (Gabi, Maya's mentor).

Whilst the mentoring literature suggests that young people lack adequate role-models (Raposa et al., 2018), several mentees reported strong and positive relationships with their families. Steve saw his role as a mentor to be reinforcing the values that Tom's family were instilling in him, and the fact that Steve shared many of the same values of Tom's family appeared to be important in the relationship. This alignment and reinforcement of family values by a mentor may help to increase transferability of skills learnt in the mentoring environment (Osher et al., 2018).

> *We covered off a lot of stuff and I was pretty quick to, when a topic came up, whether it was girls or drugs or whatever it was, I always kept with the same sort of things which no doubt his parents would teach him about, which was it's respect yourself and respect everybody else, and everything else will follow. That's how I see it. That's how I was brought up. (Steve, Tom's mentor).*

Other mentees did not have the luxury of a stable family life. Rosie's family life was described by Laura as *'chaotic, her mum doesn't really have time for her'*. Laura focussed on linking Rosie in with supports external to her family, holding up her relationship with Rosie as an example of how relationships with other adults in her life could be and encouraged Rosie to connect with other supports including the school counsellor and a trusted family member after the mentoring relationship had finished.

> *Yeah, and she'd been able to tease it out with me [an issue with Rosie's mother] um, and it had taken two terms to even like get it to that sort of teasing out point. But she did, and she allowed that help to come, and was open to it. And at the end when she realised*

that this relationship wasn't going to continue [mentoring] she let other people help her.

Bianca also described working with Mabel to identify a trusted adult who had been helpful in the past, as a potential support if she needed help in the future. Natural mentors, or mentors who are part of a mentee's life or community outside of a formal mentoring program have been shown to produce stronger effects for young people than formal mentors (Raposa et al., 2018), so a focus on connecting mentees with ongoing support could be an effective role that mentors play.

I think having an adult that she could talk to, or a person, looking at her life, a person for a distinct time, and she could do with it a bit more, I think, but you know - for a time, that she has probably learnt that you can trust adults, you can trust people, that there are people out there that are prepared to help you. She possibly has never had that. Maybe through sport she has had a bit of that and I think she has had a bit of that through a couple of coaches, but it's another person. Through all the crap going on in her life she knows 'oh, there actually are people out there who I can turn to for advice or help' And I actually really encouraged that with her to, to really see that this was somebody - I don't know, we did identify I think it was one of her coaches that she had that she thought that if anything went pear shaped she could turn to them. (Bianca, Mabel's mentor)

Figure 11 below demonstrates the role that mentors can play in connecting young people to external supports in their lives that can sustain their needs post-

intervention, as well as help to transfer the skills learnt in mentoring to other environments (Osher et al., 2018).

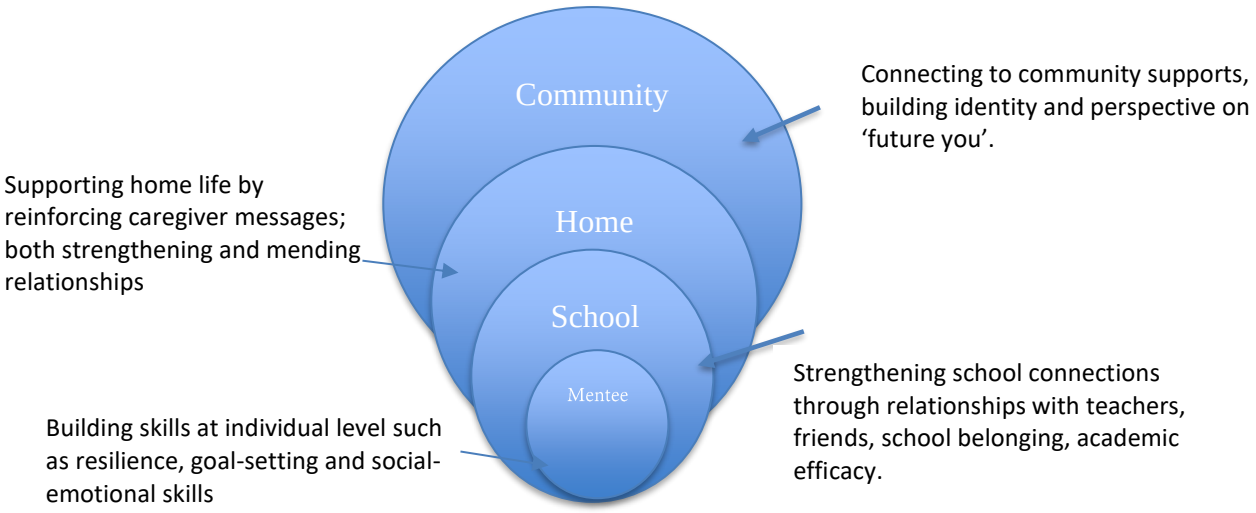

Figure 11. Mentoring in a social-ecological framework.

These findings suggest that mentors have the potential to play a vital role in helping young people create and maintain important connections to other adults in their lives while navigating their developmental need for independence. There is also some indication that by supporting these connections, skills learnt during mentoring are more likely to be transferred to other contexts (Osher et al., 2018). This suggests that mentors and programs alike need to acknowledge the greater importance of the young person's social-ecological relationships. This takes courage, and a letting go of ego, and the need to 'change a life' or 'make a difference' and may be a challenge for programs in the recruitment of mentors, because the human need to make a difference is a strong driver in volunteer motivation (Wu, 2014). However, by recruiting the 'right' kind of mentors, and including explicit training for mentors in the important role that they can play in supporting and strengthening their mentee's social-

ecological frameworks, this type of intervention may be able to bring about longer-term and more sustainable change for young people.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this study suggest that mentor attributes play an important role in the development of a purposeful mentoring relationship.

Previous research has suggested that there are disparate relationship typologies. For example, Morrow & Styles (1995) puts forward that mentoring relationships are either prescriptive (aspiration to transform youth, authoritative) or developmental (focus on relationship, lasted longer, more reciprocal) and concluded that the developmental typology was more effective. However, unlike the current study, Morrow and Styles did not consider the initial 'in-development' phase of the relationship.

The findings of the current study suggest that relationships need to be both developmental *and* prescriptive to be effective. However, there are certain characteristics of the relationship that need to be in place for it to be able to progress through to a stage where it is able to become more prescriptive or instrumental. In the early stages of the relationship, the focus needs to be developmental and mentee-led (e.g., pacing), but it cannot remain static in this phase. Relationships that stayed passive and mentee-led tended to stagnate and remain in the 'comfortable' stage. Where mentors had the motivation, skill, experience and program support required, they were able to successfully navigate between 'pacing' and 'leading' to progress to a stage in their relationship where they could become more active and at times directive. This is similar to Langhout et al. (2004) who found that 'unconditional

support' was not effective in mentoring relationships, and in some cases resulted in negative outcomes including increased alienation of parents.

Overall it appears that it is not the relationship itself that is the change mechanism, but rather that different mentor attributes contribute to the developing relationship which needed a strong foundation of trust to be able to progress to a place where mentees were open to a more directive approach.

One of the important components of the more directive approach is the mentor's ability to look beyond the mentoring relationship and connect the young person with other important aspects of their lives. This includes other relationships that will be able to support them in the long term (parents, friends, counsellors, teachers, school); interests and goals (sport, career aspirations) and social-emotional skills (anger management, dealing with bullying, giving perspective) as well as encouraging hope for the future (looking beyond getting through today to see where you want to be tomorrow).

The finding that the mentoring relationship *is* extremely important, but not necessarily in and of itself, may help to explain the findings of the previous chapter where young people who were in comfortable relationships enjoyed mentoring without experiencing growth. It can also explain why relationship quality had only very weak associations with some outcomes in the quantitative phase of this research (see p.93).

The three phases of research presented thus far have been conducted sequentially with the findings from each contributing to the research questions and approach of the next. To date, the data analysis, findings and discussions have been contained to each separate phase. To conclude this research project, the findings from

each phase will be integrated and considered together, with a view to providing recommendations for practice that can be implemented by Raise Foundation. It is hoped that this research and these recommendations will, in some small way, change the world as Denizen urged qualitative research to do (Denzin, 2012), by improving the Ismo mentoring program for its beneficiaries in years to come.

Chapter 7 – Integrative Summary and Recommendations for Practice

This thesis reports a narrative of investigation into the experiences of mentees and their mentors in the Ismo mentoring program, through the reflective lens of a research-practitioner.

The purpose of this final chapter is twofold. First and foremost, chapter will address each research question through integrating the findings from the different phases of the research. This will create a clearer picture of the Ismo mentoring program and its influence on young people. As a result of this integration, recommendations for practice will be put forward with an ideal best-practice protocol to support stronger and longer lasting outcomes for young people who participate in the program.

Working as a program coordinator in the Ismo program whilst undertaking this project afforded a unique opportunity to actively explore the relationship between research and practice. My subsequent evolution into a research-practitioner role is reported here alongside the integrated results from the research. Thus, the second aim of the chapter is to increase knowledge of the research-practitioner framework through exploration of the practical application of this framework in the current research, with the goal of encouraging closer connections between research and practice in the youth intervention field.

Research aims – a recap

I set out on this journey to address some clear research gaps that existed in the youth mentoring literature (see Chapter 2 for a full review). In short, I wanted to investigate whether an Australian school-based program that adhered to best-practice

standards as recommended by the mentoring literature could achieve better results than the small effect sizes that have beleaguered the industry over the past 20 years. I wanted to qualitatively test the effectiveness of the theoretical frameworks, developed in the USA for community-based mentoring programs, in an Australian school-based environment. Finally, I wanted to explore the processes that impacted young people's experience of mentoring, and their influence on the mentoring relationship. These aims were advanced through a mixed-methods research design that privileged qualitative data.

What were the outcomes for young people?

To recap the findings, in the first study, similar to previous research, mentees in the Ismo mentoring program reported positive adjustment, particularly in terms of their hope for the future, self-confidence, social support and academic engagement (scholastic self-confidence and grades), and relationship with friends. However, there were no reported significant changes in attendance or relationships with family.

Also as expected, effect sizes were in the small to medium range. This is consistent with previous meta-analyses (AYMN, 2012; Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011). However, despite adherence to best-practice in terms of training, matching, program support and program structure, effect sizes remained small. Further consideration of these results in light of the qualitative studies is given later in this chapter.

As reported on p.93, surprisingly, there was no meaningful relationship found between relationship quality (RQ) and mentee adjustment, which is contrary to previous research (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Goldner & Mayseless, 2009; Lakind, Atkins, & Eddy, 2015; Lyons et al., 2019; Rhodes & DuBois, 2008;

Spencer, 2002; Spencer, Keller, et al., 2019) and commonly used mentoring theories (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Karcher et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2006) including the theory of change used by the mentoring program which was the subject of this research.

Overall, these results address the first of the research aims and demonstrate that an Australian school-based program that adheres to best-practice mentoring achieved some, but not all the expected outcomes. In addition, it was found that the effect sizes of outcomes were in the small-medium range despite best-practice processes being in place. Limitations of this stage of the research, which are addressed fully on p.106 and summarised later in this chapter, mean that these results need to be interpreted with caution, and further exploration is required before they can be generalised. Here, the strength of a mixed-methods approach comes into its own to enable greater veracity than is afforded by the limited quantitative data on its own.

What were the processes of change?

The second, qualitative phase of research allowed a deeper exploration of these results, finding that a number of processes influenced the experience of mentees, including the way the program was introduced to them, how they were matched, and the developing relationship with their mentor. Further, it was observed that how mentees experienced the program shaped the development of the mentoring relationship trajectory to either a 'purposeful' or 'comfortable' relationship. This trajectory was seen as determining the outcomes that mentees experienced. That is, 'purposeful' relationships led to positive social-emotional development, and short-term improvements in attendance, bullying, self-harm, school-refusal and grades. There was some evidence to indicate that longer term outcomes include improved resilience and increased hope for the future. On the other hand, relationships that

remained ‘comfortable’ did not experience an improvement in outcomes other than a temporary respite from class.

The third phase turned to the mentor’s perspective, focussing on mentor attributes and how these influenced the mentoring relationship. Similar to mentees, mentors’ experience of the program was impacted by program processes such as matching, understanding the reason their mentee was in the program, and the support they received throughout their mentoring experience. Personal disposition and experience with young people were seen to influence how mentors interacted with program processes, and how they felt about mentoring in terms of both their motivation and their attitudes towards young people. In turn, it was observed that this shaped what they did in the mentoring relationship. In the early *pre-trust* stage of the relationship, it was evident that a number of conditions needed to be in place before it could progress to *trust*, including consistency, reciprocity and connection. In order to be effective, mentors also needed to be attuned to their mentees needs and be able to ‘pace and lead’ where appropriate.

When these conditions were met, it was observed that relationships were more likely to progress from *pre-trust* to *trust* than when these conditions were not met. Similar to the progression from *comfortable* to *purposeful* relationships that was found in the mentee phase of the qualitative research, it was only in the *trust* stage that mentors were able to move from pacing to leading to provide a more purposeful and active style of mentoring. From the mentor’s perspective, one of the most important aspects of the trust relationship was their ability to actively connect young people with other important supports in their lives, including peers, parent/carers, teachers, and life beyond the school gates.

Taken together, these results form a fuller picture of the mentee's experience of mentoring and the influences on this experience, which is shown diagrammatically in Figure 12.

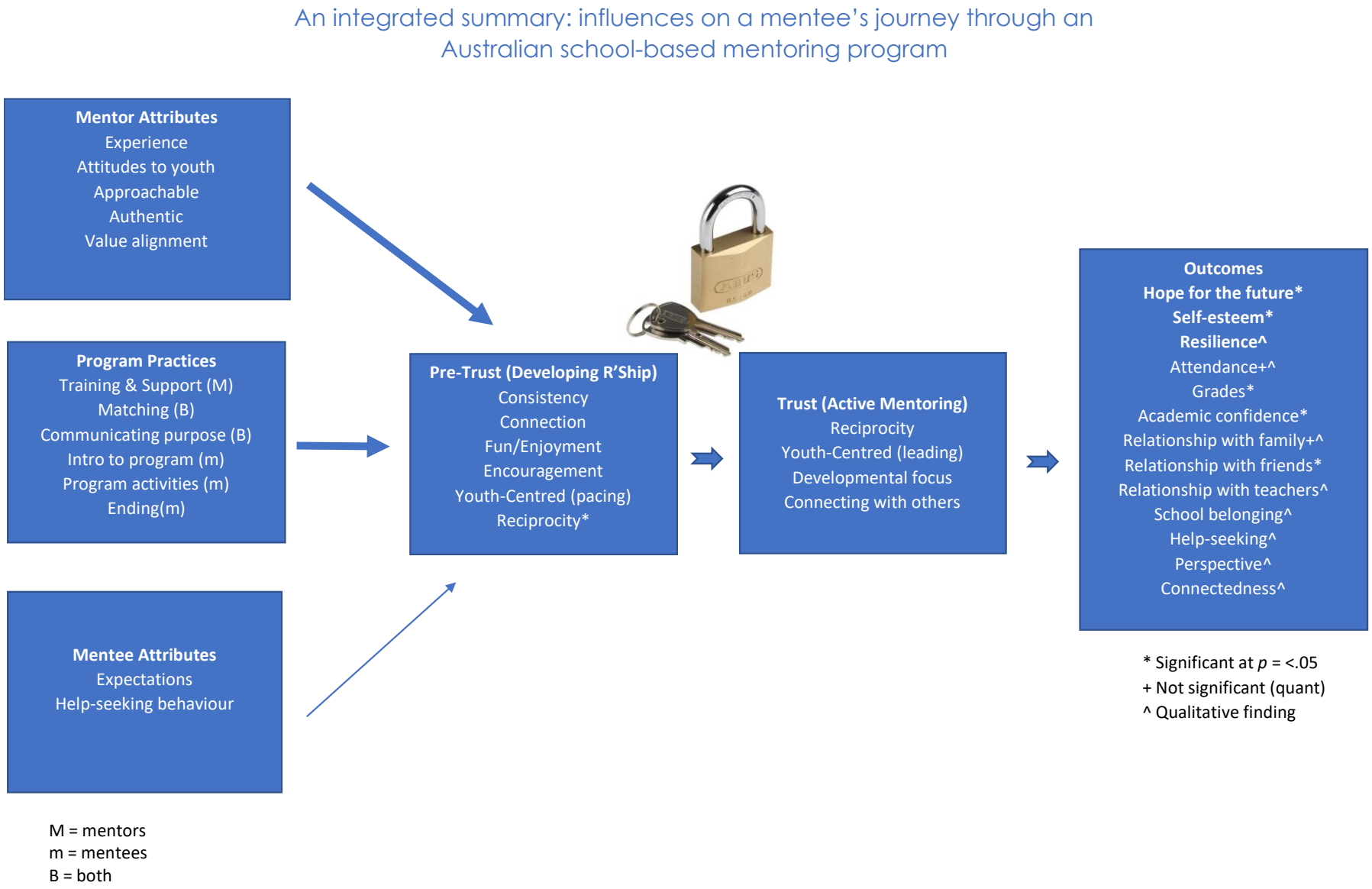

Figure 12. An integrated summary of results

Integrated findings

In unpacking the findings in an integrated way, it is useful to do so against a critical evaluation of the theoretical framework used to inform the mentoring program. A detailed discussion about Rhodes' Theory of Change can be found on p.28. However, in brief, I remind the reader that Rhodes posits that a relationship based on mutuality, trust and empathy is at the heart of the mentoring intervention. It is through this relationship that positive development in social-emotional, cognitive and identity domains is achieved, which in turn leads to various positive outcomes (Rhodes et al., 2006). This theory of change has been widely used in the mentoring literature (Dubois et al., 2002; DuBois et al., 2011; Grossman et al., 2012; Herrera et al., 2013; Spencer, 2012; Spencer, Gowdy, et al., 2019).

The Mentoring Relationship

Given the importance of the mentoring relationship in the literature, it is prudent to begin the discussion here. As previously discussed, the most surprising finding from the quantitative phase was that there was only a weak association between some measures of mentee adjustment and relationship quality, which raised the question of whether or not a relationship-based model of mentoring was appropriate in school settings. The applicability of this model has been questioned previously (Darling et al., 1994; Lyons et al., 2019; McQuillin et al., 2013), and warrants exploration, particularly as a relationship based theoretical model is used as a framework for the Ismo program (Rhodes et al., 2006).

The qualitative phase of the research shed some light on this question, as it was found that several characteristics influenced the mentoring relationship, despite all mentees rating their relationship positively. For both mentees and mentors, it was

found that certain conditions needed to be in place, both external to and within the mentoring relationship, for it to progress through to a stage where positive outcomes were able to be experienced. It is clear from these findings that mentee enjoyment is not sufficient to enable positive change.

Thus, an important finding from the current study is that there are pre-conditions that need to be in place for an *effective* mentoring relationship to properly develop. Rhodes' model does not acknowledge different stages of the developing relationship or the processes that need to be in place for this trusted relationship to ensue. The current research has broken new ground in that it focussed both on the different trajectories of the mentoring relationship (Pryce & Keller, 2012) and on the characteristics necessary for the relationship to progress to where effective mentoring can take place (Deutsch & Spencer, 2009).

These findings are significant because in the current study when a relationship did not move from the 'pre-trust' phase through to the 'trust' phase, there were few or no lasting outcomes. Thus, this study moves us beyond a purely relationship-based model, to suggest that the relationship is the *pre-requisite* for change rather than the mechanism. This aligns somewhat with other school-based mentoring literature where it has previously been questioned whether a school-based mentoring environment is conducive to developing close relationships (Cavell & Elledge, 2014).

The current research suggests that it is in fact possible to build close, trusting relationships in a school environment and that, without this relationship, the gateway to more active, effective mentoring is likely to remain closed. This builds on previous research which has shown both the mentoring relationship *and* instrumental activities such as goal-setting to be important (Lyons et al., 2019; McQuillin et al., 2013), by

showing that the sequencing of the relationship development and introduction of goal-oriented activities is of vital importance. Figure 13 and Figure 14 below demonstrate how the current research has built on the conceptual distinctions between the two types of mentoring and illustrates the sequencing of developmental and instrumental mentoring that is most effective in achieving stronger, longer lasting outcomes.

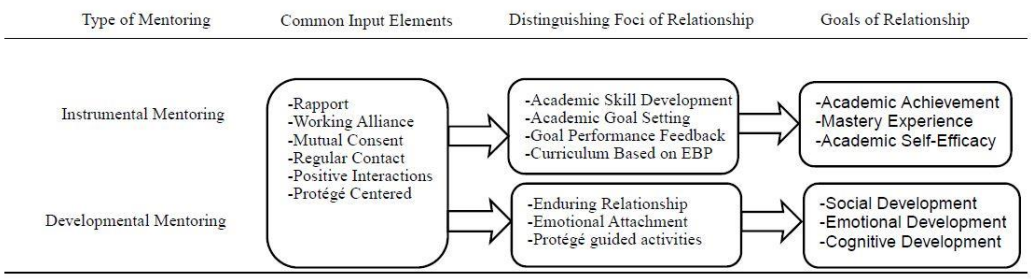

Figure 13. Conceptual distinctions between developmental and instrumental mentoring. Note: EBP, evidence-based practices. Reprinted with permission from McQuillin, Terry, Strait & Smith (2013).

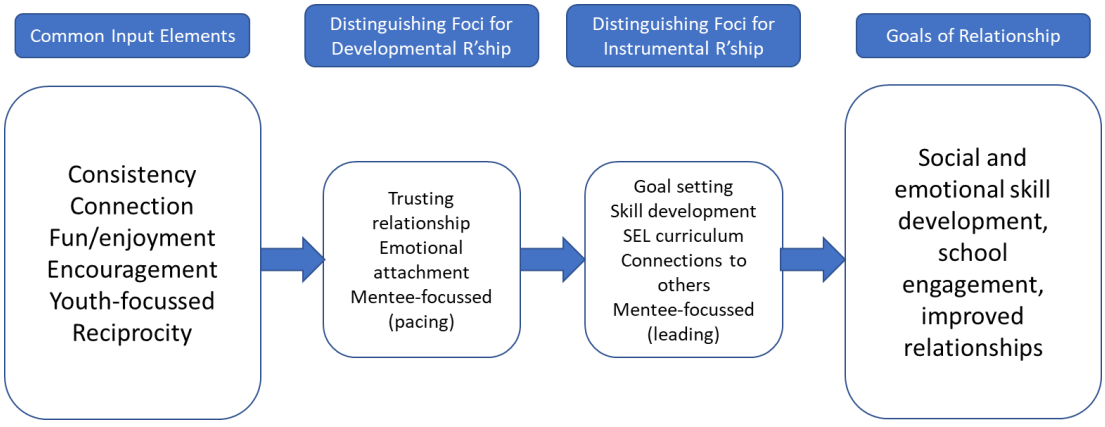

Figure 14. Sequential relationship development and introduction of goal-based activities in a school-based mentoring program. Adapted with permission from McQuillin, Terry, Strait & Smith (2013).

Interestingly, when relationships did not progress beyond *comfortable*, it was more likely to be the mentor who was dissatisfied than the mentee. Perhaps this is

because young people perceived the mentor relationship as positive in comparison to other adult relationships which were more problematic (see Figure 8). For mentors, particularly those who were not skilled in 'pacing and leading', stagnation or challenges in the relationship were perceived negatively which impacted both their engagement with the program, and more importantly, with their mentee. Spencer (2007) suggests incorporating a structured format into the program for mentees and mentors to have conversations about their relationship (for example, sharing what the relationship means to them and discussing ways their needs and expectations are not being met). This may be helpful in identifying and progressing relationships that have stalled.

The relationship between Relationship Quality (RQ) and Adjustment

The relationship between RQ and adjustment can be seen more clearly now, and it seems likely that the reason that there was little correlation between the two in the quantitative stage of this research is because mentees had a tendency to rate their relationship with their mentor highly, whether or not it progressed through to a more active stage where positive outcomes were achieved. A possible reason for this is that when mentees entered the program, most did not understand the purpose of the intervention, or the reason they had been nominated to participate. Therefore, they may have found it difficult to make a judgement about quality beyond that they enjoyed meeting with their mentor. Another viable explanation is that the scales used to measure RQ were not sensitive to the aspects of mentoring relationships that lead to positive change, and this is discussed further below.

The second phase from the mentee's perspective showed that *purposeful* relationships where mentors and mentees had a shared understanding and some common goals, led to short term outcomes such as improvements in attendance,

bullying, self-harm, school-refusal, grades etc. Longer term outcomes of improved resilience and hope for the future can be partly explained through the process of mentors connecting them to others who can provide support during and post-mentoring. All adolescents are vulnerable to risk, however by increasing their protective factors in the form of additional adult support, it is possible to reduce risk and foster resilience on an ongoing basis (Osher et al., 2020) (see Figure 1). The mentor perspective contributed to this understanding by shedding light on the qualities that were necessary to be in place for a relationship to become purposeful. Relationships which were able to progress from pre-trust to trust became more active, with mentors more able to focus on explicit skill-building, advice-giving and connecting mentees with other important adults and resources.

The need for future research is indicated in the development of a relationship measurement that includes different stages of the mentoring relationship, to highlight the importance of the *developing* relationship as a time when mentees are making decisions about whether to trust, and fully engage with the process.

The relationship between program practices and adjustment

As can be seen from Figure 12, it was found that *mentor attributes, mentee attributes and program practices* all influenced the developing relationship between a mentee and their mentor. In the integration of results, it was demonstrated that various program practices were important for both mentees and mentors. Crucially, while the Ismo mentoring program claims to adhere to best practice, meeting or exceeding nearly all of the suggested Australian Youth Mentoring Network benchmarks (AYMN, 2012), through the qualitative exploration it was evident that not all processes were implemented consistently across the different schools where the program was delivered. This type of modification by practitioners has been

explored previously in research on the fidelity of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) interventions. It was found that clinicians often modify evidence-based interventions, which is not problematic in and of itself; rather it is the way that they are modified which is important to outcomes; for example whether they are modified in a fidelity-consistent or fidelity-inconsistent way (Wiltsey Stirman et al., 2015). As found in the current research, it is likely that program coordinators in mentoring programs will make adaptations to suit different environments and groups, and their own personal style. Training for coordinators to ensure their understanding of the importance of evidence-based practice is required so that any modifications align with best-practice knowledge.

Matching.

One example of this is inconsistencies with the matching process. For both mentors and mentees, having input into the match process by being able to choose who they were matched with was important. Where this was not possible, understanding why they had been matched proved helpful by providing them a sense of purpose. It has been reported in the literature that not only is a sense of purpose important in promoting positive youth development, but it also increases the likelihood that a young person will be able to make meaningful connections with support networks, including mentors (Bronk, 2005). For the matches in this research project, when young people had agency in the matching process, or were provided with a reason or purpose about the match, they all progressed through from 'comfortable' or 'pre-trust' relationships through to 'purposeful' or 'trust' relationships.

Program Introduction.

For young people, the way in which the program was introduced to them influenced their expectations and openness to the experience. For many, there was a feeling of stigma which has been shown to be a barrier to help-seeking (Ivancic et al., 2014; Koller & Stuart, 2016; Sawyer et al., 2001). Mentees described feeling confused and at times ashamed when the program was introduced to them by the school. Where it was presented in a positive light (e.g. for children who have 'potential) there was mistrust and disdain; when it was presented negatively there was the feeling of being 'othered'. Overall, mentees described the prevailing feeling as one of confusion, and it appeared that little attempt was made to help young people understand what the program was about, or why it would be beneficial for them to attend.

There was one notable exception, where the purpose of the program was explained to Tom (to help with his experience of bullying and anger management). This made sense to Tom, and appeared to set him up for a positive experience of the program. Tom's understanding and willingness to engage in a goal that was meaningful to him meant that he and his mentor had shared purpose from very early on in the program, which appeared to facilitate the development of their relationship and also allowed them to step into an active mentoring relationship more quickly.

From a mentor perspective, it was also important to understand the reason that young people were in the program. In the example above, understanding Tom's needs and goals (e.g., to develop skills to navigate bullying and anger management) gave Steve both the confidence and the means to be able to provide the support that Tom needed. For others, unless the reason became clear during the course of

mentoring, it appeared to impact both their confidence and willingness to engage fully in the relationship.

Implications for measurement

As seen in Figure 12, when certain pre-conditions of the mentoring relationship are met, and the relationship is able to progress from pre-trust through to trust, various positive outcomes are experienced. In considering the integrated results, there are some clear implications for the way in which relationships and outcomes are measured, both in the Ismo mentoring program and other youth mentoring programs with similar aims.

Relationship measurement

The tool used to measure relationship quality in this study looked at two different facets of the mentoring relationship. First, the extent to which the relationship is centred on the young person (e.g., mentors consider their preferences and interests), and second the young person's emotional involvement in the relationship (e.g., whether they feel happy, special) (Jucovy, 2002).

The results from the qualitative studies suggest that for the Ismo mentoring program, this may not be the most effective way of measuring relationship quality. For example, the scales do not take into account either the pre-conditions necessary for an effective relationship, nor do they differentiate between the different sequential stages of a mentoring relationship. A relationship measure that can be used at different touch points during the program could help to provide 'real-time' feedback to program coordinators, so that they can intervene as necessary to support relationships moving from a *pre-trust* to *trust* phase. Further studies could then validate the findings of this research by testing whether relationships that did progress

through to an active trust stage enjoyed stronger and longer lasting outcomes than relationships that stalled at pre-trust.

Outcome measurement

Of interest is that the outcomes measured in the pre-post survey were different to those described by mentees and mentors in the qualitative studies. The survey measured self-concept, attendance, grades, academic confidence, relationships with parents and friends. However, mentees did not recognise many of these outcomes, instead described feeling more confident, being able to cope with challenges better, feeling better about school and more connected in the school community. Further, one of the key findings was that mentors described ways in which they connected young people to other supportive adults and resources. This begs the question as to whether the right things are being both targeted and measured. For example, is it realistic for a six-month relationship-based program to impact school grades or attendance? It is important that organisations ensure that they are clear what their program goals are, both proximal and distal; that these goals are being measured appropriately, and that the program itself is supporting the desired outcomes.

Effects over time

During the qualitative interviews which took place three months post-mentoring, some mentees reported that many of the outcomes they had initially enjoyed had returned to pre-mentoring levels. However, for relationships that progressed to 'purposeful', hope for the future, resilience and self-esteem were still present at follow-up. It is possible that longer term outcomes of mentoring are only enjoyed when the mentoring relationship has the qualities of a purposeful, trusting

relationship and this hypothesis should be tested in future longitudinal research with an appropriate measure of relationship quality.

In light of the findings discussed above, the following recommendations for practice are put forward.

Recommendation for practice – program processes

The findings from this research indicate several recommendations for mentoring programs.

1. Communicate the program to young people in a way that is honest and authentic, and personalised where possible to foster a sense of purposefulness and engagement from the start of the program.
2. Be open with mentees about why they have been chosen to participate in the program and share this information with mentors where appropriate.
3. Encourage mentees and mentors to develop and commit to a *shared purpose* early in the program.
4. Matching processes should be adhered to as these were not consistent. Where possible, mentees should be empowered to choose their own mentor. When mentee choice is not possible, provide mentees *and* mentors with a reason for the match (e.g., shared interests, values etc). Program staff should monitor matches closely in the early stages so that any necessary changes can be made; young people are not likely to speak up about a poor match.
5. Matching based on shared values should be taken into consideration given the importance placed on this aspect of the mentoring relationship.

6. Icebreaker games designed to promote awareness and discussion of core values should be implemented into the matching process.
7. Recruitment and/or training should prioritise mentors who had qualities that were highly valued by young people such as approachability and experience.
8. Structured activities should be purposeful and meaningful to young people.
9. Not all young people valued the opportunity to talk about their mentors at graduation; further exploration into what would be a meaningful way of celebrating the end of the program for them is recommended.
10. Not all young people felt that they had supports in place or had a clear understanding of their 'next steps' in terms of goal setting as recommended by best-practice. This aspect of the program should be addressed to ensure that ongoing support is readily accessible.
11. Consider recruitment strategies that target mentors who have experience with young people.
12. Train mentors to understand the barriers that prevent young people from seeking help in different areas of their lives. In addition, encourage mentors to help mentees understand the barriers to help-seeking and identify ways to overcome them.

Recommendation for practice – the mentoring relationship

1. Focus on the stages of the developing relationship in mentor training.
2. Ensure relationship attributes such as consistency, connection, fun and encouragement are the foci for relationships in the early stages of mentoring.

3. Include reflective activities to provide opportunities for mentees and mentors to engage in meaningful conversations about their relationship.
4. Include activities that encourage reciprocity and sharing into the mentoring curriculum to support the developing relationship.
5. Include opportunities for mentor peer supervision sessions that allow for a limited number of mentors to share concerns throughout the program within a closed confidential confine.

The Role of the Research Practitioner

Before coming to the final conclusions about the findings of this research project, I consider how my role as a research-practitioner influenced both aspects of the role. There is no doubt that this duality both helped and hindered the process in many ways.

Impact on the research

The research was impacted greatly by my role as practitioner. First, there were practical benefits such as greater ease of access to participants and being able to achieve fidelity of survey administration and completion. The passion I had for my role kept me focussed and determined to complete the project when my energy levels flagged.

On the other hand, my role as practitioner was extremely demanding, and as my research knowledge and skills grew through this undertaking, so too did the demands on my role, as I was promoted from Program Coordinator to Evaluation Manager and most recently to Research & Evaluation Director. The dual research-practitioner role made it much harder to maintain boundaries between work and study,

and often demands of my practitioner role overflowed into my study days and hindered progress.

Another benefit to the research was the in-depth program knowledge that I had which allowed deeper insights to the findings and enabled links that may not have otherwise been apparent. For example, the importance of reciprocity for both mentees and mentors was described in the two qualitative studies; however I knew that Raise Foundation had a policy which meant mentors were trained not to share any personal stories with their mentees. While this aligned with their ethos of being 'mentee-led', both the mentoring literature and the current research suggest that it is a vital part of trust-building. This research-practice gap was highlighted because of my insider knowledge of the program.

On the other hand, my intimate knowledge of the program may also have restricted or focussed me on particular areas. I did take several steps to mitigate this risk, as described in Chapter 4 (p.115), however I acknowledge that it is nigh on impossible to claim that my practitioner role did not have an influence in the interviews and subsequent analysis.

Influence on practice

This research paradigm has enabled a concentrated focus on the link between theory and practice that would not usually be available to a small not-for-profit organisation. Through this process it became apparent that there were not clear linkages between the purpose, the activities and the outcomes of the intervention. At the time of writing, Raise Foundation is undertaking a major revision of their organisation theory of change that would not have been considered if it was not for

this research, and the cumulative effect of research and practice knowledge that was gained both individually and by the wider organisation.

A less positive effect was that while a distinct benefit to the research was the passion I had for my role in the organisation, conversely, at times I grew dissatisfied with my role, as I began to question the effectiveness of mentoring as an intervention. The openness of the organisation in accepting and integrating knowledge that demonstrated need for improvement was key in mitigating this effect.

Of great benefit was the ability to quickly and efficiently communicate results that could be immediately translated into practice. For example, in the qualitative studies it became evident that resilience was one of the outcomes experienced by young people, which was then immediately included as a key outcome measure (Raise Foundation, 2016).

Ideal state

Ideally, all practitioners would have the skills, resources and motivation to incorporate research into their practice. Proponents of a science-practitioner model suggest that there are three things practitioners need to do - consume, evaluate and produce science (Harwood, 2016). That is, they must be up to date with current theories and innovations to inform interventions; they must be able to evaluate the effectiveness of their practice, and they must write about their findings to advance knowledge (Frank, 1986; Harwood, 2016).

Feasible and recommended

In practice, the 'ideal state' slated above is very difficult to achieve, particularly in a not-for-profit environment where resources in the form of both time and money are often poor. In consideration of the challenges that have been detailed

elsewhere in this thesis (see Chapter 3, p. 62) both from the research-practitioner literature, and my own experience, I suggest the following recommendations for organisations who seek to improve both their own practice and that of the wider industry in which they are located.

1. Form research partnerships with Universities and consider co-supervising Honours, Masters or PhD candidates to undertake action research within the organisation. Closer partnerships can increase the awareness of individual organisations and can lead to further opportunities. For example, through my role as research-practitioner, a partnership between Raise Foundation and Monash University was developed to provide an opportunity for students to undertake mentor training and work in a school as part of their placement requirements.
2. Building on the previous point, student research is an effective, relatively low-resourced (both time and money) opportunity for quality, independent research. However, it does require both adequate resourcing and research expertise within the practitioner organisation. As a case study example, during the process of undertaking this thesis, I co-supervised three research projects for students at Monash University.
3. Allocate resources (time, or funding) and expert support to enable practitioners to write up the results of their research. Lack of time and confidence have been cited as two major barriers to publishing action-research (Mason et al., 2016). Indeed, drawing from the example above, despite being able to supervise and support students to undertake research projects during my PhD, to date this research is unpublished due to a lack of time. While this means that my organisation has benefitted from the knowledge gained through

these projects, there is much greater potential for both wider dissemination, and for the partnering university to benefit from additional publications.

4. Prioritise and resource research-practitioner roles commensurate to size and capability. Again, using a case study example, as a small charity Raise Foundation resourced a new dedicated evaluation role at five hours per week in 2015. As the organisation has grown, so too has the resourcing allocated, and they have now secured external philanthropic funding to resource a full-time Research & Evaluation Director role.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This research has a number of limitations that have been identified in earlier chapters; for ease of reference I will summarise limitations briefly here and include recommendations for research where they have not been previously covered in the current chapter.

In the quantitative stage of the research, a lack of control group means that causality cannot be inferred from the results of the study. Further, prevention of decline was unable to be tested which may under-estimate the effects, as early adolescence is a time when declines in wellbeing can be expected (Marino et al., 2019). Whilst there are some ethical issues around control or counter-factual studies, it is recommended that future research is conducted with a wait-list control group to mitigate these concerns. In addition, the current study relied on self-report measures which have limitations that have been previously discussed. Future research should consider observation methods in addition to reports by teachers, parents and mentors to triangulate the data. See p.106 for a more detailed discussion of these limitations.

A key limitation that only became apparent through the findings of the qualitative data analysis was the measure that was used to calculate relationship quality, namely the Youth Centred and Emotional Engagement scales of The Youth Survey (Jucovy, 2002). These scales measured RQ from the mentee's perspective at the end of the intervention and did not consider the different phases of the mentoring relationship that were found to be important in the current study. In addition, they did not measure the pre-conditions to effective relationships such as consistency, connection, encouragement, and reciprocity. Given the importance of the mentoring relationship in the literature (see p.29), it is vital that a well-validated measure of relationship quality that includes aspects of the mentoring relationship found to be important in influencing outcomes is developed.

In the qualitative phase of the research, the relatively small sample size (N = 11 mentees and 10 mentors) means that the findings should be interpreted with caution. As described in the methodology chapter, this size is considered adequate in qualitative research, especially where there is saturation – the point at which no new information is observed in the data – is achieved (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The primary aim of this research, through a research-practitioner lens, was to increase understanding of the Ismo school-based mentoring program in order to improve effectiveness for this particular program. To that end, the results can, and have, been tested further within this program, however, may not be generalisable to other youth mentoring programs.

The study design relied on retrospective interviews meaning that mentees and mentors needed to rely on their memory when reflecting on their experience of the program. However, all interviews were conducted within 3 months of the program

ending, and prompts were used to remind participants of the key stages of their experience.

Qualitative research is subjective by nature and relies heavily on the interview skills of the researcher (Roulston, Demarrais, & Lewis, 2003). As a sole researcher, particularly one who was working in the organisation at the time of this research, the opportunity for bias to creep in was inevitable. As described earlier in this thesis, I took several steps to mitigate this risk including reflexivity, peer debriefing and reflective journaling (Galletta, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (see p.115 for a detailed discussion). In reference to the skills required to harvest high quality data, my training and experience as a psychologist, as well as intensive qualitative research training undertaken during the early stages of this research meant that I had a strong foundation of the necessary skills to conduct and analyse the interviews (Guest, Macqueen, & Namey, 2012).

This research was a mixed methods design, and the limited scope of a PhD thesis meant that the mixing of methods was limited to the integration of results as discussed in the current chapter. There is opportunity for further mixing of methods, particularly in relation to the development of a relationship quality scale based on the findings from the qualitative studies which has been recommended for future research.

Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study design limits understanding of the outcomes and experiences of participants to a particular point in time. To understand the sustained impact and be able to make bolder claims about the effectiveness (or otherwise) of school-based youth mentoring programs in Australia,

longitudinal research that can track participants throughout their school years and beyond is required.

Contribution to knowledge

This research has made several contributions to the literature on youth mentoring. First, the research was based in Australian schools where there is little empirical evidence for the efficacy of mentoring programs despite their growing popularity, and thus provides important context as to the generalisability of overseas literature in an Australian context. With recent recommendations calling for wider implementation of mentoring programs (Drane, Vernon, & O'Shea, 2020; Gonski et al., 2018), a strong knowledge base is needed, and this research contributes both from an academic and practical sense. As argued previously, the low-risk, early intervention high-school based Australian context is very different to the high-risk, community based, USA and UK context where much of the mentoring literature has originated (see p.44). While mentoring is relatively low cost, efficacy for the target group needs to be ensured and this research both adds to the existing empirical research in Australia and provides direction for future research to continue building a contextually relevant evidence base.

Second, the research has tested the relevance of the prevailing theory of youth mentoring in an Australian high school context. While the findings are generally compatible with Rhodes' theory of mentoring (Rhodes et al., 2006) there are several areas where they differ. Specifically, the current research has identified pre-conditions to relationship development, highlighted different stages of the developing relationship, and called attention to the role that mentors can play in connecting young people to social-ecological support networks.

This is significant in that it suggests a shift away from the mentoring relationship being the mechanism of change as in Rhodes' theory, and turns the focus towards the preconditions necessary for developing effective relationships. Relationships perceived as 'good' by young people do not necessarily lead to change and may even be detrimental (e.g., missing class with no benefit from the program). However, effective relationships that involve mentors taking a more active, 'pacing and leading' role can lead to positive outcomes. This furthers previous arguments that suggested a "sweet-spot" be found between instrumental and relationship based mentoring (Lyons et al., 2019), and posits that in order to be able to effectively mentor in the more active 'instrumental' zone, several preconditions that enable a trusting relationship need to be in place. This important information about the sequencing of the mentoring relationship and instrumental goals has major implications for program delivery.

Third, this research has used both mentee and mentor perspectives to qualitatively explore their experience of the mentoring program. The mentoring literature usually takes one or the other perspective, and to my knowledge this is the first study of its kind in Australia. Youth voice is important and often lacking in research that affects them (Clark et al., 2005), so it was vital to understand the mentee perspective. Including the mentor voice in this research provided additional valuable insight, and the triangulation of data source has allowed a more robust and wholistic story of the mentoring experience.

Finally, this research has taken a research-practitioner approach to provide a unique perspective that can increase understanding of the challenges and benefits of this approach. There is great potential for the challenges to be mitigated and a 'feasible' implementation of this dual role to be used on a wider scale in a way that

will be of immense benefit to both research and practice. My role as a research-practitioner has been woven through this thesis, and as I am finishing this final chapter, it is clear to me that one would not have existed without the other, despite the challenges involved.

Concluding Comments

From the very early days of this project, my aspirational purpose was to increase the quality of support provided to young people participating in mentoring programs, ultimately resulting in their increased wellbeing. This highly practical aim led me to take a risk in innovating a research-practitioner focus to this study. Has this aim been achieved? Through the vehicle of research-practitioner, to some extent it has, as already demonstrated by the early adaptation of the main findings by Raise Foundation. In terms of the wider mentoring industry in Australia, collaborations are in place to update and increase industry standards. However, there is still much to do, and the completion of this thesis does not mean the end to my continuing development as a research-practitioner. I remain committed to both reflexive practice that allows personal insights as well as continuing to partner with academic institutions to conduct research and disseminate the results in a timely way. Nor does it end my hope that mentoring organisations continue to evaluate the efficacy of their programs, while seeking to improve the support that they provide young at-risk Australians.

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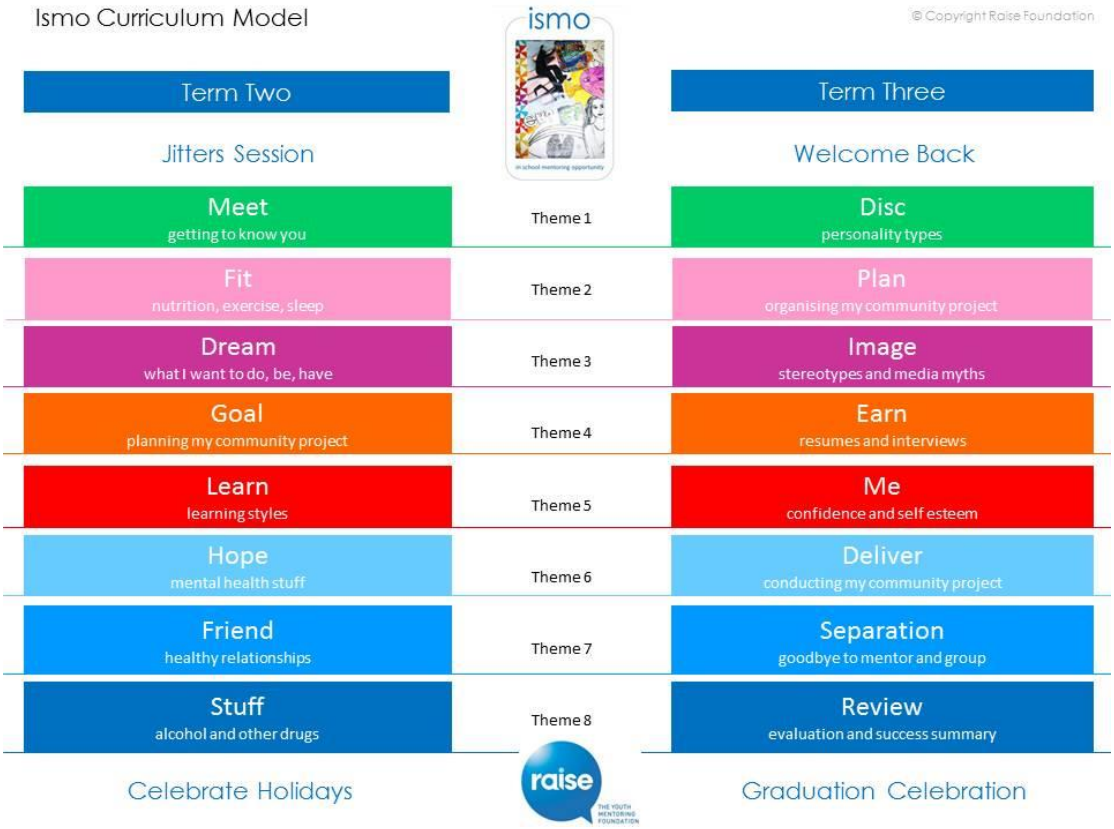
Appendices

Appendix 1 – Mentoring Curriculum Outline



Appendix 2 – Ethics Approval

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number:	CF14/3822 - 2014001998	
Project Title:	The evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO)	
Chief Investigator:	Dr John Roodenburg	
Approved:	From: 12 January 2015	To: 12 January 2020

Terms of approval - ***Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.***

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Carol Sandiford

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia
Building 3E, Room 111, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton
Telephone +61 3 9905 5490 Facsimile +61 3 9905 3831
Email muhrec@monash.edu http://www.monash.edu.au/researchoffice/human/
ABN 12 377 614 012 CRICOS Provider #00008C

Education
Public Schools

Ms Carol Sandiford
13 Ross Street
NORTHCOTE VIC 3070

CORP15/11006
DOC15/810291
SERAP 2015255

Dear Ms Sandiford

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in NSW government schools entitled *Evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program*. I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved.

You may contact principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to principals.**

This approval will remain valid until 28-Oct-2016.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Researcher name	WWCC	WWCC expires
Carol Sandiford	03847043	21-Jan-2018

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in NSW government schools:

- The privacy of participants is to be protected as per the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998.
- School principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the principal for the specific method of gathering information must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the research approvals officer before publication proceeds.
- All conditions attached to the approval must be complied with.

When your study is completed please email your report to: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

I wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Susan Harriman
Leader, Quality Assurance
29 October 2015

Policy, Planning and Reporting Directorate
NSW Department of Education
Level 1, 1 Oxford Street, Darlinghurst NSW 2010 – Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst NSW 1300
Telephone: 02 9244 5060 – Email: serap@det.nsw.edu.au

Department of
Education & Training
Strategy & Review Group

2 Treasury Place
East Melbourne, Victoria 3002
Telephone: +61 3 9637 2000
DX 210083
GPO Box 4367
Melbourne, Victoria 3001

2015_002717

Ms Carol Sandiford
13 Ross Street
NORTHCOTE 3070

Dear Ms Sandiford

Thank you for your application of 11 May 2015 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian government schools titled *An evaluation of the ISMO In School Mentoring Program*.

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Training.

2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from school principals. This is to be supported by the Department of Education and Training approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.

3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Training for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.

5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education Training in any publications arising from the research.

6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study's indicative completion date.

Appendix 3 – Consent Forms and Explanatory Statements

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM

Parents

Project: The evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO).

Chief Investigator:	**Dr John Roodenburg**
Student Researcher:	**Carol Sandiford**

My child has been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to my child participating in this project. In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Explanatory Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child's involvement in the project with the researchers.
3. I have discussed participation in the project with my child and my child assents to their participation in the project.
4. I understand that that my child's participation in this project is voluntary; a decision not to participate will in no way affect their academic standing or relationship with the school or the ISMO mentoring program and they are free to withdraw their participation at any time.
5. I understand that my child's involvement is strictly confidential and that no information about my child will be used in any way that reveals my child's, their school or my identity.
6. I understand that an audio-recording will be made of the interview.

Name of Participant (child): _____

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date _____

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Parents

Project: An evaluation of the In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO)

Your child is invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not you agree to them participating in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed below.

Who is doing this research?

Carol Sandiford as part of her Doctoral research, supervised by Dr John Roodenburg, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University.

What does the research involve?

We want to evaluate the effectiveness of the ISMO In-School Mentoring Program in achieving positive outcomes for participants. We also want to find out how the program is achieving these outcomes.

Your child will be invited to complete a questionnaire when they first start the mentoring program, and then again at the end of the program. We want to find out if things have changed for them by being part of the mentoring program. It will take approximately 30 minutes each time to complete the questionnaire.

We also want to do some interviews to find out a bit more about how your child experienced the ISMO mentoring program (about 5 selected students and their mentors only). If your child is interested in doing an interview, we will contact you near the end of the program, and make a time to meet with your child at school and talk to them about what it was like to be part of the ISMO mentoring program. The interview will go for about 45 minutes and will be arranged after school hours with the consultation and approval of you.

Of course, you can do the online survey without doing the interview.

Why were you chosen for this research?

All students who are involved in Raise Foundation's ISMO program in 2015 are being invited to participate in this research.

Source of funding

The student researcher (Carol Sandiford) is a part-time employee of Raise Foundation (the company who runs the mentoring program).

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

Being in the study is voluntary, and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do consent to your child participating, you may withdraw from further participation at any stage and your child's responses will not be saved or analysed. However, as the research involves the submission of any anonymous (non-identifiable) material such as a questionnaire, it will not be possible to withdraw data once they have been submitted. Saying no to being part of the research does not impact on your child's ability to be part of the ISMO mentoring program in any way.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

There are no direct benefits to your child personally by participating in the research. However, their responses will help us to understand how and why the ISMO mentoring program is helping young people. This information will help Raise Foundation to make changes to the program so that future participants can benefit from the information that your child provides.

Some of the questions in the survey are personal, and ask your child about things that they might find sensitive. For example, we will ask questions about their behaviour (e.g. "how many times in the past month have you lied to your parents about something important?"). We also ask them to agree or disagree to statements about current difficulties they might be experiencing (e.g. "I am often unhappy, depressed, or tearful") and about their current relationships (e.g. "there is no-one I can depend on for aid if I really need it").

Services on offer if adversely affected

In the unlikely event that your child should feel upset while completing the questionnaire, they have been advised to discontinue working on the questionnaire and let the researchers know. They will be offered the opportunity to talk to their mentor, the school guidance counsellor or the ISMO program counsellor. If they want to speak to someone outside the school, there is information below on free services they can access.

Kids Helpline:	Kids Helpline is a free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25. Telephone: 1800 551 800 (free call) or access web or email counselling online at www.kidshelp.com.au/teens
Headspace:	eheadspace is a confidential, free, anonymous, secure space where you can chat, email or speak with qualified youth mental health professionals if you are 12 to 25 years and want to talk about what is going on in your life. Online and telephone support available between 9am and 1am www.eheadspace.org.au
Lifeline:	Lifeline provide 24/7 crisis support. Phone 13 11 14 or online live chat available from 7pm to 4am At www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/online-services/crisis-chat

Confidentiality

We would like to assure you that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Any reports from the questionnaires or interviews will be synthesised to ensure that your child cannot be identified through their comments, their confidentiality and privacy will be maintained at all times. Reports on the project may be published in professional journals and other publications. Your child's name will not be used in any publication arising from this research. Pseudonyms will be used instead so that you they will not be recognised.

Storage of data

Data collected will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations. They will be kept at Monash University, Clayton in locked cabinets and secure computer server for five years.

Results

The findings may be disseminated in national, regional and/or international conferences and a summary of key findings will be made available to participants on request.

Contact details of the researchers:

Chief Investigator: Dr John Roodenburg
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education
57 Scenic Boulevard, Clayton Campus
Monash University 3800
Phone: (03) 99051295
email: john.roodenburgh@monash.edu

Student Researcher: Carol Sandiford
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
57 Scenic Boulevard, Clayton Campus
Monash University 3800
Phone : 0410617146
email: carol.sandiford@monash.edu

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

Thank you,

Dr John Roodenburg **Carol Sandiford (M.Psych/PhD Candidate)**

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM

Mentors – Group 2

Project: The evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO).

Chief Investigator: **Dr John Roodenburg**

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Completing a written questionnaire at the start, the middle, and the end of the mentoring program.	☐	☐
The data that I provide during this research may be used by Monash University in future research projects.	☐	☐
Being contacted for a follow-up interview	☐	☐
Audio recording during the interview	☐	☐

Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Mentors

Project: An evaluation of the In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO)

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed below.

Who is doing this research?

Carol Sandiford as part of her Doctoral research, supervised by Dr John Roodenburg, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University.

What does the research involve?

We want to evaluate the effectiveness of the ISMO In-School Mentoring Program in achieving positive outcomes for participants (both mentees and mentors). We also want to find out how the program is achieving these outcomes.

You will be asked to complete a written questionnaire when you first start the mentoring program, in the middle and then again at the end of the program. We want to find out if things have changed for you and your mentee by being part of the mentoring program. It will take approximately 10-15 minutes each time to complete the questionnaire.

We also want to do some interviews to find out a bit more about how you experience the ISMO mentoring program (about 9 selected students and their mentors only). If you are interested in doing an interview, we will contact you near the end of the program, and make a time to meet you and talk to you about what it was like to be part of the ISMO mentoring program. The interview will go for about 45 minutes.

Of course, you can do the online survey without doing the interview.

Why were you asked to participate in this research?

All mentors who are involved in Raise Foundation's ISMO program in 2015 are being invited to participate in this research.

Source of funding

The student researcher (Carol Sandiford) is a part-time employee of Raise Foundation (the company who runs the mentoring program).

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

We need you to sign and return a consent form to say that you agree to participate in the research. This is completely up to you, and you can change your mind at any time. However, once you have submitted the questionnaire it will not be possible to withdraw your data, as it will be anonymous (we will not be able to match your name to your data). Saying no to being part of the research does not impact on your ability to be part of the ISMO mentoring program in any way.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

There are no direct benefits to you personally by participating in the research. However, your responses will help us to understand how and why the ISMO mentoring program is helping young people. This information will help Raise Foundation to make changes to the program so that future participants can benefit from the information that you provide. It will also help us to understand how mentoring benefits mentors. This will help Raise Foundation to recruit mentors.

Services on offer if adversely affected

In the unlikely event that you should become upset while completing the questionnaire, you should discontinue working on the questionnaire and will be offered the opportunity to talk to the Raise Program Counsellor. If you would like to speak to someone outside of the organisation, Lifeline offer a free service.

Lifeline: Lifeline provide 24/7 crisis support. Phone 13 11 14 or online live chat available from 7pm to 4am
At www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/online-services/crisis-chat

Confidentiality

We would like to assure you that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Any reports from the questionnaires or interviews will be synthesised to ensure that you cannot be identified through your comments, your confidentiality and privacy will be maintained at all times. Reports on the project may be published in professional journals and other publications. Your names will not be used in any publication arising from this research. Pseudonyms will be used instead so that you will not be recognised.

Storage of data

Data collected will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations. They will be kept at Monash University, Clayton in locked cabinets and secure computer server for five years.

Results

The findings may be disseminated in national, regional and/or international conferences and a summary of key findings will be made available to participants on request.

Contact Details of the researchers:

Chief Investigator: Dr John Roodenburg
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education
57 Scenic Boulevard,
Clayton Campus
Monash University 3800
Phone: (03) 99051295
email: john.roodenburgh@monash.edu

Student Researcher: Carol Sandiford
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
57 Scenic Boulevard,
Clayton Campus
Monash University 3800
Phone : 0410617146
email: carol.sandiford@monash.edu

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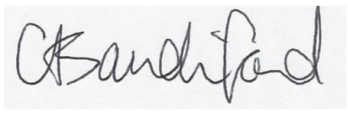
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

Thank you,



Dr John Roodenburg **Carol Sandiford (M.Psych/PhD Candidate)**

MONASH University

CONSENT FORM

Students – Group 1

Project: The evaluation of an In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO).

Chief Investigator: **Dr John Roodenburg**

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Completing a questionnaire at the beginning, middle and end of the program.	☐	☐
The data that I provide during this research may be used by Monash University in future research projects.	☐	☐
Being contacted for a follow-up interview	☐	☐
Audio recording during the interview	☐	☐

Name of Participant _____

School _____

Date of Birth _____

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

Students

Project: An evaluation of the In-School Mentoring Program (ISMO)

You are invited to take part in this study. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone numbers or email addresses listed below.

Who is doing this research?

Carol Sandiford as part of her Doctoral research, supervised by Dr John Roodenburg, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University.

What does the research involve?

We want to evaluate the effectiveness of the ISMO In-School Mentoring Program in achieving positive outcomes for participants. We also want to find out how the program is achieving these outcomes.

You will be invited to complete a questionnaire when you first start the mentoring program, during the mentoring program and then again at the end of the program. We want to find out if things have changed for you by being part of the mentoring program. It will take approximately 15 minutes each time to complete the questionnaire.

We also want to do some interviews to find out a bit more about how you experience the ISMO mentoring program (about 9 selected students and their mentors only). If you are interested in doing an interview, we will contact you near the end of the program, and make a time to meet you at school and talk to you about what it was like to be part of the ISMO mentoring program. The interview will go for about 45 minutes (unless you have heaps to say and then it could be a bit longer!) and will be arranged after school hours with the consultation and approval of your parents.

Of course, you can do the questionnaire without doing the interview.

Why were you chosen for this research?

All students who are involved in Raise Foundation's ISMO program in 2015 are being invited to participate in this research.

Source of funding

The student researcher (Carol Sandiford) is a part-time employee of Raise Foundation (the company who runs the mentoring program).

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

We have already received consent from your parents to be part of the ISMO mentoring program, and for you to participate in this research if you would like to. If you are happy to participate, we need you to sign and return a consent form to say that you agree to participate in the research. This is completely up to you, and you can change your mind at any time. Saying no to being part of the research does not impact on your ability to be part of the ISMO mentoring program in any way.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

There are no direct benefits to you personally by participating in the research. However, your responses will help us to understand how and why the ISMO mentoring program is helping young people. This information will help Raise Foundation to make changes to the program so that future participants can benefit from the information that you provide.

Some of the questions in the survey are personal, and ask you about things that you might find sensitive. For example, we will ask you questions about your behaviour (e.g. "how many times in the past month have you lied to your parents about something important?"). We also ask you to agree or disagree to statements about current difficulties you might be experiencing (e.g. "I am often unhappy, depressed, or tearful") and about your current relationships (e.g. "there is no-one I can depend on for aid if I really need it"). While we appreciate you answering these questions, and they are anonymous (we can't match your name to your data), you are free to skip these questions if you prefer.

Services on offer if adversely affected

In the unlikely event that you feel upset while completing the questionnaire, you should discontinue working on the questionnaire and let your program counsellor know. You will be offered the opportunity to talk to your mentor, the school guidance counsellor or the ISMO program counsellor. Or, if you want to speak to someone outside the school, you can contact these services (they are all free).

Kids Helpline: Kids Helpline is a free, private and confidential, telephone and online counselling service specifically for young people aged between 5 and 25. Telephone: 1800 551 800 (free call) or access web or email counselling online at www.kidshelp.com.au/teens

Headspace: eheadspace is a confidential, free, anonymous, secure space where you can chat, email or speak with qualified youth mental health professionals if you are 12 to 25 years and want to talk about what is going on in your life. Online and telephone support available between 9am and 1am www.eheadspace.org.au

Lifeline: Lifeline provide 24/7 crisis support. Phone 13 11 14 or online live chat available from 7pm to 4am At www.lifeline.org.au/get-help/online-services/crisis-chat

Confidentiality

We would like to assure you that confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Any reports from the questionnaires or interviews will be synthesised to ensure that you cannot be identified through your comments, your confidentiality and privacy will be maintained at all times. Reports on the project may be published in professional journals and other publications. Your names will not be used in any publication arising from this research. Pseudonyms will be used instead so that you will not be recognised.

Storage of data

Data collected will be stored in accordance with Monash University regulations. They will be kept at Monash University, Clayton in locked cabinets and secure computer server for five years.

Results

The findings may be disseminated in national, regional and/or international conferences and a summary of key findings will be made available to participants on request.

Contact details of the researchers:

Chief Investigator: Dr John Roodenburg
Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Education
57 Scenic Boulevard, Clayton Campus
Monash University, 3800
Phone: (03) 99051295
email: john.roodenburgh@monash.edu

Student Researcher: Carol Sandiford
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education
57 Scenic Boulevard, Clayton Campus
Monash University, 3800
Phone : 0410617146
email: carol.sandiford@monash.edu

Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

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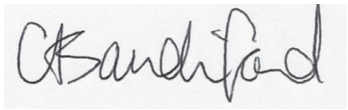
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

Thank you,



Dr John Roodenburg **Carol Sandiford (M.Psych/PhD Candidate)**

Appendix 5 – Survey Measure

Unique Code

Questionnaire - Mentees

Date of Birth: _____ Age: _____

Gender: ☐ Boy ☐ Girl

Do you currently have a mentor? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, is it the same mentor you started the program with? ☐ Yes ☐ No

** Please don't forget to fill in your unique code at the top of this page. Ask your mentor or Program Coordinator if you need help with this **.

Thank you for agreeing to complete this survey. It will help us to find out how effective the mentoring program is in helping young people. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, and your responses are confidential - we take that really seriously. Please answer as honestly as you can. You can change your mind about taking part at any time (if you do change your mind, stop filling in the questionnaire and let your Program Coordinator know), and if any questions make you feel uncomfortable you can skip them. By completing this survey you are agreeing that your anonymous data can be used for future research.

Questions about your goals

The six sentences below describe how young people think about themselves and how they do things in general. Read each sentence carefully. For each sentence, please think about how you are in most situations. Place a circle inside the box that describes YOU the best. For example, circle the number 1 "None of the time," if this describes you. Or, if you are this way "All of the time," circle number 6. Please answer every question by putting a circle in one of the boxes. There are no right or wrong answers.

		None of the time	A little of the time	Some of the time	A lot of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1	I think I am doing well	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	I can think of many ways to get the things in life that are most important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	I am doing just as well as other kids my age.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	When I have a problem, I can come up with lots of ways to solve it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	I think the things I have done in the past will help me in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	Even when others want to quit, I know that I can find ways to solve the problem.	1	2	3	4	5	6

In answering the next set of questions I am going to ask you, I want you to think about your <u>current</u> relationship with friends, family members, community members and so on. Please tell me to what extent you agree that each statement describes your current relationship with other people. So, for example if you think a statement is very true of your current relationships, you would tell me "strongly agree". If you feel a statement clearly does not describe your relationships, you would respond "strongly disagree"

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress	☐	☐	☐	☐

3	There is someone I can talk to about important decisions in my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	There is a trustworthy person I could turn to for advice if I was having problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with.	☐	☐	☐	☐

These are some questions about what you think about school. Remember, this is a survey, not a test so there are no right or wrong answers, everyone will be putting down something different.

		Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
1	I feel that I am very good at my school work.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I feel like I am just as smart as other kids my age.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I am pretty slow in finishing my school work	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	I do very well at my classwork	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I have trouble figuring out the answers in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	I am often disappointed in myself	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I don't like the way I am leading my life	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I am happy with myself most of the time	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I like the kind of person I am	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I am happy being the way I am	☐	☐	☐	☐

We want to ask you a few questions about how things are going with you and your mentor. Please feel free to be very honest with your responses, nobody except the research team will see this questionnaire, and your name will never be connected with your responses.

	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?	Not True At All	Not Very True	Sort of True	Very True
1	My mentor knows my name.	1	2	3	4
2	My mentor makes fun of me in ways I don't like.	1	2	3	4
3	My mentor almost always asks me what I want to do.	1	2	3	4
4	When I'm with my mentor, I feel special.	1	2	3	4
5	Sometimes my mentor promises we will do something; then we don't do it.	1	2	3	4
6	My mentor is always interested in what I want to do.	1	2	3	4
7	When I'm with my mentor, I feel excited.	1	2	3	4
8	When my mentor gives me advice, it makes me feel stupid.	1	2	3	4
9	My mentor and I like to do a lot of the same things.	1	2	3	4
10	When I'm with my mentor, I feel sad.	1	2	3	4
11	I feel I can't trust my mentor with secrets – they would tell my parent/guardian	1	2	3	4
12	My mentor thinks of fun and interesting things to do.	1	2	3	4
13	When I'm with my mentor I feel important	1	2	3	4
14	When I'm with my mentor I feel bored	1	2	3	4
15	I wish my mentor asked me more about what I think.	1	2	3	4

Terrible *Not so good* *Okay* *Very Good* *Excellent*

How do you get along with your family?

Terrible *Not so good* *Okay* *Very Good* *Excellent*

How would you rate your confidence in yourself at the moment?

Terrible *Not so good* *Okay* *Very Good* *Excellent*

I feel more able to ask an adult for help because of the mentoring program

Very true *Sort of true* *Not very true* *Not at all true*

I feel more able to accept help from others because of the mentoring program

Very true *Sort of true* *Not very true* *Not at all true*

I would refer the mentoring program to a friend

Very true *Sort of true* *Not very true* *Not at all true*

Please place this questionnaire into the envelope provided, and hand to your Program Coordinator. Please also make sure that you have filled in your UNIQUE CODE at the top of the first page. If you need help with this, just ask!

Thank you so much for taking part in this survey.
Have a great day ☺

Appendix 6 – Researcher's Vignette

I was seventeen years old, watching daytime television on a day off from work. On one of the morning shows, there was a segment on mentoring with Big Sister/Big Brother through the YWCA. I knew instantly that this was what I wanted - to become a youth mentor. I telephoned Big Brother/Big Sister, and told them that I was the perfect mentor for a young person. They disagreed – based primarily on my tender years! I persisted over several months, and finally a month before my eighteenth birthday I was interviewed, and matched with Tammy, an 11-year-old girl with a beautiful smile and eyes that glinted with mischief. Her background belied her sunny outlook – like me, she hid her secrets beneath her smiles. Like me, also, as she grew up the smile remained, but her behaviour betrayed the pain she was trying to forget.

Our connection was instant, and the relationship became incredibly important to both of us, persisting over a number of years far beyond the initial commitment. I provided a sense of calm, and kindness for Tammy. In her chaotic life, I was the only adult who was consistent for her during her adolescence – although looking back I was barely more than a child myself.

As I'm writing this vignette, I reflect on my age at this time and wonder if the reason that I was so drawn to become a mentor was because I was in desperate need of one myself. An 'advance stream' student from a close family with excellent social supports – a few years earlier I had the world at my feet. Something had changed during my adolescent years, and both school and home became tumultuous and confusing. I had been asked to leave two public high schools (or face expulsion). After the second, my parents sent me to business college, and shortly after my fifteenth birthday, I got a job working as a steno-secretary for Australia Post. I left home the next year. This is a simplified version of a long and involved story, one that I often reflect on. I wonder how different things may have been for me had I had an older adult, someone who wasn't my parents, that I could trust. Someone to listen to me. Someone I could share the craziness from inside my brain with. Someone that could help unravel and make sense of the things I was struggling with.

My relationship with Tammy flourished, despite her challenges and my inexperience. I set boundaries for her, challenging her when her behaviour towards me was unacceptable, while letting her know all the time that she was special, listened to and understood. In some ways, being this role model for Tammy forced me into a more adult role in my own life. I thrived on being useful, being needed, and this fuelled my

desire to return to education. My goal? To become a Program Coordinator for Big Sister/Big Brother. I was 21 years old when I returned to university as a mature age student. Twenty years later, I finally realised my dream. I became a Program Counsellor for Raise Foundation – in charge of a mentoring program for young mothers.

I have done lots of mentoring over the years, but nothing has impacted me the way that my relationship with Tammy did. With her, I was the best version of myself. It was always highly reciprocal, even to the point that it was my relationship with her that landed me my dream job. My future employers could not fail to see the spark and passion deep within me when I spoke of Tammy, and of mentoring. I'm still in touch with Tammy, who is all grown up with three children of her own. I am also still with Raise Foundation.

The point of this vignette is to deepen my own self-reflection and acknowledge that mentoring is tied up with the core of who I am, and what I like about myself. Galetta (2013) suggests that researcher's own autobiographies can have a huge impact on their research. The negative aspect of this is that I clearly come in with a deep personal bias towards mentoring as an effective and important intervention. However, with rigorous reflexivity, and other validation measures such as peer debriefing, member checks and triangulation, my extensive experience with mentoring, will also bring invaluable insight to my research in many ways.

Appendix 7 – Interview Schedule (Mentees)

1. **Tell me what mentoring was like for you?**
   - *What did you think it was going to be like?*
   - *How did you feel about being 'chosen'*
   - *Why do you think you were chosen?*
   - *Why did you stick with it? Why did you keep turning up every week?*

2. **Thinking back to the first 'Jitters' session. Can you describe that to me?**
   - *How were you feeling?*
   - *What were you thinking?*

3. **Who was your mentor? Can you describe him/her to me?**

4. **What did you want to get out of the mentoring program?**
   - *Did you have any goals that you set with your mentor?*
   - *Can you give me an example of how you went about achieving a goal?*
   - *Was there anything that disappointed you about mentoring?*
   - *Would you talk to your mentor about something you had done wrong?*
   - *When things haven't worked out in the way you want them to has your mentor been able to help?*

5. **What was it like getting to know your mentor?**
   - *When did the relationship become important to you?*
   - *How did you know?*
   - *How do you feel about yourself in this relationship?*
   - *How has this relationship affected you, and your life?*
   - *Has your relationship with your mentor affected your relationship with other important adults in your life?*

6. **What was having a mentor like?**
   - *What was good about it?*
   - *What was bad about it?*
   - *What did you learn from your mentor?*
   - *What was different about the relationship with your mentor (compared to other adults? Compared to your friends?)*

7. **Tell me about a special time when you felt particularly close to your mentor?**
   - *How did you respond / your mentor respond?*
   - *How did it affect how you felt about yourself?*

8. **Tell me about a time of conflict, or distance between you and your mentor?**
   - *How did you respond? How did your mentor respond?*
   - *How did you feel about yourself?*
   - *How did you feel about your mentor?*

- *How did it get resolved?*

9. **What did having a mentor mean to you?**

10. **How would your mentor describe you?**

11. **What impact do you think this relationship has had on your mentor?**

12. **How do you think things would be different for you if you had not had a mentor?**

Appendix 8 – Interview Schedule (Mentors)

1. **What made you decide to volunteer for the mentoring program?**

2. **What did you think being a mentor was going to be like?**
    - Why did you stick with it? Why did you keep turning up every week?

3. **Thinking back to the first 'Jitters' session. Can you describe that to me?**
    - What was it like?
    - How were you feeling?
    - What were you thinking?

4. **Who was your mentee? Can you describe them to me?**
    - Do you know why were they chosen for the program? Why do you think?
    - Do you know why they were chosen to be your mentee?

5. **What was it like to develop a relationship with your mentee?**
    - When did the relationship become important to you?
    - How did you know?
    - What impact do you think this relationship has had on your mentee?
        - What has changed for them because of mentoring?
        - How did these changes occur?
    - What was the most difficult thing about this relationship?
    - What was the best thing about the relationship?
    - How do you feel about yourself in this relationship?
    - How has this relationship affected you, and your life?

6. **What did you do in the mentoring sessions?**

7. **What did you want to get out of the mentoring program?**
    - Did you have any goals that you set with your mentee?
    - Can you give me an example of how you went about achieving a goal?
    - Was there anything that disappointed you about mentoring?

8. **Tell me what being a mentor was like?**
    - What was good about it?
    - What was bad about it?

9. **Tell me about a special time when you felt particularly close to your mentee?**
    - How did you respond / your mentor respond?
    - How did it affect how you felt about yourself?

10. **Tell me about a time of conflict, or distance between you and your mentee?**
    - How did you respond? How did your mentee respond?
    - How did you feel about yourself?
    - How did you feel about your mentee?

- How did it get resolved?

11. **Can you give me an example of a time your mentee asked for help or advice?**

12. **How do you think things would be different for your mentee if they had not had a mentor?**

13. **What did being a mentor mean to you?**
    - How is your life different?

14. **Is there anything else that you would like to say about your experience of being a mentor?**

Appendix 9 – Relationship Categorisation for Qualitative Studies

Mentee Pseudonym	Mentor Pseudonym	R'Ship with Mentor (Mentee Study)	R'Ship with Mentor (Mentor Study)
Rosie	Laura	Purposeful	Trust
Mabel	Bianca	Purposeful	Trust
Ren	Troy	Comfortable	Pre-Trust
Deb	Betsy	Comfortable	Pre-Trust
Amy	Gabi	Purposeful	Trust
Harmony	Tania	Developing	Early Trust
Ellie	Nicole	Developing	Early Trust
Arabella	Jolene	Developing	Trust
Tom	Steve	Purposeful	Trust
Bryan	Barb	Comfortable	Pre-Trust
Charlie	Not interviewed	Comfortable	N/A