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GIVING 180 DEGREES TRUST'S GRADUATE STUDENTS A VOICE: A STUDY
ON AN ADVENTURE-BASED AND MENTORING PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The 180 Degrees Trust offers a High Country Camps and Mentoring programme for at-risk youth and youth offenders in Canterbury, New Zealand. The aim of this study was to examine the extent to which graduate students believed that their participation in the 180 Degrees Trust's High Country Camps and Mentoring programme influenced their engagement with education, employment and training two to five years after graduating from the programme.

Using a qualitative approach, through semi-structured interviews, four participants' views of their lives before, during and after their time with the 180 Degrees Trust were obtained. Thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews revealed eight salient themes, which encapsulated the findings from this study.

Participants came from similar troubled backgrounds. They credited the support from staff members, their mentors, other students and unique experiences as helping them to develop greater interpersonal and practical skills. Despite participants acknowledging that group work allowed for the development of interpersonal skills, they also acknowledged that they, at times struggled with the dynamics of their group, in particular the negative influence of other students' behaviour.

After graduating, participants adapted their new skills and attitudes to gain employment or return to education. Participants stated that they would have benefited from ongoing support during this time.

Two to five years after graduating, participants stated that their participation on the High Country Camps and Mentoring programme still affects them in their daily lives. This is evidenced through their development of relationships and their employment experiences.

There is a paucity of in-depth, participant focused research on the long-term outcomes of students in adventure-based and mentoring programmes. The findings of this study suggest that more research also needs to be conducted on the affect of group dynamics on students as well as how to best support students after they graduate from adventure-based and mentoring programmes.

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