The holistic effect of police officers mentoring 'high risk' youth

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Abstract

This article reports on an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis study that provides a description of the experiences of a sample of college students who were mentored by police officers. It includes an account of personal motivation for the topic and the features of the investigation, specifically with regard to academically underachieving youth. Throughout the study, there was a heavy concentration on any 'high risk' circumstances present and their possible influence. The article provides a brief description of findings to illustrate the holistic effect of the mentoring journey and concludes with the limitations of the study and the implications for practice and further research.

Key words: interpretive phenomenological analysis, police officers, high risk, youth mentoring.

Introduction

I have been a police officer for over 28 years, with the majority of this time spent dealing face to face with either perpetrators or victims of crime. I have always been motivated by the need to understand why people make the choices they do, but also what I could do to enlighten them about the range of options they may not have considered. I could debate the nature verses nurture issue of the environmental factors of the child, 'creating' the anti-social and criminal enterprise driven youth and I have seen evidence of this, as learned behaviour from an unfortunate or inherently criminal family is undeniable (McCord, 1991), however, I have also seen the autonomous youth who have made positive choices and succeeded on all levels in spite of their socialisation and familial antecedents. I would humbly say that I would include myself in this statistic. The HM Government paper 'Every Child Matters' (DoH, 2003) leading to the Safeguarding Act of 2013 delves deeper in respect of the vulnerability inherent within their environments and the increased risks associated to these situations, proposing that children or youth are susceptible to radicalisation or mental health symptoms and that they could be groomed into sexual exploitation, prostitution, drug taking and other criminal activity. So the question for this research was 'how can we reach out to out to those youth who could be viewed as 'lost' to society, because they are failing either academically or behaviourally to conform'?

Within any role we play, there few substitutes for one to one relationships where positive regard (Rogers, 1986) is a factor. My operational experience has taught me that the exposure to role models and personal attention from an influential adult is minimal for youth as a target group, and that the impact of introducing personal attention can be monumental. This view is evidenced within the comprehensive work by Muncie (2014, p.100) where he references Durkhiem's 'Normality of Crime' theory. This is also supported by Kornblum (1985) in his 'Growing up Poor' study, where he identified the influential nature of mentors. Congruent findings were produced by Werner and Smith (1982) where high risk children were studied. Rutter (1987 p.237) argued that at-risk children with one good relationship were less likely than others to develop conduct disorders. The impact of this absence of an influential adult role-model cannot be measured as there are too many other factors which could

influence the outcome (Muncie, 2014). However, the introduction of a positive intervention, such as mentoring for these young people could provide subjective data which may indicate an effect for them as individuals (Smith et al., 2009).

The introduction of police officers as mentors was a considered choice as it is unknown how their inclusion would affect the development a trusting relationship. Drury (2003) provides research indicating an individual-blaming agenda and power-play for the lack of ability to communicate from both the adult and youth perspective. Within this study, Drury argues that stereotypes of the adult mentor from the adolescent mentee perspective and visa-versa, are depicted as often detrimental for the development of relationships. The youth were expected to be hostile, sullen and unforthcoming with adults failing to listen to them, and needing only to get their own message across. However, police officers interviewed by Drury and Dennison (2000) as part of an original study, stated, they aimed to be honest, open and not talk down to adolescents, interpreted by Drury and Dennison as an effort to gloss over the power difference by treating adolescents as equals. This is supported by Michael and Mehrota (2015), who also discuss the need for symbiosis in the relationship and the need for an absence of a power ratio creating an authentic youth/adult relationship. Conversely, DuBois (2002) suggests that professional people who are already in helping or supportive roles may have a greater insight in relation to their own attitudes, ability to reflect and better able to listen and tolerate difficult feelings.

The specific police force within the study has faced immense pressure to work further with the communities it serves in recent years (5-year Strategic Policing Plan). The diverse political and religious nature of the communities served provides their own challenges (Community Tension Survey- confidential document). These are played out in local and national media, where the police are depicted as robustly managing warring factions of protesting groups (Bedfordshire on Sunday, 24th November 2014). As a separate community issue, but no less concerning has been the continuing gun crime within the town where over the last 4 years there have been numerous shootings resulting in a number of fatalities, mainly involving teenage gang members (BBC news report, 15/05/13). I felt that possible positive interventions could be explored in an attempt to prevent the seemingly natural progression of youth from the disenfranchised, failing student to potentially committing violent and criminal activity (Lakind & Atkins, 2015, Carb & Matjasko, 2012).

I decided to concentrate on identified disenfranchised 6th form college students in my research and both in the spirit of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) but also with reference to an empirical gap I identified in the literature (Smith et al., 2009). My aim was to provide the youths who were mentored by police officers with a voice throughout and to chronologically signpost any effects or impacts they had recognised from their personal reflections of their mentoring journey. It was evident from the initial interviews I held with each of the five students that there were factors or circumstances within their environment or physical or psychological being that constituted 'high-risk'. Lloyd (2013) talks about the detrimental effects of poor health and well-being, suffering bullying and poor educational aspiration and achievement as a direct consequence of this familial situation. It would be correct to say that all of these factors were represented to a greater or lesser degree within these initial discussions.

The social world of adolescents has changed, as have the recognised added responsibilities and types of negative influencers they may be vulnerable to (Pittman, 2012; Beier et al, 2000). Although generalisation is vital in research to identify trends and patterns of behaviour, an individual's attitude and internal meaning-making can alter dramatically depending on their own experiences and socialization as has been seen within Beiers (2000) study. Explaining the limitations of youth mentoring when supporting high risk individuals, Rhodes (2002; p. 255) suggested that 'mentoring

programs have proven that they can powerfully influence positive development among youth'. It is this positive change that maintains a commitment to youth mentoring of high-risk groups is fundamental, considering the lack of personal positive influencers in their lives as described by Lakind and Atkins, (2015). These authors also provided an outline of the types of youth who would be considered to be 'high-risk', including those who are affected by poverty, unstable housing, unemployment and family composition.   As already emphasised mentoring cannot be the remedy to the youth situation as a whole, but there has been research produced highlighting that that the personal growth and ability to make decisions as a result of the one to one sessions in an adult/youth mentoring relationship can reduce the likelihood of problems associated with transitions into adulthood (Simmons et al, 1973). These relationships can be separate or additional to recognised relationships with parents and teachers (Hope et al, 2013: Schwartz et al, 2012).

This article will continue with my motivation for beginning and continuing the research. A year on and the mentoring programme is now in its second successful year at the same college. An examination of the gaps in the empirical literature provides further motivation to examine the possibilities behind this process. I will also compare three methodologies, identifying the reasons why IPA was chosen. I will describe the sample subjects, who they were and why they were chosen for this study. Once the foundations of the study have been identified, I will work through the study itself, my reflections, the identification of the subordinate themes and discuss any links between the students' experiences of the mentoring and their journeys through college. All of this information will then be drawn into the conclusions and finally any limitations and my own reflections.

My motivation for the subject

It would be difficult to provide a personal context to this research without first outlining my empathy to the students included within it. The students chosen for this programme are all academically struggling for various reasons, a position I can remember occupying throughout my school and college years. I was deaf and attended a school for the hearing impaired until I was 8 years old. Once allowed to attend state school, I was quiet, lacking in confidence, bullied and unable to contribute in class. Until the age of 12 years, I was also kept off school, as a young carer, looking after my father who had multiple sclerosis. Although with surgery, my hearing improved, and my father sadly died when I was 12 years allowing me access to more school hours, but I did not extend my educational attainment and scraped through my 'O' and 'A' levels.

Determined to do something useful in my life, I joined the police but have never forgotten what it was like to be that struggling student at the back of the class. Having been a successful police officer for 28 years, promoted to the rank of Inspector, I know that change can happen. It is determined by self-will, values and experiences but can be affected by those around us, who can influence our thoughts and behaviour.

Existing gaps in the literature

It appears that there is a need for more empirical research which concentrates on the experience of the mentee, providing a more holistic account of their environment, health and well-being, familial circumstances and academic attainment (Schwartz et al, 2012, Fazel et al, 2104) and the overall effect of the mentoring process. The positive effects of mentoring have been suggested to require the mentee to have the capacity for meaning-making and be receptive to mentoring (Cox, 2003, DuBois et al, 2011; Tolan et al, 2013). These effects are also reliant on their external social influencers and the subsequent internal attitude and value formation being compliant with the intervention for it to be accepted by the adolescent (Baxter-Magolda & Porterfield, 1985). It could be argued that what

contributes to youth vulnerability irrespective of their external circumstances is their internal lack of self-esteem (Schwartz et al 2012, Hope et al, 2013, Giunta et al, 2013). This lack of personal regard and confidence in one's self and own abilities has causal links to delinquency, poor academic attainment and risky behaviour (Lakind & Atkins, 2015, Carb & Matjasko, 2012) and although their links have been established as present, the order in which they appear is impossible to predict.

Over the last two decades there has been more empirical literature exploring the goals and outcomes of youth mentoring (Meier, 2008, Fletcher & Mullen, 2012, Slack et al, 2013, DuBois & Karcher, 2014, Aderibigbe et al, 2014, Lakind & Atkins, 2015). The progression of youth mentoring appears to be in response to various educational, societal and economic changes and the development of social awareness regarding the impact of these changes on young people (Rustique-Forrester, Riley, 2001; Balogh, Mayes & Potenza, 2013). Despite this, a lack of empirical concentration on the holistic meaning-making of the youth during and post implementation of a mentoring intervention reveals a gap in ascertaining the personal experience of young people participating in mentoring programmes – a gap which this study seeks to address.

Acknowledging that a mentor requires enhanced communication skills and some appreciation of the application of empathy, I have suggested that police officers may provide an underused and under-researched resource for this type of mentoring, This detail indicates that not only do the officers have the ability to converse and develop essential emotional intelligence required for a successful mentoring relationship, they have the experience and ability to tolerate the difficult feelings that may be discussed by the high-risk youths. They also belong to a culture where development by this method is common-place. Police officers are continually assessed and expected to develop within their roles.

Methodology

The interpretive idiographic viewpoint in a research setting includes the researcher's values, prior knowledge and interpretations of meaning and personal understanding (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, acknowledgement of the researcher's interpretation is essential for establishing the required validity of the research. It is also important to recognize that the aim within the phenomenological method of inquiry is to obtain insight into participants' experiences, by enabling participants to reflect within that experience during the research (Husserl & Solomon, 1927). As this study was dependent on the interpretation of the meaning-making from the students contributing, it was vital that the approach would support the open discourse required for personal and subjective disclosure of individual thoughts, feelings and values. It is for this reason that a phenomenological, interpretive approach seemed to be the best fit (Smith, 2007; Lopez & Willis, 2004) in terms of the research paradigm adopted.

Supporting the hermeneutic, phenomenological approach, the interview questions were semi-structured (Smith et al., 2009). This enabled individual meaning-making from the subject and subsequent reflection and interpretive reflexive practice in terms of the process within the interpretive phenomenological analysis principles. The principle aim in hermeneutic approaches within qualitative research is to explore and analyse the 'life-world' of people using non-directive interview techniques to collect information (Smith et al., 2009). This viewpoint is pertinent within the youth environment, the idiographic influences such as peer pressure, academic expectations, cultural and religious norms and stereotypes of those involved as relevant frames of reference must be considered (Muncie, 2014). This premise supports the motivation research linked to the self-determination theory conducted by Standage, Duda and Ntoumanis (2005).

Due to the underpinning interpretive philosophy, knowledge obtained can be difficult to validate in forms of natural science and from a purely scientific viewpoint (Yardley, 2000). Reflecting on the purpose of the research, it is essential that the current research explores the meaning placed on the experience of mentoring by the young people themselves. For this reason interpretive phenomenological analysis seemed most appropriate (Smith et al., 2009). There are other methods of data collection and analysis within the qualitative field and others were considered prior to choosing IPA. The most obvious competitor to IPA was the case study methodology (Yin 2013), as it also involves the 'in-depth' exploration of the individual's experience, generating data via similar methods as IPA. However, this methodology was discounted for this current research as the concentration of the findings would be on the processes within the organisation case or project and the transferability of the model to similar organisations. Another possible option for the research was an action research methodology. This again, is process driven and would struggle to provide the depth of analysis required when the subjective meaning placed on the mentoring received by the college students is pivotal to the findings.

Sample selection

The college concerned has an overall attendance of 2,700 students, 120 of which are within the cohort of those struggling academically. The selected sample was a purposive and homogeneous cross section of those within a particular cohort of students within a specified academic year at this particular sixth form college. Therefore, all of the participants were selected as they provided a perspective relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Within the mentoring programme where young people are supported by police officers, 25 students were mentored albeit only five students were chosen for the research process, as IPA requires small numbers of subjects to allow for in depth analysis to be performed (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51). Participant details are included in Table 1. This core group of 25 students who were provided with the mentoring opportunity, allowed for substitutes to be identified should any of those being interviewed leave the programme for any reason.

Table 1. Participants

SUBJECT	GENDER	AGE	RACE/ RELIGION	ACADEMIC SUBJECTS	HIGH RISK ISSUES DISCLOSED – FAMILIAL, SITUATIONAL, EDUCATIONAL, HISTORICAL
Sara	Female	16yrs	Mixed Heritage	Biology GCSE, Maths retake, Health and Social Care	Carer for 9yr old brother who has ADHD, Asperger's and OCD. Mother has EDS and cannot cope.
Kevin	Male	16yrs	Black	Maths retake, English retake, Art level 2 Btec	Difficulty with severe dyslexia & dyscalculia and has one to one assistance with tutor who cannot do maths
Carol	Female	16yrs	White	Maths Function Skills, English retake, IT/Media	Was bullied so severely in High School that she missed a great deal of school and attempted suicide
Usman	Male	16yrs	Asian	Maths & English retake, level 2 Business	Is confused about his sexuality and is afraid regarding the impact of this on his family. Undiagnosed SpLD.
Shah	Male	17yrs	Asian	English retake, IT & Business	Concern re Radicalisation: Mother was convincing him that he should stay away from western girls as he was going to have 100 virgins when he gets to Paradise.

To achieve the in-depth understanding of their mentoring journeys, I interviewed the five students more than once. This research allowed for me to use the individual disclosures within the first interviews to direct me towards possible thematic concepts for the second and third interviews. (Smith et al., 2009).

Access to the students was subject to the safeguarding principles related to the Prevent strategies of 2013. As the decision was made by the college that the police officers contributing their time to this programme would not be DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked, there was a need to facilitate the mentoring process by enabling this to take place in the sight of a supervisor or tutor. On some occasions, this would include having the mentoring within the classroom itself, where the class mates of the mentee were. The researcher interviews were conducted in a separate room as I am DBS checked and could be left alone with the students whilst being entrusted to uphold the relevant safeguarding principles (DoH, 2003).

Utilising the six principles of qualitative research analysis (Smith et al., 2009), I identified step by step how the IPA methodological criteria had been achieved through familiarisation, coding, searching for themes, reviewing the themes and looking for connections, emerging themes, moving to the next case, and writing up, identify patterns across the cases. In line with IPA, I analysed each individual's experience before undertaking the thematic comparison. This consideration provided a phenomenological journey of the mentoring process and a subsequent detailed analysis to be conducted, providing a useful conclusion and theoretical links to previous relevant studies. A similar process was used to exemplify adherence to Yardley's model of validity (2000).

Researcher's reflexivity and data analysis

I chose not to take notes during the three interviews with each student as I wanted to listen intently to the responses provided without distractions. It was also vital that there was no disturbance to the participants' flow. I have kept a continual personal account of the dynamically unfolding process. The subjective engagement with the process was challenging when the obvious requirement for objective reasoning was evident. To enable this to be achieved in line with Smith et al. (2009), and maintaining IPA principles by providing additional data analysis reflexivity, I made extensive notes following each interview, acknowledging the influence that my own assumptions, values and experience may have to my interpretations (Gilgun, 2010). By doing this it has also enabled me to understand Gilgun's (2010, p.173) phrase, *'we are often unaware of what we think, believe and the implications until we write about them and discuss them with others*.' These notes provided a social mirror in terms of my own bias, prejudice and barriers to objectivity. Having received the completed transcripts, I read them line by line whilst listening to the intonation of the voices to attempt to interpret the tiniest nuance for each of the students. This was incredibly valuable and enabled me to provide a more complete picture of both the person but also the journey they were on. It also enabled me to comprehensively identify the confidence, self-assuredness and clarity of direction and choice gained through the mentoring process.

Identification of subordinate themes

It was evident within the initial reading of the transcripts that there were emergent themes for each subject. These created a journey of development, recognition and potential opportunities facilitated by the introduction of the mentoring process. By maintaining the identified themes within an individual mind map, relating to one person's journey, I was able to plot in a pictorial format, the holistic effect of mentoring for each of the students. The data from the interviews remained consistently denoted across the mind maps in the same colours e.g. 1st interview was in red pen, 2nd in

blue and 3rd in green. This enabled any patterns of behaviour or experience to be identified across the 5 candidates, creating themes (see Figure 1).
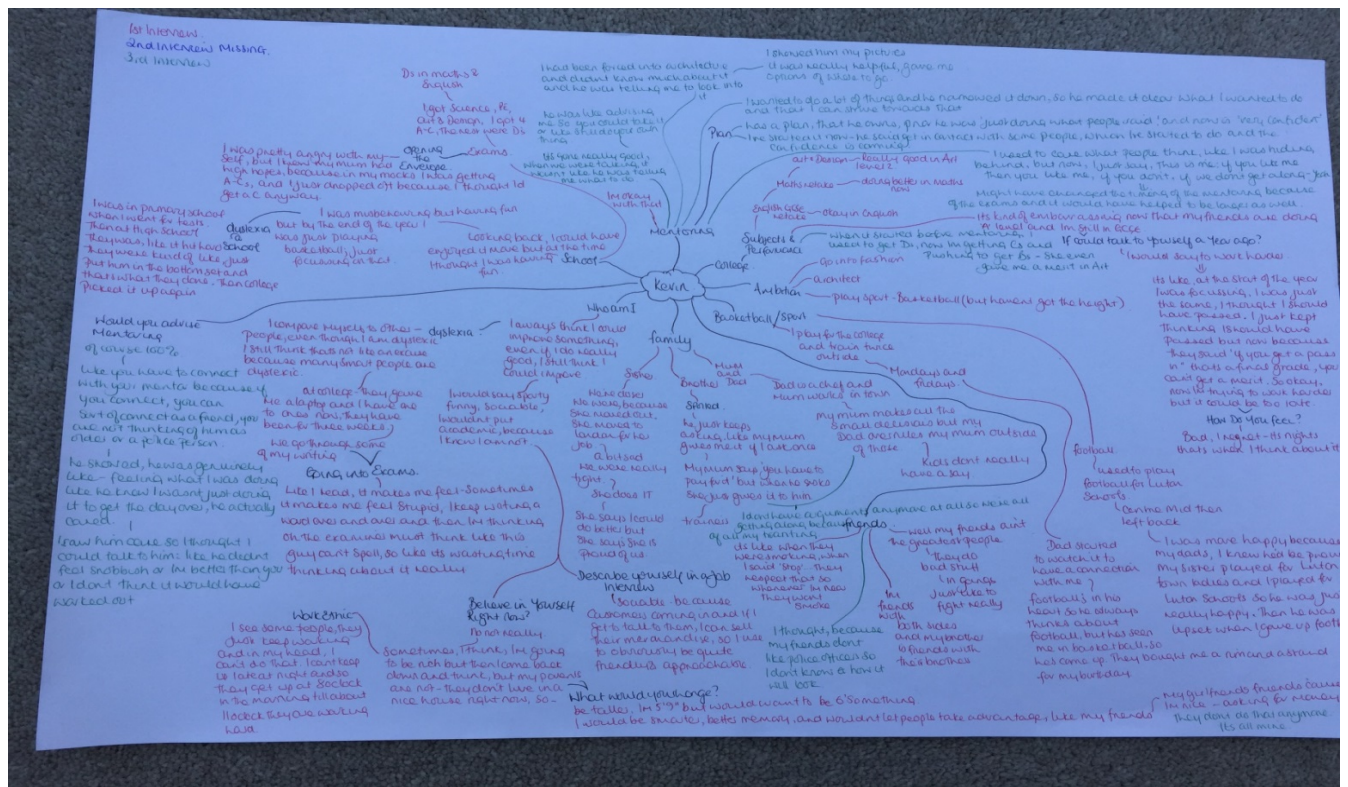

Figure 1. Example Mind Map

These themes were then paralleled across the experiences and meaning making of all five students, culminating in the identification of the three concept themes providing the foundation of the overall research analysis. I will provide an outline of each of these concept themes and proceed later to offer a more contextualised account of each theme.

Findings - Concept, Emergent and Subordinate Themes

Three key themes emerged across the participants; The authentic self, Education and aspiration and Police officer mentors as represented in the figure below (see Figure 2).

Theme One – The Authentic Self
It was clear throughout the interviews, that the students had an appreciation and an understanding of their authentic selves which appears to work alongside the façades created for a myriad of situations including: to hide disappointment or nervousness or created to attempt to fulfill the expectation of others. When asked about the impression he made on others, Shah in his first interview, described himself as, 'a joker, or a clown.' He acknowledged that he needed to be more mature and 'calm down a bit and joke around,' but his friends, '…. are used to a funny guy.' For Kevin, his dyslexia has often impacted on his confidence, when describing himself he says, 'I would say sporty, funny, sociable. I wouldn't put academic because I know I'm not.' Carols lack of confidence has been the result of years of bullying in High school, 'in a classroom, I just feel like I'm being judged.'

There was some division in these different personas of the individual interviewed but the overlap was hazy, causing confusion and sometimes frustration as they attempted to separate themselves from their perceived unsuccessful self, and emerge as the mature and potentially successful self. Their lack of confidence was an unvarying barrier to accepting this potential outcome. There was a suggestion from the students that the police officers may provide the panacea for this lack of confidence. Usman, in his first interview, had high hopes for the mentoring and the impact of the process, 'I think the police officer might help me to develop as a person and develop my confidence.'

Theme Two – Education and Aspiration
Pivotal to this theme was the reflections on their situations which provided an opportunity for the individual students to assess their current position and reflect on the circumstances or behaviour which resulted in their present station. There was a consistent theme highlighted amongst the majority of those interviewed of regret, internalising the blame for their lack of success in their GCSE results. This negative emotion, compounded by their continuing GCSE pressure in college and the psychological impact of self-fulfilling prophecies in terms of expected outcomes of current studies and potential aspirational levels have impacted on all interviewed. Kevin in his first interview, eloquently described his self-disappointment, 'I was pretty angry at myself because I – not angry at myself but I know mum had high expectations, high hopes for me…'

This was countered with the improvements made within his performance as Kevin reported in his last interview, held post mentoring that, '…before mentoring, I used to get Ds, now I'm getting Cs and pushing to get Bs. She even gave me a merit in art.' For Usman, his lack of self-confidence was a barrier to success, 'I think I was nervous from the inside and I think that stopped me from being confident.' With Usman, he was so softly spoken initially that I had to ask him to sit closer to the microphone so that his voice would be recorded. By the third interview, I had learned to move the microphone to a normal distance. His posture had changed and although he didn't yet command the room, you could now tell he was in it.

Figure 2. The three themes

MEANING MAKING			
<u>Stages of coding</u>	<u>Theme 1</u>	<u>Theme 2</u>	<u>Theme 3</u>
Concept Themes	The authentic self ⬆	Education and Aspiration ⬆	Police officer mentors ⬆
Category -Clusters Themes	The real me The divided self Transformation ⬆	Why am I in this position? Experience shaping outcomes ⬆	Expectations of the relationship, the reflective journey and the personal effects of the process ⬆
Emergent Themes	Confidence and self-worth High risk antecedents	Misguided priorities Learning Difficulties	Positive attitude Limitations of the process

Theme Three – Police Officer Mentors

Within the initial interviews, it was clear that the majority of the expectations of the mentoring relationship revolved around the previous experiences the students had with members of the police service as a whole. Sara explained that she thought that the process might be, 'a little awkward.' This seemed to relate to the fact that the officer would be a stranger to her rather than the stranger would be an officer. Shah expressed that it, 'would be a great chance and opportunity to actually talk to a man….' Kevin, introduced his friends within the first interview as 'aint the greatest of people,' explaining that they, 'do bad stuff…in gangs…just like to fight really.' He was concerned about how speaking to a police officer would look, reflecting about this in the third interview he considered his feelings prior to the mentoring at the beginning, 'I thought because my friends don't like police officers, so I don't know how it will look.' He went on to explain the confidence that has developed in him since the mentoring, 'I used to care what people think, like I was hiding behind, but now, I just say, this is me; if you like me, then you like me. If you don't, we don't get along.' For Shah, he explained that, 'I've not been messing about in lessons, he (mentor) made me realise having talks with him that it's not about being just a clown and messing about, you need good grades and do something with your life.'

Discussion

Remaining true to the value-driven perspective of delivery, the aim was to enable confidence and personal growth rather than intellectual development as this was seen to occur as an apparent natural consequence of the mentoring. It has been essential that the social and personal context of the individual student has been respected in order to ensure the learning taking place is specific to their personal needs and social resources. This is the strength of the chosen mentors, as police officers, their experience and empathy has greatly assisted in rapport building and the development of trust throughout.

The effect on the meaning-making of these students was quite profound. The semi-structured interviews enabled a narrative journey to be captured, detailing their opinions, feelings, self-image and self-belief throughout. It was clear that the students had embraced the mentoring sessions. They had engaged with the mentors and had developed more self-awareness and self-efficacy as a result, both having and accepting a challenging way forward that they were confident to achieve. This research has generated more in-depth understanding in how and why mentoring by police officers may contribute to and support the holistic meaning-making of the adolescent student. It has suggested the related skills and experience which have proved contributory to the building of trusting relationships. Specifically, it has been the empathetic, non-judgmental approach of the police officers that has appears to have provided the environment for sensitive challenge of existing defeatist attitudes and promoting transformational learning.

Conclusions

Each of the students suffered from confidence issues, which manifested in avoidance of difficult situations, poor self-belief and the development of self-fulfilling prophecies or conversely acting the fool, drawing controlled attention rather than uncontrolled ridicule. The introduction of mentors for youths who demonstrated high risk behaviours resulted in the majority of those participating reducing the negative behavior but there were some for whom the mentoring could not be the panacea due to their existing socio-economic and societal influences. However, the subsequent meaning making of the youth provided more relevant reflection material and enabled the possible effects related to the introduction of the police officers into the lives of these young people to be subjectively measured by the students through phenomenological interpretation.

Limitations

The current research took place in a highly diverse town, in a 6th form college setting. Working with high risk groups can be fraught with danger as their lifestyles and inability to plan, organise and commit can make research incredibly difficult. These specific fields were chosen to provide relevant data for the research aim but they do serve to restrict the generalisation possibilities of the results. The longitudinal impact of the mentoring and the development of the students' transition from mentee to self-mentor would provide an advancement of the current research.

My own reflections

The first interview with students enabled me to ascertain their perspective on their holistic environment and circumstances. It was remarkable that although they were picked at random from the original 25 (Boost programme candidates) each of them fell into the definition of 'high risk' students in one or more elements, be they specific learning difficulties, dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD, depression and suicide attempt due to bullying at high school or performing the role of carer for those at home (Lloyd, 2013). Following the mentoring process, all the students interviewed expressed the benefit of having the confidentiality clause, which helped provide the trust required for establishing an environment conducive to disclosure, enabling them to be explicit during their mentoring sessions. I reflected on the need for confidentiality and whether this might have been more of an issue since the mentors, being police officers, were required to disclose and report on everything discussed with them. Having created an open discussion, it was made clear to the students that anything could be discussed. This lack of censorship on subject or degree of disclosure was obviously assisted by the confidentiality clause explained at the commencement of the mentoring process, but I have also reflected about the pros and cons of the use of police officers within the mentoring process and there appeared to be an unconscious disassociation that took place for all the students who went beyond the first interview, allowing for the discussion to take place.

Even though the students knew they were talking to police officers who were potentially difficult to shock, it appeared that they had unconsciously forgotten their status during mentoring, allowing full and frank conversations to take place and enabling the students to be completely honest about their feelings and experiences. This contradiction in assimilation seems to have negated any potential barriers caused by difference in age and position. The associated power and control and the possible hindrance to rapport which may have been caused by this has been mitigated by the way that the officers chosen have approach the sessions (Drury, 2003). By demonstrating an empathetic persona towards these students, the mentors may have experienced a contradiction with what they might otherwise have assumed was going to be the experience, thus enabling the trust to be established and the relationship and open discussion to be maintained (Rutter, 1987; Hope et al, 2013; Schwartz, 2012).

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