SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL WELFARE

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Social Work and Social Welfare

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EDITORIAL

Social Work and Social Welfare from a Multidisciplinary Perspective − A Challenge for Researchers

Editor-in-Chief: Nicola Mucci, M.D., Ph.D.

In 2008, a deep economic crisis started in the US and rapidly spread around the world. The financial and economic crisis, called "The Great Recession", continues in many countries today and has been considered as the most severe recession in the history of US (after "The Great Depression"). The crisis brought very fast growth in unemployment and it is foreseeable that it will be long lasting and that recovery will be very slow. Hence, such economic change obviously had a significant impact on workers worldwide.

The crisis of the companies, with the staff cuts and the increase in the number of unemployed people, also resulted in significant changes in the work organization for those who remained in their job positions. The crisis increased job insecurity, in particular, for those who remained employed in industries where many layoffs had already occurred. In addition, the reduction in staff also led to stressful workplace conditions such as an increased workload with longer shifts and less rest, reduction of wages, and job dissatisfaction.

Considering the magnitude of "The Great Recession", this epochal moment can and must be a stimulus for a decisive rethinking of policies that allow an ever greater number of people to feel good and feel better.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defined health in its 1948 Constitution as Health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". People are *healthy* when they are able to make choices, when they can exercise their substantial freedom, when they can achieve what they value, when they can express their potential, when they feel included in society, when they trust institutions, and when they feel supported in times of difficulty.

The welfare policies, even if marked by enormous differences between the different countries, represent a model of social coexistence based on solidarity. However, until today, welfare systems have developed in a context that no longer exists: constant economic growth, young working population, relatively homogeneous needs, solid family structures. The radical socio-economic changes in progress characterize today's welfare systems for their unsustainability, in particular from the economic-financial point of view, and their inadequacy, due to the inability to give effective answers to emerging social problems.

Therefore, in the current socio-economic context, it is necessary to adopt a new perspective that focuses on the person and its network of relationships rather than the types of services they need, adopting a logic of social inclusion and cohesion, with a view to building long-term strategies with a clear, transparent and concrete definition of strategic objectives.

The European Union, with the *Europe 2020*

strategy, emphasizes the issue of social cohesion, to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The EU has set ambitious goals to be achieved by 2020 in the following five main areas:

- *Employment*: 75% of the population aged 20 to 64 must be employed;

- *Innovation*: 3% of EU gross domestic product (GDP) will have to be invested in research and development;

- *Climate change*: the "20/20/20" targets for climate and energy must be achieved (as well as reducing emissions by 30% if conditions are adequate).

- *Education*: the percentage of early school leavers must be less than 10% and at least 40% of those aged between 30 and 34 must have completed third-cycle studies or equivalent.

- *Poverty*: poverty reduction, with the aim of overcoming at least 20 million people the risk of poverty or exclusion.

Cohesion policy makes available the general investment framework and the allocation system necessary to achieve the objectives of the *Europe 2020* strategy.

The proposed approach intends to promote an expansion of the conceptual framework of reference and of the traditional objectives of welfare: from a policy of assistance and acceptance of discomfort, to a policy for individual and collective well-being. In this way it is possible to go beyond the perspective of assistance, activating reciprocal practices that simultaneously produce social value and economic value, generating development.

Social cohesion commits the social forces as a whole: on one side the economic crisis has exacerbate the primary needs (employment, income, health, education, *etc.*); on the other they bring out new essential needs that must be satisfied to ensure the well-being of people: active relationships, exchanges, conditions of trust to produce and create value.

The concept is, therefore, that of a transforma-

tion of social assistance services into actions of personal empowerment, where the subject is an active agent to be empowered and the need is sought to respond through the enhancement of potential. In order to be effective, social protection must have as its objective the capacity of the individual and therefore provide for his active participation in all cases in which this is realistically practicable.

Welfare today is facing a very difficult challenge: there is the strong need to rethink, with courage and realism, the entire social protection system, building new forms of system governance. In such a context, the work environment is one of the fundamental elements. In fact, within it can develop both opportunities for growth and development that risks to the health and safety of workers.

Today, it is no coincidence that the protection of health and safety is one of the most important aspects of global policies on employment and social affairs. The ongoing activities in this area involve a complex interaction between the various interlocutors, including governments and other public authorities, as well as associations of workers and employers.

The promotion of health and safety in the workplace is the result of joint efforts by employers, workers and society. The following factors contribute to the achievement of this goal: improving work organization and workplace; encouraging worker participation in the process regarding health promotion in the workplace; promoting healthy lifestyles and personal development (psychic, physical and relational).

Promoting health and safety in the workplace means more than simply meeting the legal requirements on health and safety, which are different in the various countries. Promoting health and safety in the workplace means above all that employers actively help their staff to improve overall health and well-being. Within this process it is essential to involve workers and take into account

their needs and opinions on how to organize the activity and the workplace.

Improving wellbeing and health of workers leads to numerous positive consequences such as a lower staff turnover and less absenteeism, greater motivation and productivity, improvement of the image of the employer recognized as a positive organization and attentive to the wellbeing of the staff.

In recent years, the use of multidisciplinary methodologies and integrated in the management of health and safety in the workplace is emerging. In this sense, research, as well as greater productive efficiency, of the mutual adaptation of man and of the systems and means of production is a common goal of occupational medicine and occupational ergonomics. The synergistic co-participation between the two disciplines in the design of shift systems represents, today, a need that is difficult to delegate. A similar integrated approach is applicable in any employment context. A careful risk assessment and a subsequent adoption of truly effective measures can bring benefits in terms of reducing injury risk and increasing productivity, as well as the health and safety benefits of workers. In this sense, measures to promote health and safety are more an opportunity than a cost for the employers.

A system aimed at the production of social welfare must be focused on optimizing the resources made available and aimed at maximizing the effect on the community of reference. With these premises, it is necessary that tools and services are constantly monitored in their impact. The optimization of resources allows to reach the maximum expression of the individual potential of the stakeholders and therefore to maximize the synergies and the establishment of virtuous efficiency circles on resources, as well as economic savings and the creation of guidelines.

Social Work and Social Welfare has ambitiously set itself the goal of becoming a point of reference for the scientific community that analyzes, under many points of view, the processes of social evolution and transformation all over the world. In particular, research fields of this Journal include, in non-exclusive way, the following topics: Social Resources; Social Policy and Law; Social Environment; Community System; Social Planing; Welfare System; Social Culture; Social Insurance; Public Welfare; Occupational Health; Social Medicine.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Uncoordination of China's social assistance program resources and policy solutions

Haomiao Zhang

Abstract: With the promulgation and implementation of Social Assistance Interim Measures, China has basically established the social assistance system framework with *Dibao*, *Three-nos* people support and disaster relief as the basis, with housing aid, medical aid ,education aid and employment aid as the support and with temporary assistance and charity help as the supplement. The establishment of various social assistance programs undoubtedly aims to fulfil different demands of urban and rural neddy people, however,the increase of social assistance programs does not necessarily bring about an increase in the effectiveness of social assistance. This paper analyzes the uncoordination of Chinas social assistance program resources and put forward related policy solutions.

Keywords: social assistance, program resources, policy solutions, China

1 Introduction

China's social assistance program resources, which refer to all types of assistance programs to help the poor and vulnerable groups. According to China's "Interim Measures for Social Assistance" in 2014, there are eight kinds of programs: *Dibao* (minimum living standard guaranty system), *Three-nos* people support(people with no working ability, no income, and no family support), disaster relief, medical assistance, education assistance, housing assistance, employment assistance and temporary assistance. These eight kinds of assistance programs can be classified into three major categories, namely: long-term living assistance, special classification assistance, and temporary emergency assistance. Among them, *Dibao* and the *Three-nos* people support are the long-term living assistance; the medical, education, housing and employment assistance are the special classification assistance; and the disaster relief and temporary assistance are temporary emergency assistance.

2 Aspects of the uncoordination

Although China's social assistance programs have played a more significant role in protecting citizens basic living, maintaining social fairness and promoting social harmony and stability, the uncoordination of social assistance program resources exists. The uncoordination is manifested in the following aspects:

2.1 Minimum Living Standard Guarantee System (*Dibao*) welfare binding

The existing social assistances are prone to "welfare binding". The original intention of China's Minimum Living Standard Guarantee System(*Dibao*) is to solve the basic livelihood problems of poor group. However, with the implementation of medical, education, housing and other special assistance programs, many other regimes are bundled to implement with *Dibao*, resulting in such a situation that, if a person enjoys *Dibao* allowances, then the person can enjoy any assistance policies, i.e., eligibility of most special assistance programs is conditional on the receipt of *Dibao* allowance. In other others, the *Dibao* recipients can also get a number of other assistance programs; and they will lose the entitlement to many other assistance programs if they are removed from *Dibao*. Although the "Interim Measures for Social Assistance" in 2014 gives unified provisions on all the social assistance systems, the new policy still does not get rid of some special assistance programs' binding with *Dibao*. E.g., in the "Interim Measures for Social Assistance" the beneficiaries of medical, education, house

and other special assistance programs are still limited to the "*Dibao* family members" or "*Three-nos* support people". Although these special assistance programs reflect the governments' final guarantee of the diversified basic needs of the poor, the *Dibao*-linked targeting mechanism of special assistance programs lead to a result that, to some extent, the *Dibao* people can enjoy the relevant assistance programs, but other poor families or individuals cannot get their deserved assistance. On the one hand, this case causes a "superposition effect", i.e., the *Dibao* families can obtain multiple assistance benefits, thus probably "enticing" some able-bodied recipients to stay in the *Dibao* program for enjoying these benefits, without willingness to withdraw from *Dibao*. On the other hand, this case also cause a "cliff effect", i.e., there is a huge gap between the *Dibao* recipients and the non-*Dibao* low-income people in enjoying the assistance policies, leading to a result that the non-*Dibao* low-income groups are difficult to obtain the help from social assistances even if they are in trouble, thus further producing a sense of injustice and compromising the social assistances' relief effects. It can be seen that the increase in social assistance programs does not bring about a simultaneous increase in the effectiveness of assistance, because the coordination between the internal programs of existing social assistances is yet to be improved.

According to the data from the survey on the urban and rural poor-family social policy support system by the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MoCA) in 2013, 48.75% of *Dibao* families are simultaneously enjoying two or three assistance benefits, and 33.94% enjoying four to five benefits (See Table 1).That is to say, *Dibao* families can also receive more superimposed assistance in addition to their *Dibao* allowances, making such families depend more on assistance.[?]

Table 1. Binding situation of the assistance benefits of China's urban *Dibao* families

Superposition situation of thesocial assistance programs	Proportion (%)
accept Dibao allowance	11.96
accept two to three assistance benefits simultaneously	48.75
accept four to fiveassistance benefits simultaneously	33.94
accept six to sevenassistance benefits simultaneously	4.98
accept eight or moreassistance benefits simultaneously	0.37

Too many benefits for *Dibao* families lead to some working-aged and able-bodied *Dibao* recipients not to want the employment, because once they have a job and get certain incomes, their *Dibao* allowance will be reduced accordingly or they even exit *Dibao* program. It is clear that, if the employment incomes are lower thanor only slightly higher than*Dibao* allowances, they will certainly choose not to be employed or try to conceal their incomes, so as not to exit the assistance, thus leading

to a poverty trap. In recent years, the proportion of able-bodied *Dibao* recipients, including the registered and unregistered unemployed persons, employed persons and flexible employment personnel, has always been higher than 61% since 2007.And in 2007, 2013, 2014 and 2015, the proportion is even higher than 62% (See Table 2). Of course, a part of *Dibao* recipients capable of working may not be employed due to looking after the elderly and children. Even if the number of such person is reduced, there is still a large number of able-to-work person. Clearly, it is not the ultimate goal of a program to put so many people with complete or partial working ability into *Dibao*. According to the large-scale sample survey of the nation-wide urban and rural poor-family social policy support system by the MoCA in 2013, the urban *Dibao* families enjoy nearly six years *Dibao* allowances on average, with 89% never exiting; and the rural *Dibao* ones 3.4 years on average, with 92% never exiting.[?] If such cases last for long, the fairness and efficiency of China's social assistances is bound to be impaired. It shows that the problem exists that the *Dibao* recipients tend to enjoy such benefits for long; and they also show the tendency of reluctance to be employed. So the problem of long-term assistance exists under the situation of very low-level benefit. We need to re-think a lot on the issue of *Dibao*s bundling design.

2.2 Lack of service assistance

China's social assistance pays more attention on material relives by granting cashes and in-kinds, but there is a serious lack of service assistance. Material relief is aimed to protect the survival of poor groups; as a "blood transfusion" means, it cannot promote the assistance recipients to development accumulate human capitals. The more public resources are invested into cash and in-kind assistances, the more attention is paid to the fairness by the public, and the stringent scrutiny will be imposed on economic status of the applicants. Thus, those assistance recipients who have the ability to work will be more unwilling to bear the risk of losing assistances due to employment, easily leading to long-term assistance. Service assistance mainly includes medical assistance, education assistance, employment training, home-based care assistance for poor elderly, and *etc*. They help to improve the living conditions of poor and vulnerable groups via services, enhance human capitals and help raise abilities, and finally promote the development of the people and society. So they are a kind of "blood-producing" assistance means. It should be noted that, in general, China's service assistance's development lags behind, leading to serious shortage of supply.

According to the data from the survey on the urban

Table 2. Binding situation of the assistance benefits of China's urban *Dibao* families

Year	Total urban *Dibao*	The Disabled		Population With Working Capacity								Percent
				Employed		Registered Unemployed		Flexible-Employed Population		Unregistered Unemployed		
		No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	
2007	22.721	1.610	7.090	0.940	4.130	6.272	27.600	3.438	15.130	3.643	16.030	62.890
2008	23.348	1.691	7.240	0.820	3.520	5.643	24.170	3.817	16.350	4.022	17.230	61.270
2009	23.456	1.810	7.720	0.790	3.370	5.102	21.750	4.322	18.430	4.109	17.520	61.070
2010	23.105	1.807	7.820	0.680	2.950	4.928	21.330	4.324	18.700	4.200	18.180	61.170
2011	22.768	1.841	8.090	0.620	2.700	4.725	20.750	4.297	18.870	4.267	18.740	61.060
2012	21.435	1.745	8.140	0.500	2.310	4.004	18.680	4.593	21.430	4.171	19.460	61.880
2013	20.642	1.692	8.200	0.450	2.180	3.655	17.700	4.598	22.270	4.123	19.970	62.130
2014	18.802	1.579	8.400	0.380	2.000	3.127	16.630	4.262	22.670	3.986	21.200	62.500
2015	17.080	1.526	8.930	0.320	1.850	2.652	15.530	3.792	22.200	3.943	23.090	62.670

and rural poor-family social policy support system by the MoCA in 2013,the assistance program most frequently enjoyed by the urban and rural hardship groups is *Dibao*, at a percentage of 65% or higher, followed by one-time holiday subsidies, with a percentage of about 50%, and then followed by waivers of expenses of water, electricity, gas and heating, at a percentage of about 30%.Medical assistance and education assistance account for 25% and 10%, respectively, which are not high. The migrant poor families can acquire very limited social assistances in their current residences, and the proportion is further lower: about 64.9% of such families have not received any assistance, and the most frequently received assistance program is medical assistance, at a percentage of only 6.78%;other assistances take very low proportions (see Figure 1). Although acquiring few relives, such poor families have high and diversified demands on social assistances. Of course, different types of families have different priorities in demands. The top three social assistances most needed by urban poor families are *Dibao*, medical assistance and subsidies for water, electricity, gas and heating; the top three by migrant poor families are the housing assistance, medical assistance and education assistance; and the top three by rural poor families are *Dibao*, medical assistance and temporary major accident relief. In addition, there are many needy groups who need the employment help, entrepreneurship support, legal aids, psychological services and other relief services.

In 2015, the author organized a survey of the social assistance in Chengdu, finding that the access to *Dibao* and material supports were the most important forms of helps acquired by the *Dibao* recipients; only 30% and 6% of these respondents had received medical assistance and education assistance; and only 1-2% had accessed employment assistance, care services and spiritual comforts. But the surveyed have high demands on these assistance services, especially medical supports, because more than 30% of them believed that the medial as-

sistance and medical insurance would deliver them big helps. Still not a few *Dibao* recipients have demands on look-after and cares, psychological comforts, employment and legal aid, and other services.

At present, despite the special assistance provides service for the recipients, such as education, medical care, housing and employment, the coverage of these service assistance is narrow, the level of benefit is low and the effectiveness of the assistance is limited. In addition, low-income groups in addition to the needs of the above services, there are still care, psychological comfort, business support and other needs, but the existing social assistance systems did not provide such service assistance, showing the lack of these kinds of service assistance.

2.3 The uncoordination between assistance and other social security programs

China's social security system is mainly composed of three subsystems, namely, social assistance, social insurance and social welfare. The social assistance is the fundamental subsystem, aimed at ensuring the most basic life of the vulnerable social groups; the social insurance is the principal subsystem, aimed at solving the various risks faced by the ; and the social welfare is the highest-level subsystem, aimed at improving the quality of life of all citizens. The three subsystems should develop in a coordinated manner, rather than compromising or favouring certain one.[?] Otherwise, the overall function of the social security system will be impaired, or even stir contradictions between members of the society. In addition to coordination among social assistance programs, social assistance programs and the social insurance's and the social welfare's related programs shall be coordinated and integrated. But till now, such coordination has yet to be improved.

On the one hand, the coordination between the social assistance programs and the related social insurance ones is not strong. Firstly, the coordination between medical assistances and medical insurance is not smooth enough.
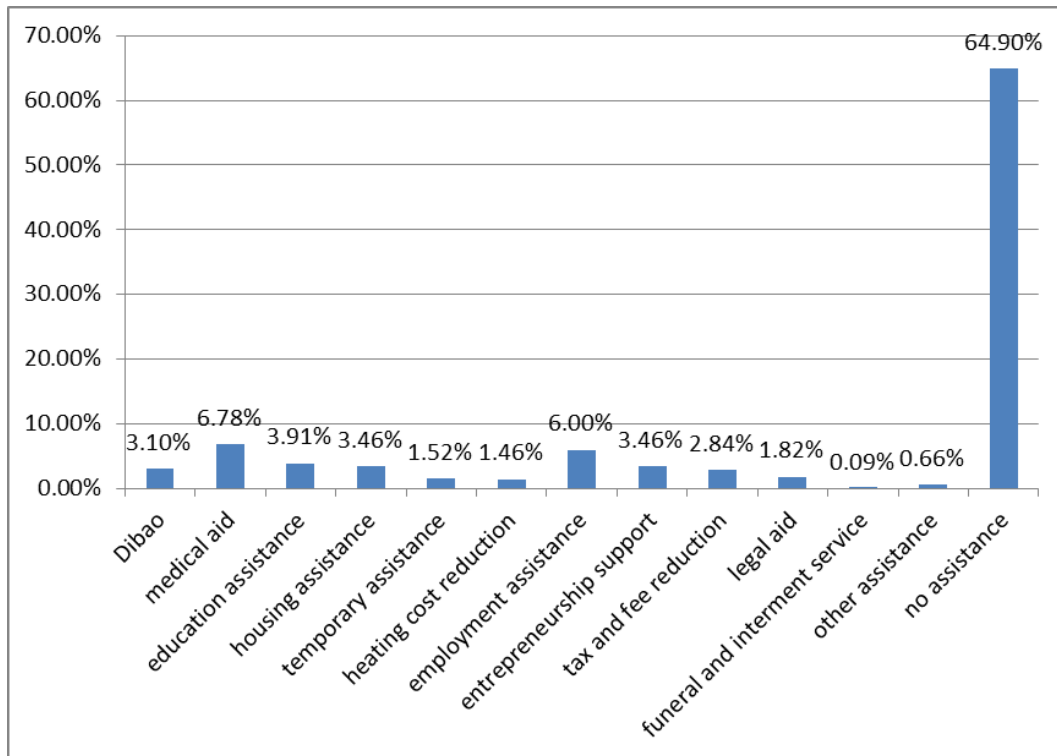
Figure 1. Situation of migrant needy familiesin obtaining assistance in current resident places

The first issue is that there may be deviations in the actual beneficiaries of subsidizing funds for participating in medical insurance and medical cooperative care. Some part of the medical assistance funds is used to help the *Dibao* recipients, *three-nos* support person and other assistance objects to participate in basic medical insurances. Such expenditure in 2015 reached 6.17 billion Yuan, which is allocated directly from the basic medical assistance account to the basic medical insurance fund account. The basic insurance fund account can be used for all the insured objects, not only for the poor groups. So it is not proper to say that the funds for subsidizing the poor for participating in the medical insurance and medical cooperative care are fully used to solve the medical burdens of the poor groups. And the second issue is the actual reimbursements under medical assistances vary greatly due to different settlement methods between the medical assistance, basic medical insurance, serious illness medical insurances and other systems. As to the connection between the medical assistance system and the medical insurance system, a unified method has been achieved basically across the nation, excepting the connection timing order. However, the nation has not adopted a unified settlement method; e.g., section-wised settlement and accumulation-wised settlement of medical expenses are both being used. Secondly, the coordination between employment assistance and unem-

ployment insurance is to be strengthened. Employment assistance is aimed at the able-bodied *Dibao* recipients. Currently, more than 60% of the urban *Dibao* recipients have the working ability. Obviously, it is not the ultimate goal of the national policy to place so many people with the working ability under the shelter of social assistance. Employment assistance is aimed to drive the *Dibao* recipients to return to the labour markets through many employment advancement measures, including the job recommendation, training, public service jobs, subsidies for training and social security, *etc*. Unemployment insurance is a kind of social insurance program which provides a certain period of material assistances and re-employment services to the labourers who have lost their wages due to the involuntary unemployment. The function of unemployment insurance to promote re-employment is widely valued in the world. But in China, generally, such re-employment promotion function is limited; and in practice, the coordination between employment assistances and unemployment insurances has not attract enough attention.

In addition, the coordination between social assistance and social welfare and poverty alleviation development is not enough. Firstly, there is a lack of coordination between *Dibao* program and special groups' welfare programs (disabled persons, elderly persons, women and children). Disabled people, elderly people, children and

women are the vulnerable groups with poor capacity against risks. If social welfare for them does not develop well, they will have to rely on social assistance, eventually worsening the burden of social assistance system. On the contrary, if the social welfare is relatively perfect and sound, it can improve the quality of life of all the people, reduce the possibility of poor risk-resistance groups to fall into the poverty, and thus alleviate the pressure of social assistance; additionally, for *Dibao* families, if their elderly, disabled, children, women and other members can enjoy the corresponding social welfare, the burdens on such families can be reduced, thus helping the assisted families out of poverty. At present, there are a considerable proportion of disabled persons, elderly people, children and women in China's *Dibao* recipients. Although the welfare for them in China has been developed over recent years, the coordination between is insufficient between *Dibao* and such welfare programs, resulting in dilemmas in selections by *Diabo* recipients in practice. In order to prevent the loss of benefits, they can only stay in Dibao. As discovered in the interviews of *Dibao* recipients in Chengdu in 2015, five persons enjoy the welfare subsidy for the disabled, in addition to *Dibao* allowance; and another person further enjoy the old-age welfare subsidy. These benefits have made a certain improvement to the life of *Dibao* families. However, poor coordination between various policies results in conflicts, leading to inconvenience for the poor groups. Secondly, the relationship between the rural *Dibao* and the poverty alleviation and development needs to be further coordinated. The poverty alleviation and development and the rural *Dibao* are both important measures to combat poverty in China. And they are also important and basic institutional arrangements to alleviate rural poverty. For a long time, these two systems have operated independently, with differences in goals, working objects, working methods, natures, implementing bodies and working mechanisms. Currently, the MoCA has introduced a guide to promote the effective coordination of the two. But in practice, improvements are still needed in terms of the object connection, standard connection, information sharing,*etc*. Many counties' rural *Dibao* standards are lower than the poverty alleviation standards. The two departments do not conduct well in communication, coordination and information sharing, and two systems need to further strengthen their connection and coordination.

3 Policy Solutions

First, the object of various kinds of assistance programs should be regulated and welfare binding should

be avoided. It needs to regulate the objects of all kinds of assistance programs. All kinds of special assistance should be brought into the unified social assistance management system, and the object, standard,payment methods and levels as well as management should be designed uniformly in order to enhance the coordination among the programs. Meanwhile, it needs to get rid of special assistance programs' binding with *Dibao*. The eligibility of special assistance can be extended to the low income group beyond *Dibao* recipients, or narrowed to some special families among *Dibao* recipients, or can be crossed with *Dibao* coverage.In sum, it needs to determine the objects of special assistance through demand test according to the actual situation of the family difficulties ,rather than determine the objects according to whether the applicants are *Dibao* recipients, thus super position effect can be avoided and the sustainable development can be achieved.[?] In this regard, the latest social assistance reform in South Korea can provide reference and revelation, in 1999 South Korea has established the national basic living standard guarantee system, similar to the Chinese *Dibao*, providing living assistance for the poor who live under the absolute poverty line, in addition, these living assistance recipients can also get education, health care, housing and other assistance, and those who are not the objects of living assistance can not get any assistance. On the one hand, this leads to welfare dependency of the recipients, on the other hand it also causes superposition effect similar to China. Therefore, South Korea implemented reform in 2015, and after the reform the basic living standard guarantee system and special assistance including medical aid, education assistance and housing assistance run separately. Basic living standard guarantee system provides living assistance for absolute poor group provides, and medical aid, education aid, housing aid and other special assistance aim at absolute and relative poor people who have demand for special assistance.[?] This way can meet the needs of the poor families, and can also provide assistance more equitably and effectively.

Second, existing special assistance should be strengthened and other services assistance should be introduced. Poverty not only means low income and difficulties in basic living, but also means being trapped in social dilemma. In China's social assistance system, *Dibao* can deal with the problem of no or low income, special assistance such as medical aid, housing aid, education aid and employment aid can deal with social dilemma.Therefore, on one hand the design of special assistance should be optimized and benefit level should be increased. At present, special assistance programs including medical aid,housing aid, education aid and em-

ployment aid are still imperfect, and benefit level is too low to meet the actual needs of the poor families.It needs to improve and optimize the existing special assistance, moderately improve the benefit level and strengthen the contact with employment promotion,so as to play the special assistance's role of dealing with social dilemma. On the other hand, other services assistance should be introduced to meet the various needs of the disadvantaged people. At present, besides the needs for cash assistance, recipients also have demands for service assistance, in addition to the needs for "instrumental" assistance way, the recipients also have demands for "emotional" assistance way, the diversification of needs reflects that the recipients claim of their rights, and they put forward their demand more and more from the perspective of maintaining their rights and interests. Therefore, the establishment of assistance programs should consider the diversified needs of the recipients and provide various kinds of service assistance. Based on the existing service assistance programs, social assistance service should also give priority to the following programs: rehabilitation and nursing assistance, care and custodial assistance, psychological assistance and so on(see Table 3).These service assistance programs can be used to explore and accumulate experience in a local pilot, and the programs that are widely available, easy to assess and controllable in quality should be gradually fixed to become policies.In addition, it needs to take measures to strengthen the coordination between social assistance and social insurance, poverty alleviation and development and social welfare,so as to reduce the recipients' vulnerability through providing insurance treatment, development and welfare support services.

Table 3. Social assistance service programs needed to be introduced

Service assistance	Target groups
Rehabilitation and nursing	Poor disabled, sickness and elderly,etc.
Care and custodial	Poor elderly, children,orphans and street children,etc.
Psychological counseling	Poor people with mental problems, community correction criminals (drug addicts, prisoners of release)

Third, the investment on social assistance should be increased and the relationship between social assistance administrative power and fiscal expenditure should be rationalized.Compared with foreign countries, there is a gap in the spending on social assistance and the total expenditure on *Dibao*. The proportion of China's fiscal spending on social assistance to that on social secu-

rity, and the proportion of social assistance expenditure to GDP is obviously low. Therefore, in terms of funding, financial support responsibilities of governments at all levels should be further defined, social assistance expenditure scale should be adjusted, and the benefit level should be increased gradually, meanwhile,it needs to actively mobilize social and market forces to raise funds, as a complement to the government finances.When increasing the investment on social assistance, the social assistance administrative power and expenditure responsibilities of the central and local governments should be clearly defined.Regulation on responsibilities of different levels of governments is not clear in Social Assistance Interim Measures issued in 2014. There is also lack of clear delineation of fiscal expenditure responsibilities.For this, the system of local responsibility, territorial management and multi-level financial burden should be further clarified,and administrative responsibilities and financial responsibilities should be unified. On the basis of clarifying basic management system, the government levels deciding assistance standards should be raised and the main financial spending responsibility of provincial government should be highlighted.Transfer payment from central government for *Dibao* and medical aid should be integrated, and unified social assistance transfer payment project from central government should be established. Within the overall social assistance system,fund should be allowed to be moved among different assistance programs,and funds also should be tilted into rural areas and poor areas in the central and western parts of the country. Fiscal expenditure structure should be optimized, and expenditure on medical aid, education aid, housing aid, and temporary assistance should be increased. Financial fund should give priority to key livelihood issues which demand urgent solutions.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Motivated by a mandate: a university-clinic partnership to develop a perinatal depression registry at a community based hospital in the Midwest

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Abstract: Disparities in maternal mental health outcomes persist despite the myriad of existing evidence based treatments and recent public health prevention policy efforts. Integrated health care delivery models such as Collaborative Care and patient medical home models have the potential to reduce health disparities in clinic settings. These evidence-based approaches require multidisciplinary teams for successful implementation and to provide quality care to improve specified patient outcomes. However, strategies for successful collaboration and steps for critical reflection are often overlooked in clinical and health services research. Furthermore, a shared vision of social justice is essential in the process of building and sustaining patient-centered care models, but is often understated. The purpose of this paper is to describe the development and implementation of a social justice-informed hospital-based perinatal depression registry to address maternal health disparities. Our partnership is informed by community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles for carrying out health services research. We describe the steps for building a sustainable university-hospital collaboration between traditional and non-traditional researchers using principles from CBPR in a clinic setting.

Keywords: community-based participatory research, maternal mental health, perinatal depression, psychosocial screening

1 Background

Depression is one of the most common conditions in pregnancy, affecting up to 12.7% of pregnant women[1] and is the leading cause of disease-related disability during this period.[2] Women with depression during pregnancy face increased risk for preterm births and delivering both low birth weight and very low birth weight infants,[3] who are in turn at high risk for infant death in the first year of life.[4] Depression during pregnancy is also a risk factor for depression in the postpartum period.[5,6] Adverse health outcomes as a result of untreated depression extend from mother to infant. For instance, postpartum depression is associated with delayed infant development,[7] impaired maternal-infant attachment,[8,9] and suboptimal breastfeeding.[10,11] Furthermore, women with psychiatric illness while pregnant are at increased risk for suicidal ideation.[12–14] Growing evidence shows that racial and ethnic minority women, in particular those of lower socioeconomic status, may experience increased risk for perinatal mood disorders.[15,16] Given the deleterious effects of depression during pregnancy on infants and mothers over the life course, recent preventive efforts have begun to more directly address perinatal depression.

2 Methods

2.1 Depression screening policies in the perinatal period

In 2016, the U.S. Preventive Task Force recommended that adults (including pregnant and post-partum women) be screened for depression.[17] For many women, prena-

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tal clinic visits may represent their only encounter with health care professionals and are a critical point for assessing mood disorders.[18, 19] Case detection of depression in the perinatal period can be followed by provision of evidence-based treatments to reduce maternal morbidity/mortality as well as adverse birth outcomes. Screening instruments for perinatal depressive symptoms include the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale (EPDS),[20] the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9),[21] the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D),[22] and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI).[23] Many questions remain, however, about which instrument to use and in which trimester to screen. More studies are required to demonstrate the optimal method, timing, and utility of perinatal screening for mood disorders.

2.2   State mandates to screen for perinatal depression

Several new policy initiatives and state-level mandates have begun to address the need for detection of mental health problems during the perinatal period. Often times, the need for a state-level mandate emerges after highly publicized cases of maternal mental illness. One such example is the Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS Act which became part of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act legislation in 2010.[24] Melanie Block Stokes was a young woman who committed suicide after several months of unsuccessful treatment for postpartum depression in 2001. The Melanie Blocker Stokes MOTHERS Act is a comprehensive policy to reduce the burden of post-partum depression through research, screening, and support services. Only recently have health policy experts begun to identify the associated benefits, costs,[25] and barriers to screening[26] because of state policy mandates for depression screening. In 2008, Illinois became the second state to mandate depression screening at least once during pregnancy and once during postpartum for women receiving any perinatal care. Although all women receiving care in Central Illinois clinics now complete a depression screening, best practices for screening and the prevalence estimates for perinatal depression in Central Illinois have not yet been established. Collaborative health services research has the potential to inform the broader clinical community and to identify possible disparities in the prevalence of depression and its treatment to inform state policy efforts.

2.3   The role of mental health registries

Since best practices for identifying perinatal women in need of depression care, clinics and hospital systems have taken the task upon themselves and created local efforts to screen for depression. The majority of findings from perinatal database registries tend to originate in urban coastal areas and/or well-resourced academic medical centers. The settings of existing registries complicate the applicability to rural or suburban areas in the Midwest. Despite detailed descriptions strategies to implement registries and use chart data to inform practice, the process can be more difficult in under-resourced settings that are not affiliated with academic centers. To address this limitation and to develop best practices in a large private hospital setting, we launched a collaborative effort to initiate perinatal depression screening in outpatient OBGYN clinics in Central Illinois. To make use of clinical data and work towards full implementation of a collaborative care model we initiated a depression registry. The guiding impetus in all of our discussions leading up to starting the registry was a shared commitment to social justice and improving health outcomes for patients.

3   Purpose

The purpose of a database registry is to gather and store large quantities of data related to a specific disease or conditions. This approach is commonly used in research conducted by traditional academic health services researchers (MD or PhD level researchers). Registry designs often require a team approach, drawing from the expertise of its members in order to provide certain contributions to the research. In our region, there remains a shortage of health care providers and an even smaller pool of health care providers with research interests. Because of these circumstances, we tried to be creative when building our team of research partners. In 2012, we established the Identifying Depression through Early Assessment (IDEA) Research Team as a collaboration between university faculty, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, psychiatrists and undergraduate and graduate students.

4   Procedures

4.1   Setting

The IDEA Research Team Perinatal Depression registry was developed at Carle Foundation Hospital, Urbana, Illinois with support from various local funding sources. Carle Foundation Hospital is a 345-bed re-

gional care hospital housing the area's only Level III perinatal services and Level I trauma care. The catchment area spans a 100-mile radius and serves nearly 8 million residents of mostly rural central Illinois. The main hospital is located in a suburban town but serves 13 surrounding rural counties. The Research Institute at Carle provided the infrastructure and support to develop the perinatal depression registry. In our initial conversations about health inequalities at the clinic level, we began an exploratory discussion with the Carle Research Institute and the Carle Department of Social Work. We began our conversations with the Department of Social Work because of the department's oversight on all perinatal depression screens. Since the implementation of the State Mandate to screen for depression, the perinatal social workers were charged with screening all postpartum women prior to discharge from labor and delivery. The Department of Social Work and the Carle Research Institute facilitated meetings with health care providers from the clinics.

4.2 Social justice and clinical research

A shared commitment to social justice is inherent to our collaboration and is also directly integrated into our partnership. Figure 1 provides an illustration of how our team integrates practice knowledge and Community-based participatory research (CBPR) principles in clinical research in our health services research collaboration. CBPR is an approach used in community research, but not commonly used in mainstream clinical and health services research.[27] The specific principles we draw from are Sharing Power, Capacity Building, Shared Dissemination, Shared Long-term Goals, and Sustainability. For example, starting with our very early discussions on health disparities and clinic research we have been committed to Sharing Power and Capacity Building as guiding principles for building our team.

Figure 1. Heuristic depiction of integration of social justice principles to improve perinatal mental health

From those early meetings we approached the clinic as the community and began a series of multiple key stakeholder meetings with practitioners to learn the perceived needs of the clinic and the potential role of research to improve both clinic practice and patient outcomes. We met with nurse midwives, physician assistants, nurses, obstetricians, and nurse managers in separate meetings to hear the collective opinions by practice area.

4.3 Valuing practice knowledge

After three months of discussions, six practitioners with an interest in clinical research remained as core team members. One of the most important drivers for participation as a part of a research team was the potential to address community needs through presenting evidence (*i.e.* research findings) of the level of need. Our remaining team represented a diverse set of practitioners from psychology, maternal fetal medicine, nursing, and social work. Our clinic-based team members described their motivation for becoming involved in research after years of practice in the same community. The providers described having witnessed vast changes in the sociodemographics of their patient population over time. The providers believe that the clinic is now more diverse culturally and racially than ever before. Along with the shifting demographics of the clinic, there are added challenges in patient communication such as language barriers and educational disparities. Providers in our clinic find it difficult to identify possible risks for pregnancy complications among foreign-born patients if they do not speak the language. Yet another motivation to participate in research is a desire to determine the extent of the increasing number of patients who have comorbidities associated pregnancy complications. Several members of our team sought to better understand the specific complicated cases and learn if the high-risk patients are reflective of epidemiological patterns across clinics in our catchment area. In our collaboration, the providers receive no incentives for participation in research and are driven by a desire to provide superior care. The practice knowledge of team members is highly valued and often shapes research questions.

4.4 Sharing power

Medical, psychological, and social work perspectives have come together to address pressing unmet health care needs in a large private hospital that serves a mostly rural catchment area. The team has come together to carry out health services research because there is a shared desire to address disparities in the local population. Given the different training backgrounds and roles within the clinic there are different norms and expectation of power. We

have taken several deliberate steps to address the power imbalance that is inherent in medical hierarchies. For example, in our monthly planning meetings and in communications we address one another by first name. In all of our discussions to design the research protocol, to propose research questions, or to request external funding, each team member has an active voice and all contributions are respected. In our collaboration, all team members are equal partners.

4.5   Capacity building

Capacity building is central to our efforts to collaborate and address maternal health disparities by carrying out health services research based on the principles of CBPR. As a team, we decided early in the process that there was need for insider perspective and partnership when conducting the research. As a team of nontraditional researchers, we could gain from one another and the perspectives from peer-clinicians could improve our approach to conducting social-justice oriented research. Accordingly, from the very inception of the IDEA research team, capacity building of team members and affiliated practitioners has central to our mission. To this end, there is vertical mentoring across practice areas and within the team. Some members bring expertise with funding application preparation and others bring knowledge of psychotropic medications or how to interpret blood glucose levels. As a team, we are actively building the capacity of one another to conduct rigorous and meaningful research. For example, in the early stages of the registry project, and prior to ethics committee approval, all core team members were required to complete and pass a 20-module human subjects ethics training. The training proved challenging depending on years of education or previous experience with research. By the end of the training, most members of the team found it a rewarding experience. In other areas of capacity building, the PhD or MD level partners assisted with how to draft a research abstract or prepare a funding application. Now after nearly two years of partnership, the other members of the team are peer mentoring clinical colleagues on research methods and dissemination of case reports. Given the persistence of mental health disparities and the gap between research and practice, the increase in formation of partnerships such as ours are going to be necessary to improve our health care system.[19] Using or translational approach to understanding the extent of perinatal health disparities we jointly think through and discuss our research questions. For example, from a physician assistant perspective, the use of nutritional supplements to treat depression over pharmacological treatments during pregnancy was of specific interest. For the nurse practitioners from maternal and fetal medicine, the role of polycystic ovarian syndrome and risk for depression was of keen interests. For now, the overarching aim of the perinatal registry is to gather data to analyze the prevalence of mood disorders and co-occurring health problems obtained from chart reviews from pregnant and postpartum women and their infants in a racially and ethnically diverse obstetrics and gynecology clinic in order to determine the prevalence of mood disorders and associated factors in this population and the impact on postpartum outcomes. All members of the research team bring their professional expertise and background to design research questions. Given the disciplinary diversity in the team, our current research questions are broad and range from examining the relationship between depression and diabetes to the association between depressive symptoms and advanced maternal age.

4.6   Design

The IDEA Research Team implemented a database that utilizes a longitudinal cohort design. We enter chart data from women from the first pregnancy visit and from the women and their infants from post-partum visits up to six. Enrollment into the database is scheduled to continue for 5 years or after enrollment of 20,000 women. The proposed sample size of 20,000 will allow for complex nested and longitudinal statistical analyses. Clinic staff will provide the depression screenings to all patients as part of routine clinic care. The database is a list of de-identified patient participants whose pregnancy related clinic data, along with the infant data will be used for chart review research. We will examine the prevalence and the course of maternal mood disorders and their relationship with health status and medical conditions for both mother and infant.

5   Sustainability and dissemination

5.1   Funding mechanisms

To date, the majority of our funding support is from internal grants and foundation funding. We have been successful in obtain pilot funds to establish the database registry and have applied for external federal funding and will continue to do so in the near future. Our research is also eligible for numerous federal and private awards. In recent years, there has been an increase in funding to strengthen the infrastructure for health services research to improve health outcomes aimed to reduce disparities. Examples of organizations that participate in this type system level research funding awards

are Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute, the National Institute of Minority Health Disparities, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In addition, recent efforts both among government agencies and private interests are providing support for collaborative research.[28] Power sharing and capacity building are evident in our approach to funding. All members of the team actively seek opportunities for funding, are active co-investigators on applications, and contribute to the writing process.

5.2 Dissemination

Writing collectively to share the findings and a description of our research process must integrate different disciplinary perspectives which can sometimes result in a stew of varying concepts. To this end, our monthly meetings represent a space for our team to talk through ideas and share disciplinary knowledge to clearly convey our various perspectives. Once again power sharing is imperative to make sure that all voices are included in the writing process. The meetings inform research directions, but also serve as reflective practices for all team members.[29] As we move forward, it will become imperative for our team to develop and refine our model of dissemination so that we can write both across audiences and within our specific subfields.

5.3 Shared long term goals and sustainability

Our team came together as a band of researchers with a shared goal to reduce maternal health disparities to ultimately advance social justice. Our individual commitments to social justice oriented research and practice extend beyond the research partnership. Concurrently our collective commitments to social justice keep the team motivated to sustain the project for the long term. Our shared goal is to develop a Collaborative Care model where we can actively address maternal mental health disparities through reorganization of existing resources in the outpatient setting.[30] It is this vision to employ research to improve patients' outcomes that motivates our research team. The perinatal depression registry we have described in this paper is one social-justice orientated approach to directly address disparities in maternal mental health and attempt to test a novel concept of applying CBPR principle within a clinic setting. There is a need to increase these forms of partnerships to advance health services research and address health disparities, especially in non-metropolitan settings.

6 Conclusion

Social Justice informed approaches to health services research are essential to be able to forcefully address perinatal mental health disparities. In our example, our team was brought together through a shared purpose to determine the level of health inequality in our community. Moreover, the manner in which we engage with our research collaborators uses principles of the social justice for mental health framework. While our case study presents one example, future collaborations of multidisciplinary teams conducting social justice informed research are essential to tackle mental health disparities and improve health outcomes across all populations.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dimensions of professional knowledge

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Abstract: This study concern how professional knowledge is discussed, understood and employed by integration workers in an integration activity in Sweden called Civic Orientation. The changing and complex nature of integration work implies that integration workers need specialized knowledge to ensure quality of the activity. Defining what is meant by professional knowledge is especially important and to address these issues, this study focuses on what constitutes professional knowledge with respect to the efforts made to support immigrant integration. Our study reveals that professional knowledge in Civic Orientation encompasses the understanding and responding to the heterogeneity of the groups in daily interactions, developing standardized procedures; and knowledge about how to establishing a cumulative approach to knowledge in the organization. We argue that these motives are embedded in different perspectives on culture and knowledge. Furthermore, these different perspectives are expressed as tensions between values of creativity and standardization as well as between equality and heterogeneity.

Keywords: professional knowledge, communication, integration work, standardization

1 Introduction

The focus of this study concerns how professional knowledge in integration work is understood and defined by integration workers and managers in one of the main programs used by Swedish authorities to help immigrants integrate into Swedish society, a program called Civic Orientation (CO).

In recent decades, societal structures, welfare organizations, and work processes have been challenged because of increased immigration and changing immigration policies. In this context, public integration work has been transformed by both public policy mandates as well as general demographic and societal changes.[1] These transformations involve how activities are organized, what methods are used, and how operating procedures are implemented as well as management and governance. The changes are discursive changes at the social, business, and professional level,[2] where differences in logic and principles are at play in the determination of what is professional knowledge.

Given the nature of the work involved, integration workers in this field often need to have specialized knowledge and one can ask if the transformations of work practice with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers is developing into a new field of practice.[3] However, we argue that it is reasonable to assume that the transformations have generated new demands on professional expertise as well as questions in need of further research.

The issue of professional knowledge suggests a highly relevant question: How is professional knowledge defined and how is it dealt with in a new integration activity such as CO? Understanding the processes of integration work requires understanding how dimensions of knowledge are discussed, understood, and employed, by the integration workers but first we need to define what integration is.

1.1 Integration and integration work

Integration is a concept that has been addressed in many ways, but it often involves both social structure and individual behaviour.[4, 5] The structural component of integration incorporates a dimension where individuals participate in formal organizations and activities such as in politics, education and labour to seek agency. This view of integration also means that participation can vary from low to high and that integration activities in general aim to support both formal and informal relationships. On the individual level, integration can generally be defined as structural or affective interconnectedness with

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others as well as with social institutions, as individuals position themselves and are positioned by others through social interaction and relationships with different kinds of institutions.[6]

1.2 Civic orientation

In Sweden, CO is a 60-hour integration program directed to some immigrants; those who has a residence permit and join the establishment-program from the Public Employment Service, and those who are a family immigrant. The regulation[7] states that the purpose of CO is to facilitate the integration of new arrivals into the work and life of the community by providing a basic understanding of Swedish society and by forming a basis for further knowledge acquisition. Therefore the government encourage to participate as early as possible after arrival to the municipality. CO must be conveyed in the form of dialogue and discussion adapted to the immigrant's own conditions and perspectives. The information should therefore be given in the immigrants' mother tongue. The CO should be seen as a common base where the municipalities' efforts are supplemented by the county councils, government agencies and other actors.

CO provides the immigrants with information about the following:

(1) Human rights and fundamental democratic values

(2) An individual's rights and obligations in general

(3) How society is organized

(4) Practical everyday life

Furthermore, one goal with CO is to ensure a certain national standard in terms of form and content.

The emphasis is on the practical aspect of living in Sweden but the exact content, extent and focus of each thematic area are adapted from the participants specific conditions and the local conditions. The program is given in the immigrants' native language, so the groups are categorized by language. But the immigrants are a heterogeneous group with different experiences and knowledge they are young and old, men and women, skilled and unskilled, from urban and rural areas, and from different countries with various religious backgrounds.

However, a program generally starts when there is a full group (*i.e.*, 15-20 people). If a participant is absent from one occasion (session), it can be made up the next time the program is given since the program is highly structured. However, this strict structure means that deviation from the planned activities or changes in the pace at which the activities are provided is greatly restricted, constraining the immigrants' other priorities such as education and work.

1.3 Professional knowledge

But what is professional knowledge? We often talk about professional knowledge just like Muzio and Kirkpatrick[8] we see professionals as a collective setting, who develop approaches, values and strategies.[9] Professional knowledge is often treated as a concept where we assume that we know and almost intuitively recognize it. But the meaning and essence of professional knowledge is not easy to define in words; it is multifaceted, perspective-rich and complex phenomenon and therefore tends to slip between your fingers like sand. However, in this study, professional knowledge is related to the social structure of integration work since that is a key issue in the assignment of CO.

Knowledge can be seen and understood in several ways but in this study we see knowledge as being connected with facts and principles, having familiarity or conversance with subjects, which in this case should be subjects related to integration work. On a general level one can say that professional knowledge is a prerequisite for competent acting that is valued in situations, which also means that knowledge is the ability to participate in an integration activity. From our perspective, knowledge is embedded in activities and just like Thẳng,[10] we argue that knowledge is personal, but also manifested and shared between people in activities.

Since there is no definitive definition of what constitutes professional knowledge in integration work, the aim of this study is to get an understanding of how professional knowledge in integration activities is understood and defined by integration workers and managers in one of the main programs used by Swedish authorities to help immigrants integrate into Swedish society.

1.4 Perspectives of activities

Even though we are now in a situation where integration work is discussed in most Western countries, we still need to know more about how professional knowledge in integration work is understood and in what ways the meanings of professional knowledge enter and transform everyday integration practices. Consequently, we argue that the way professional knowledge is understood has a massive influence on how to organize work, but also on staff members' (integration workers) modes of expression and, more specifically, methods of performing integration work. From this point of view, the theoretical and methodological perspective of this study is that professional knowledge cannot be isolated from the context in which it is put to work.

CO can be understood as an activity system and can be scrutinized at three interrelated levels: activity, actions, and operations.[11] In this study, our prime focus

is the local organization of the activity in a municipality. The interplay between society, institutions, and individuals becomes relevant for understanding how through different voices various perspectives on professional knowledge arise (*i.e.*, ways of acting, reasoning, and handling the experiences that are made in relation to the task of the activity system) where the activity is directed at newly arrived immigrants. Governmental policy categorizes activity as providing information about Swedish society in a way that helps immigrants integrate into Swedish society.

However, even if the immigrants' integration gives meaning to the activity, individuals have their own goals and engagements. To be able to teach a class on democracy, an integration worker must carry out a series of actions, for example, preparing for the lesson. Such preparations imply that the general objective of the lesson (*e.g.*, lessons on democracy) is accomplished by the integration worker's perceived motive and goals coupled to each action. However, the integration worker's actual performance, the operations, depends on current conditions and tools, *i.e.*, the means or methods by which their actions are carried out. Such aspects of work are embedded in daily routine practice and are not always consciously performed. For example, the integration workers do not have to think about how to keep a session moving; they just do it.

The interdependence between the different levels[11] implies that CO is shaped and transformed by generating actions and operations. An integration worker, however, might find it difficult to establish a link between the durable object of an activity and the goals of their on-going actions, although these are connected. Such paradoxical relations are characteristic for activity systems and can be thought of as sources of change. The changing dimensions of CO imply that it is not always clear how professional competence is defined. There is an inseparable relationship between the knowledge required to handle situations that challenge routine aspects of work and aspects of quality. In other words, the concept of professional knowledge is an historical accomplishment and is 'recurring patterns of purposeful activity that are distributed over people and technologies in work practice'.[12]

An integration worker's main concern is to establish links between the immigrants' cultures and Swedish culture, a process that Akkerman and Bakker[13] call 'boundary crossing'. Boundary crossing involves generating new meaning and new understanding across cultural differences. How the integration workers identify, understand, and frame distinctive perspectives in meaning making processes becomes central to facilitating the

immigrants' understandings of everyday life in Sweden. Sometimes, however, situations that disturb the on-going conversations emerge and challenge the routine aspects of the work. How well integration workers deal with these interruptions is an indication of their professional knowledge.

From a boundary crossing perspective, we consider professional knowledge in relation to how different viewpoints are produced with specific voices and relate to specific positions. This multi-voicedness, for example, illustrates how individuals can take on varying perspectives and move between different positions. Such a view becomes relevant for describing how boundaries are constructed and overcome. In our study, different positions are evident in discourses about professional knowledge, as people both respond to former utterances and anticipate future responses. Hence, processes of positioning are both shaped by context and are context renewing.[14]

2 Methods

The empirical material in this study comes from integration offices in Sweden. And just like a schoolroom, the physical facilities of the integration offices include tables and chairs, distributed in rows, and a whiteboard located at the front. The activities are scheduled four days a week with each meeting lasting two hours. Professional knowledge and continuity in everyday work, in terms of both content and form, are uphold and accomplished through the schedule and the framing and structuring of activities.

2.1 Data collection

After being provided with the details of the study, all the staff members and management agreed to participate in the study. To embrace the relation between individuals' ways of talking in and about everyday practice and the collective organization of activity, we focused on the entire activity system, which made it possible to analyse individual, collective, artefact-mediated, and professional knowledge with respect to CO.

To grasp the workflow and the ways work was organized, about 115 hours of observations were carried out, divided between both authors. The purpose of those observations was to understand the overall expectations, norms, purposes and procedures already in place that adhered to the organization and coordination of work. The observations were focused on different activities and discussions and can be described as a funnel shaped process where the point of departure was questions starting with What is valued?. Observations also involved talking to different staff members in and about various situations.

Field notes were written in close conjunction with the observations, and time, place, activities, as well as what the immediate interpretation of what the participants addressed as important were all recorded. These notes have been used as complementary data to support and illustrate our interpretations.

Another purpose of the observations was to highlight for closer scrutiny those activities that played a critical role for how professional knowledge is defined in immigrant integration work. The periodic work meetings at the department were distinguished as a sort of crucial activity as they focused on aspects of professional knowledge related to the organization, development, and understanding of their work. These meetings included the manager of operations, administrative staff, and integration workers. Eight meetings were recorded, all between 60 and 90 minutes long. The video recorder was arranged to capture how the integration workers and the managers interacted with each other and what was presented on slides.

Additionally, a total of 18 interviews were conducted and tape-recorded, 16 with integration workers and two with management. Most interviews were done with the integration workers since their work is specifically targeted in the study. The interviews generally lasted about one hour, but varied between 30 and 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted at locations specified by the integration workers. Attention was focused on knowledge and quality in work. The interviews with the management were transcribed verbatim, but the interviews with the integration workers were summarized as an initial step. When transcribed, some of the oral remarks were edited to make them easier to understand.

2.2 Analysis

This study focuses on some aspects of professional knowledge and how integration workers and managers involved in CO conceive of professional knowledge. All data were used as a basis for analysis, and to form a preliminary hypothesis of how professional knowledge was understood and expressed, the field notes were initially used for documenting the workflow as well as guiding the analyses. Thereafter we made a content analysis of the interviews and the video recordings to find recurrent patterns of the way the staff and management understood aspects of professional knowledge. In that process, the interviews and the video recordings were listened to, reviewed and scrutinized several times.

Excerpts of interest for this study were transcribed verbatim. To grasp *what* was valued, *how* and *in relation to what*, the staging of *rules*, *community*, and *division of labour*[15] guided our analysis as well as the ways in which different interlocutors positioned themselves and others. Such positioning made visible their formal stance in relation to the activity as well as the ways in which they articulated specific agenda and perspectives on professional knowledge. Additionally, different positioning played out in terms of different responsibilities and people were held accountable for distinct tasks accordingly.

The initial analysis identified two categories that emerged as significant tools (or even strong actors) in maintaining and securing professional knowledge: *culture* and *material and methods* (standardizations). Specifically, culture stood out as a core aspect of professional knowledge in relation to the integration workers' ability to perform their daily tasks, making information intelligible and meaningful to the immigrants. Subsequently, we continued with closer analysis of the interviews and transcribed parts of the video recordings, starting with more detailed analysis of culture by scrutinizing how differences in the groups of immigrants were understood and what values and attributes emerged as aspects of professional knowledge in relation to the integration workers' actions. Specific focus was directed towards narratives about the bridging aspects of the integration workers' tasks.

In relation to learning material and methods at hand for the integration work, a structured order seemed to influence the distribution and processing of information. This finding directed our focus to analyse what rules and attributes emerged as aspects of professional knowledge in relation to the regulations and guidelines that directed the activity. The next step directed our analysis to examine the cumulative approaches to knowledge inherent in the system of activity. We identified professional knowledge aspects in relation to how actions and responsibilities were horizontally and vertically distributed in relation to the community.

3 Results

In the daily work associated with CO, the integration workers and management refer to professional knowledge in different ways and in different contexts: in everyday interactions in the classroom and in relation to resources such as methods and learning material. What becomes professional knowledge is revealed in the enactment of rules, community standards, and division of labour.

3.1 Professional knowledge as culture in action

One central aspect of professional knowledge in daily activities is culture. Culture is integral in the integration workers' daily work in both expected and quite un-

seen ways, and professional knowledge is manifested as the workers invoke culture in classroom interactions with the immigrants. CO is designed to provide information about Swedish society and to make comparisons between different cultures. What is less noticed is that the integration workers' work relies on the ability both to recognize the multiplicity of differences in the groups and to recognize the group members' sense of cultural belonging. This awareness enables the integration workers to bridge cultures. That is, culture functions as the organizing element of an activity, embracing interactive and mutually constitutive relations between cultural contexts and aspects of quality. As an organizing element, culture serves to continuously shape the activity in which the integration workers are operating.

In relation to the central functioning of culture it is interesting to note how institutional expectations on the integration workers were related to their dual cultural competence. As one manager expressed it: 'You will still need a certain amount of time in Sweden to be able to compare the cultural part in any way, and at the same time, it has sometimes been on the contrary; to be a broker, you cannot have been too long in Sweden. Otherwise you do not have the material to compare with.'

This utterance positions the integration workers as brokers between cultures. The interactions across contexts such position enables is an aspect of professional knowledge in the integration workers' work, where culture becomes a core feature. A decisive aspect of the value given to culture is made visible in how the integration workers deal with the heterogeneity in the groups. The integration workers consistently expressed the view that it was their responsibility to recognize the multiple differences in the groups: 'When you're small, you are socialized into norms and values and a culture (...) you have the culture as a starting point. It is easy to bring this up in the classroom too, but when you see that there are also other opinions, then one understands. (...) it's an advantage, it is a resource for me that a person may see different things with different perspectives. That is what I am trying to emphasize in class.'

This utterance stresses that people's positions are relational and linked to cultural and historical experiences. By understanding the immigrants' cultural belonging, the integration workers can understand how their different positions affect the way they perceive the environment and the issues that are dealt with in the sessions. This utterance also indicates an understanding of peoples' need to belong and their ability to move between different positions. Such movement can be considered as sense making processes and therefore part of identity[16] with a potential of spanning cultural bound-

aries. Even dichotomies between cultures and differences in the group are used by integration workers to go deeper into the subject, which becomes a crucial aspect of professional knowledge in their work. The integration workers express how professional knowledge depends on varying perspectives and that there is a constant negotiation between different positions in the class about various issues. For example, when talking about gender equality, one integration worker says: 'Sometimes the illiterates handle issues of gender equality better that highly educated (...) I give the illiterates the chance to defend their thoughts and ideas.'

Likewise, the integration workers' discourse also revealed how professional knowledge depends on bringing the immigrants into account: 'What is it that Iranians, for example, with that culture and that background are concerned about?'

The integration worker is simultaneously 'othering'[13] the Iranians and locating culture to them. By distancing oneself from a cultural value system, the integration worker is bringing the immigrants into account by challenging them to participate in the activity. The integration workers' objective positioning of 'themselves' is a prerequisite for directing and jointly scrutinizing cultural boundaries (*i.e.*, how the different cultures relate to one another). The integration workers' understanding of the immigrants cultural belonging enable the anticipation of relevant issues that most surely will raise questions and lead to the negotiation of different norms and values, which makes new courses of action possible while letting each group member take his or her own stance. Such identification and negotiations of boundaries have the potential to lead to new understandings of everyday life, norms, and values in different cultures. The utterance below refer to user-based aspects of professional knowledge that concern positioning the immigrants as active and responsible, encouraging them to respond to their on-going life projects: 'They (the immigrants') think that we want them to forget their traditions and turn Swedish. We discuss that a lot (...) But our role is to raise questions. Where are you? Who are you, as a human, as a father or mother? It is their (the immigrants') role to become more active in society.'

This understanding of society' through their (the immigrants') thoughts' indicates the integration worker's desire to make connections between the already known and the desired outcome, which is successful integration into Swedish society. Such dimensions of performance become important aspects of professional knowledge, aiming to increase the immigrants' access to active participation in society. Thus, the choices the integration workers make regarding how to carry out a specific

action are partly (re-)enacted from experience, partly improvised, and partly coupled to envisioning the future. In other words, the objective is not to overcome differences, but to establish continuity in action and interaction between different positions and cultures. Such enactment pinpoint process aspects of professional knowledge aiming to satisfy individual needs and interests.

3.2 Professional knowledge in methods and learning material in action

According to the national regulations,[7] different aspects of standardization and responsibility to secure a uniform delivery of service to all immigrants are interlinked with professional knowledge. Standardization as an aspect of professional knowledge involves an insurance that the same content is delivered in an equal manner to all immigrants. In CO, both the content and the form are stipulated at a national level, implying that the freedom to choose, *e.g.*, the literature to be used, is utterly constrained. Hence, methods and material found in textbooks and presentations are based on eight predefined themes stipulated in the restriction, which are divided into subthemes and provide a set of categories that define the 'problem areas'. Consequently, these constraints significantly influence how integration workers perform their tasks and how professional knowledge is defined.

According to the data, the scheduled processing through the different themes assures that all immigrants receive the same information. By using standardized tools such as PowerPoint presentations, professional knowledge becomes equated with equality. Moreover, according to the interviews, there is also a cumulative professional knowledge as all immigrants move from one scheduled theme to another in the same way, indicating that the tools are seen as providing measurable variables to evaluate the activity. However, as the informants argue, it is reasonable to always critically consider whether these standardized programs do what they claim they do or even provide equal opportunities once an immigrant completes the CO.

It is obvious that when the integration workers are making professional knowledge a question of standardization and equality, it influences how they interact with the immigrants, *i.e.* process aspects of the activity. When the integration workers are conducting a lesson, the standardized material or scripts coordinate their actions and predetermines what is relevant to highlight depending on the immigrants they are interacting with. Simultaneously, as the integration workers describe the content of the lessons as having different significance depending on the groups and their cultural heritage, indicating

that a uniform script cannot effectively deal with the differences between groups, they argue that they must follow the standardized chronological order that is built on an overall logic. The integration workers position themselves as responsible for following the script and overall, see the script as logical:

I think the arrangement that we have today and the order of the headings is rather logical. It starts with 'Coming to Sweden', and it ends with 'Growing old in Sweden'.

The reflective remark made above, on the chronological order of the issues in the script, indicates that the script might be correct and logical from an imagined life course perspective, and this is perceived as professional knowledge. However, this objective 'logic' and the way it corresponds to the heterogeneity of the groups can be called into question as it is designed for institutional use and can make it difficult for integration workers to respond to individual immigrants' issues.[17] That is indicating the complex and contested character of professional knowledge, which is made evident in a manager's remark: '(standardized scripts) should be a tool to help you to perform, but also a quality assurance that all receive our department's CO'.

This utterance points to a both/and function associated with standardization. This dual functionality indicates a need for boundary crossing for the integration workers, highlighting objective as well as subjective aspects of professional knowledge which exceeds the expectations of various stakeholders. Boundary crossing,[13] becomes in other words a vital competence in achieving and upholding professional knowledge and distributing and structuring work that everyone needs to relate to. As seen from the data, the standardized material is valued as an important tool in their work. Although, there are times that the integration workers need to let go of the stipulated order to respond to situations at hand. A challenge involved in achieving and upholding quality seems to lie in the way standardized information can be organized to support the integration workers' creative abilities.

3.3 Perspectives on knowledge

Many issues in CO require the integration workers to have specific professional knowledge. One such issue is sexuality, which is a subject that can be challenging for anyone and even more challenging in cultures where it can be taboo to discuss sexuality in mixed-gendered groups. It is reasonable to think that it is easier to talk about the parental insurance system than about sexuality. A reasonable question would be what content and pedagogical knowledge is best for maintaining professional knowledge regarding such issues.

However, according to the data, professional knowledge in CO is also a matter of handling structures that support and develop the work processes. As a manager says, this is done: 'through internal education, management makes evident their responsibility for securing the integration workers' knowledge base where we know that it differs very much culturally and about group processes to make them suitable for the mission'.

One manager emphasizes the need to keep the integration workers 'job-ready', indicating a boundary between objective knowledge and the integration workers' subjective knowledge:

We want them trained in some way in order to keep them job-ready.

The managements' view reveals a vertical distribution of knowledge, implying that objectified knowledge is given precedence over the integration workers' situated knowledge. The interviews with management also reveal that professional knowledge aspects of the organization of work are related to developing and maintaining structures and processes for continued knowledge development. Such aspects of professional knowledge can be related to parts of the ISO 9000 system that give importance to continuously developing methods and processes within organizations by regular audits.

The integration workers expressed a desire for a common knowledge base (especially pedagogical knowledge) that would help them adapt their activities for the specific needs of the immigrants, which point to the professional knowledge of processes related to what Sahney, Banwet, and Karunes[18] call the delivery of service and the outputs in terms of supporting the immigrants integration in society. The following utterance highlights a boundary between management and the integration workers and the multiple boundaries between the integration workers' level of knowledge, indicating an organizational perspective that needs to be considered when assessing professional knowledge. '[We] want to have a course in education science. If we want better results, we need to create a common denominator among us. But even among the integration workers, the level of education is very diverse. It can have an effect, more or less. But at least we have had a common denominator the courses that we have had here and the meetings we've had here always provide us with some knowledge and it's open you discuss, you criticize, complain, appreciate, everything.'

In addition, the utterance addresses how the integration workers frame their tasks, an understanding that addresses the ambiguous nature of their activity with respect to assessing its professional knowledge in relation to a larger collective system of activity. By conditioning the enhancement of work, the boundary between what currently characterizes the activity as a whole and what is yet to be accomplished is emphasized, indicating a possible path of action. The utterance reveals that the integration workers desire more action from management while also acknowledging horizontal aspects of knowledge development. The utterance also indicates a readiness to move from an 'individual' view of knowledge and learning to one that considers the perspectives of others. In other words, professional knowledge depends on developing a common denominator in the system of activity, which requires a learning environment that supports boundary-crossing activities as a way of promoting the continuous development of new knowledge.

The approach to the cumulative dimensions of knowledge will have implications for what becomes valued as quality work, and the above utterance addresses how boundary-crossing activities can serve to secure both learning and quality. However, ensuring learning and quality requires recognizing what the integration workers actually do. The results reveal different perspectives on where to locate knowledge, which are relative to and constitutive of one another. Simultaneously, the results indicate the integration workers' and management's different relations to professional knowledge, maintained through different positioning, voicing, and interactions within the activity system with different actors, who jointly design and conduct the CO.

4 Discussion

We started by scrutinizing how professional knowledge is understood with respect to an integration activity. Our study revealed that professional knowledge in CO simultaneously encompasses three motives: (1) understanding and responding to the heterogeneity of the groups in daily interactions; (2) developing standardized procedures; and (3) establishing a cumulative approach to knowledge in the organization. We argue that these motives are embedded in different perspectives on culture and knowledge, which become evident in the organizational discourses about professional knowledge. Furthermore, these different perspectives are expressed as tensions between values of creativity and standardization as well as between equality and heterogeneity.

As seen in the result, professional knowledge points to different aspects of integration work that simultaneously both constitute and reveal the dilemmas with professional knowledge on a conceptual level. For example, there is no all-embracing definition for either multiculturalism or integration for the integration workers to relate to. When it comes to integration, the complexities arise as soon as we change perspectives: from personal

to societal, from thematic to practical, or from diversity to coherence. In Swedish society, significant differences exist and many individuals and groups desire to be socially and politically recognized. Such differences manifest themselves in culture, identity, and interests, which together are usually referred to as integration. If we talk about integration, we need to come to an understanding regarding a number of issues to frame and articulate what it means. Once these issues are considered, the degree of inclusivity can be measured, which can be argued as a measure of quality of those activities that supports integration. The actions and activities that the authorities initiate will emanate from the desire to reach this agreed definition of what is desirable with respect to an inclusive society.

Professional knowledge can thereby, on the one hand, be described as to what extent actions and activities reach this definition of integration. On the other hand, this integration is an outcome of what a society sees as qualitatively desirable. Professional knowledge with respect to inclusiveness can then include dress code regulations (or the opposite) in public schools or the workplace, the right (or absence of the right) to education in one's mother tongue, and religious or political freedom (or regulations), but professional knowledge can also include specific integration activities provided for immigrants that support their integration process.

4.1   Interests in conflict

Our results revealed a paradoxical relation in the activity system between, on the one hand, the effort made to achieve a specific 'knowledge domain in relation to the integration workers' dual cultural competence', and on the other hand, the effort made to standardize routines in terms of means and methods to secure quality through detailed ways of accounting for work. While the standardizations served to structure work, aiming to offer a uniform and equal delivery of service, we recognized the immigrants' culture played a significant role for the integration workers' understanding of, framing of, and response to the heterogeneity of the groups. We hold that there is a risk that different motives contradict one another with respect to equality versus heterogeneity. If so, such a conflict of interest might indicate a paradoxical aspect inherent in the activity system, which is consequential for the concept of professional knowledge and essential for the understanding of how to support the integration of immigrants.

Our results also indicate that professional knowledge is characterized by the creative dimension of the integration workers' performance, as they adjusted their actions to the immigrants' needs. We argue that vital aspects of professional knowledge emerge in activities and cannot simply be regarded as a given in the sequential pre-structured order. Hence, our findings point to the integration workers' knowledge as being involved in displaying the situated meaning of information, which relies on their understanding of the heterogeneity of culture. The challenge to secure quality can never be addressed without considering the situated knowledge required for imposing standardized procedures onto the processes of meaning making. As Wittgenstein[19] argues, no rules can sufficiently specify a pattern of behaviour because the interpretation of a rule requires more rules. Similarly, Kim and Kim[1] argue that 'the rules for deliberation are to be produced only through deliberation', implying that such rules and skills are produced by people interacting with one another. The significance of the integration workers' rules became apparent in their creative performance as they responded to and made use of the differences in the groups.

4.2   Cultural brokers

The integration workers mean they take many perspectives into account and that an important aspect of professional knowledge in CO is that they themselves function as cultural brokers, who create links in a chain of democratic governance. Accordingly, they have a specific understanding of the learning context and what Veillard[20] calls a horizontal expertise that allows crossing boundaries between cultures and different positions. Such boundary-crossing skills involve supporting the immigrants' access to society by enhancing the opportunities for knowledgeable actions in a new cultural context.[21] These skills comprise the integration workers' ability to take many perspectives into consideration.[22]

The integration workers see themselves as positioned between two cultures, which enable them to simultaneously face the ambiguity of boundaries where they can address and articulate 'meanings and perspectives of various intersecting worlds'.[13] At the same time, the workers' in-between position also enables them to move beyond boundaries by negotiating the meaning of various subjects in the groups, which entails more complex judgements than just transferring information about Swedish culture.

However, from a qualitative-perspective the integration workers are responsible not only for supporting the immigrants' trajectories, but also for making sure that they get the information they have a legal right to. We argue that the standardized material stabilizes work in terms of content and procedure and the integration workers mean they must provide supplemental information for the immigrants to make sense of different subjects.

Thereby one can say that aspects of professional knowledge are incorporated in both organizational structure and the work processes. However, what is at stake here is the way information is organized in terms of sequential order and content. That is, the order and content should support the integration workers' activities,[17] and the policy discourse should be reflected in the textual material. As seen in the result, these concerns are not always satisfied and transparent. Even if the integration workers use the material to structure their activities, the fundamental structural conditions for their work are never actually questioned. If the underlying cultural models of standardizations remain implicit, the potential of standardized tools to fill a bridging function will presumably go unrecognized.[13]

4.3 Institutional implications

The complexity of professional knowledge resides in the fact that the way in which work is constituted must also be understood in relation to the organizational context. Policy makers and others have argued for the need for national standards to ensure quality and equal service to all immigrants, where equality is similar to professional knowledge. However, if professional knowledge and quality in CO is equated with standardization and equality/uniformity, it is likely that the principles of a democratic conversation about the organization of everyday life will suffer. If this is the case, it is likely that the integration workers' knowledge in situ will be ignored and their cultural knowledge becomes invisible. The struggle for standardization, as a central aspect for ensuring quality, might collide with the heterogeneous character of the participants' needs and their ability to adapt information. If the multiplicity of different identities within the groups is neglected, equality might result in homogenization.

From what is seen in the result, we argue that professional knowledge of CO practices depends on the capacity of organizations to develop cumulative structures that support the integration workers' navigating and bridging between the different boundaries they encounter in their work. One aspect of such an organization would involve spending time on making explicit the integration workers' in situ rules.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Turning into a "Godparent": How adult volunteers negotiate their personal life to become a mentor for "Unaccompanied Refugee Minors"

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Abstract: This article looks into how volunteers deal with their biographies and social embeddedness to make sense of their engagement in mentoring before they are matched. It draws on a qualitative investigation on a community-based pilot youth mentoring program for "unaccompanied refugee minors" in Austria. This article reveals how already trained, local adults actively relate to "family," "migration" and "previous activities" in their meaning-making. It shows how they negotiate their personal life and existing relationships in the process of turning into a future "godparent." The discussion of findings against the state of the art leads the way to two heuristic claims: firstly, the study provides grounded arguments for an extension of the conventional mentoring concept on the side of the mentor. Secondly, for a more relational and processual approach towards the mentors' side, both biographical and social network dimensions need to be integrated in methods and designs of youth mentoring research.

Keywords: youth mentoring programs, voluntary mentors, unaccompanied refugee minors, personal life, social networks, biography, mentoring as a concept

1 Introduction

Youth mentoring programs are one of the fastest-growing forms of social and educational intervention to deal with social problems in the broad field of child and youth services and social support. Related research is still considered to be at an early stage of development. Nonetheless, the body of scientific literature has grown enormously in recent years[1]. In the light of this situation, this article starts from a twofold observation and a subsequent irritation. Firstly, mentoring research, including that on youth mentoring programs, has increasingly reflected the claim that investigations on the overall phenomenon cannot be limited to the concept of a self-contained mentor-mentee dyad. Secondly, it is obvious that in recent years, research on the mentors' side has increased[2, 3], including that using qualitative approaches[4–9]. Both developments together suggest that we should already have rich answers to two related questions: How do mentors' biographies and current social embeddedness connect to the construction of mentor-

ing and possible achievements? How do (prospective) mentors deal both with making meaning of their (future) mentoring activity and shaping their relationships? The irritation is that youth mentoring research nevertheless has only scant responses to both questions.

To help fill this research gap on the mentors' side in youth mentoring, this article looks into selected findings from a study on a pilot project, starting in the "long summer of migration" in Europe in 2015[10]. The project recruited, trained and, finally, matched voluntary, adult, local people from civil society to create what were in principle open-ended relationships with "unaccompanied refugee minors" (URMs for short) in an Austrian region[11, 12]. This article leans on the analysis of 17 narrative interviews with volunteers after they accomplished their training. What is unique about the set is that at the time of data collection, these adults were about to get to know their prospective mentee and, hence, to become "godparents" (a term frequently used for youth mentors in German-speaking countries). After presenting the findings from this sub-study, in the discussion I will concentrate on how this leads the way to extending existing conceptualizations of "mentoring." In the outlook, I will suggest directions for future research, including where to look and what to look at in "mentoring," and how to gain deeper and richer knowledge on mentoring processes.

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2   State of the art

More than a decade ago, Keller argued that "mentoring resides within a mutually reinforcing (or inhibiting) network of other relationships"[13]. This, as the author continued, needs to be systematically considered within a "conceptual framework for the mechanisms of change involved in youth mentoring"[13]. Connected to the insight of "mentoring as a multiple relationship phenomenon"[14], a growing body of studies on career and workplace mentoring have investigated so-called developmental networks since the Millennium. This literature takes stock of the fact that various people within a learning or working environment can be involved in the development of a mentee or protégé[15]. To be brief, such developments inside and outside of youth mentoring criticized the limited view on the mentoring dyad. To shed light on the research gap, in the following I compile an overview of how mentors' connectedness prior to and during their mentoring activity has been taken into account in youth mentoring studies (and beyond) and how biographical and social aspects of their lives are reflected in the current state of the art.

2.1   Connections beyond the mentor-mentee dyad in youth mentoring studies

Partly as a reaction to the critique on the orthodox dyadic concept, a small number of mostly qualitative studies have looked into how youth mentors come upon, interact with or think about other people beyond the protégé, such as mentees' peers[8], parents, families and friends[7]. Other studies focused on how these "others" experience and perceive mentoring, *e.g.* by understanding how parents or caregivers view their children[16] or studying the view of program staff[17–19]. This development of considering mentoring relationships in a broader perspective has often been described as up to date.

However, we still have scant knowledge on the social and biographical side of the adults who are intended to work with socially problematized (youth) target groups in a mentoring scheme. For example, in their article on "family involvement," Taylor and Porcellini[20] regarded only the families of young mentees, as a matter of course. This is also reflected in the heuristic "holistic" and "systematic model of mentoring" which Keller[13] presented more than a decade ago. It solely considered relations between the mentor, child, (his/her) parent(s) and the caseworker as part of the web constituting the mentoring system. The model did not incorporate aspects connected to a mentor's biography or current social embeddedness.

Yet, this conceptualization of mentoring has slightly changed. In a contribution on social networks from 2014, Keller and Blakeslee[21] mapped a hypothetical web of significant relations in youth mentoring. What is notable here is that it factors in the mentor's personal connections, *e.g.* relations to his or her partner, friends, relatives and community. Hence, these ties are portrayed as existing *prior* to a new relationship with a mentee. Over and above this, the authors suspect that mentoring expands the mentor's networks over time. In addition, Keller and Blakeslee connected the social network perspective to social capital, thus emphasizing the possible bridging and bonding functions of social ties. However, as Keller and Blakeslee conclude, "youth mentoring research rarely refers to the social network characteristic of mentors and mentees"[21].

With a few exceptions[4, 19], studies using qualitative methods have adopted a very narrow research perspective on the mentors' side[5, 6]. I venture to say that many do not reflect the spirit of in-depth qualitative inquiry. Thism, however, is necessary, as the two still unanswered questions presented at the outset are anchored in a social constructionist, interpretative approach towards the social. This, in turn, requires a thorough engagement with qualitative inquiry for the production of meaningful knowledge. In contrast to this premise, almost all existing studies filtered out and sorted contrived data into different categories of mentors' "motives," "motivations"[22] "needs"[6] or "role conceptions"[5].

On this point, therefore, the conclusion has to be that youth mentoring network connections on the side of the mentor that exist *prior* to his or her engagement and those that he or she gains through mentoring (*e.g.* to other mentors) have not been researched to any substantial extent in youth mentoring. There is barely any scientific knowledge on the social connectedness and "personal life"[23] of mentors within a qualitative research perspective. According to Smart's definition of a sociological, relational "personal life" approach[23, 24] "the personal" and personhood have to be understood as something thoroughly constituted as and by relationships; as something mobile and in movement (as against the idea of the individual having a relatively fixed state or status)[25]. Following up on this, we know little about what mentors bring to youth mentoring, *e.g.* based on their personalities or subjectivities, their biography, prior experiences and social embeddedness, including their social and emotional (inter)relationships.

2.2   Antecedents of mentoring in quantitative studies

As a consequence of this intermediate finding, the view needs to be widened. Within an operational and

functional(ist) perspective of mentoring, recruiting the "right mentor," training, matching and supporting him or her with further activities is widely considered to be the very basis for the establishment and subsequent success and desired outcome of any mentoring relationship. Hence, within quantitative mainstream mentoring research, different individual aspects of mentors have been investigated extensively. Examples for this are mentor attributes, dispositions, personality characteristics, values, previous experience (as a mentor or mentee), "cost-benefit" calculations and so on. In her quantitative meta-analysis of various factors influencing mentoring support, Ghosh[26] united these various aspects under the term "antecedents" to predict mentoring outcomes. Researchers frequently consider such antecedents as factors to be itemized, for example, in studies designed to determine the individuals' willingness to serve as a mentor or to continue their service[27].

Seen through the lens of the sociology of (scientific) knowledge one could say that these means of conducting research put mentoring scholars into the position of testing the significance of selected aspects which, according to the scientists' own assessment, offer a valuable perspective to produce findings on "mentors." Thus, researchers compile knowledge on what underlies and shapes mentoring by looking at how particular variables correlate, in the best case measuring them in before-after designs, rather than reconstructing the actors' own knowledge production in meaning-making and social interactions. It is telling that (prospective) mentors' own situatedness and social relatedness, including their (present) experiences and (past) memories, have played a considerable small role in current, mostly quantitative research on mentors. This, for example, is visible in Allen's often cited, encompassing review of (quantitative) research on "mentoring relationships from the perspective of the mentor," published in 2007[2]. Here, Allen groups what is actually going on in a mentor's life and possibly impacts substantially on mentoring under the heading "situational variables." Mentors' prospects on a mentoring activity are grouped under the headline "expected costs and benefits"[2]. The wording testifies to the strong embeddedness of this view in social exchange theory and rational choice theory. However, this perspective is hard to connect to current understandings of how the social can be researched within qualitative inquiry[28]. As I posit, a methodological and epistemological reflection on what is brought about by these ways of looking on the mentors' side is largely lacking in research, including in youth mentoring studies.

2.3 Research gaps on mentors in youth mentoring studies

To put it in positive terms, at least it can be registered that both quantitative and qualitative studies on mentors acknowledge that they *do* have prior experience, achieved capacities and ongoing social relations, which they might bring to (youth) mentoring. Further, it is often mentioned that mentors *do* have particular ideas about their (future) protg, about themselves and future activities. This can also be seen in research on youth mentoring[29]. Some, if not many studies consider these aspects significant for the ways individuals become a mentor, join a particular mentee, develop as a person and impact on others, and how they bring about a relationship with a certain quality[13]. For example, some longitudinal quantitative studies (though not on youth mentoring) aim to show the causal connection between pre-mentoring and mentoring outcomes. Logically, they do so by measuring the level of particular outcomes before and after a person enters into a mentor role, as investigations on "transformational leadership behavior" show, for instance[30].

To sum up, studies on mentors have generally left out core aspects of the social construction of "mentoring" and related social and organizational practices, as well as more complex, relational and biographical perspectives on this[11]. So far, established methods in qualitative or quantitative social network analysis have not been deployed in research on youth mentoring[21]. Most studies on the side of the mentors have followed a quantitative, factorial logic[2]. I posit that with their focus on itemizing and testing attributes, dispositions or self-perceptions they were unable to understand biographical and social aspects within the larger picture of (future) mentors' meaning-making, social interactions and social embedding. This is also true for some studies on youth mentoring which reported that they employed qualitative methods, but did so with a largely quantitative mindset[5, 6].

What is notable here is that none of the above-mentioned qualitative studies on mentors in youth mentoring programs collected data on *pro*spective mentors. If they looked at people's life prior to becoming a mentor, they used *retro*spective data. However, they did so mostly without taking the narrative quality of mentors' utterances into account in their analysis. To my knowledge, since the Millennium only two qualitative studies, both focusing on community-based youth mentoring, have used a qualitative longitudinal design with initial and follow-up interviews with mentors[4, 18] and thus been able to pick up on mentors' (early) aspirations or expectations. However, only Colley applied an in-depth

processual analysis to her ethnographic narrative data[4].

2.4 Derivatives for the design of the present study

Hence, there is still much to explore. One reason is that if one collects narrative data *before* mentors are matched with their young counterpart, it is most likely of a different kind. In other words, such data offers a different access to social realities in mentoring. In addition, it is most likely that qualitative research on mentors' meaning-making *prior* to mentoring reflects various aspects of the overall historical, organizational and political problem setting implied in a youth mentoring program and related proceedings (*e.g.* selection interviews with staff, training etc.). This is because the social realities constructed in mentoring, understood here as an extended, dynamic phenomenon, are most likely to differ to a substantial degree across studies which take place in varied environments and settings.

Taking all of this into account, this article looks into findings from a qualitative sub-study on mentors within a pilot project for so-called "unaccompanied refugee minors" at peak times of refugee cross-border mobility towards and through Europe in 2015. The pilot project can be seen as a subsequent effort to react to young independent movers' differential inclusion[31] by a nation state's welfare system[12]. As far as I know, up to now and world-wide, no other qualitative investigation has looked into how voluntary local "adults" perceive or experience their future, present or past activities and relationships as *prospective* mentors for so called "unaccompanied refugee minors".

3 Research setting, assumptions and design

This sub-study was part of a more complex explorative study. It used a range of qualitative methods to look at how a pilot mentoring project for URMs evolved and took shape. A local semi-independent ombuds agency for the defense and promotion of children's rights in an Austrian region initiated the program in 2015.

3.1 Rationale and research design

Within our overall study, we have interviewed the same mentors (termed "godparents" in the pilot project) repeatedly. The investigation was led by the author. Four young female voluntary researchers conducted most of the interviews. At the time of the first data collection, the local voluntary adults had finished their training provided by the organization running the pilot program, but still had not met "their" future mentee face to face.

One of the reasons for this design was that we wanted

to focus to an extended degree on the role which biographical and social aspects related to the mentors (*e.g.* their current social environment) played in their self-perception and self-construction, looking at them as individuals who were possibly working on (future) mentorship and, with their biography and social networks, working through and for it. The main reason for collecting data *before* the "matching date" was that we wanted to be able to produce data on how mentors *generally* conceptualized their match, including the images they had of the "type" or "group" of young people they were volunteering for. Hence, based on social-constructionist research on social services and social work, we understood the interviews with future mentors as active sense-making by future mentors in the light of dominant discourses on URMs and of related social problematizations which mentors were made familiar with through the preparatory, compulsory training.

3.2 Research setting, sample and data processing

The prospective "godparents" were contacted by e-mail and informed about the purpose of the survey. During their compulsory mentor training, they had already been told that the survey was part of a scientific study used by the ombuds organization to gain insights into its pilot project. In the interview, they were again reminded that participation was voluntary. Interviewees were also promised that their data would be protected and to a large extent anonymized. The interviewees chose when and where the interviews took place. All the interviews, which took between 15 and 50 minutes, were recorded. The standard method used was to take notes recording the detailed circumstances of the interviews. The data was transcribed verbatim with an intermediate level of precision. Guidelines were available, mainly offering guidance to interviewers (the guidelines can be made available on request in German). As is normally the case in relatively open, narrative interviews, these were used as required.

3.3 Operationalizing the research interest statement

For the start of the conversation, which is the main subject of this article, the theme was first to be addressed of how interviewees came to be "godparents" in the course of their life history. A second block of the guidelines was designed to investigate how the mentors saw the young people, how they imagined their relationship with "their" (future) young person and how they understood their role as a "godparent." A third section dealt

with the training period and how they saw the organization carrying out the program and training. These findings from block two and three are not set out here for reasons of brevity.

The introductory question of the first block was "How did it come to be that you are here?" Among other things, this question implied that interviewees should connect their own participation in the project with past events and with their social dimensions (such as with past volunteering in youth work). It was also intended to encourage mentors to relate their participation in the project to social positionings (such as parents facing an "empty nest"). Finally, it was also supposed to make the "voluntary local adults", connect their notions of life (*e.g.* their own, future life) with the here and now of developing a mentorship.

All in all, the introductory question was intended to situate the narratives temporally, which always also has spatial and social dimensions, longitudinally, across the "length of the biography," as it were. A second question in this block was designed to link in with this. The focus here was on how they currently related to "soon being a godparent." From that basis, they were then asked about their social environment; entering, so to speak, transversely into the (social) "breadth of the biography" and, in doing so, examining the position occupied by the prospective godparentship in significant everyday social relationships (with their family, workmates etc.). Thus, the question "What do those around you think about you becoming (being) a godparent?" asked for reactions they had noticed in their social environment; about third-party opinions and statements made relevant in mentors' narratives.

3.4 Data analysis

The first step taken after the data was collected was to analyze three interviews line by line using a hermeneutic interpretation procedure tending towards sequential analysis. This enabled topics and aspects to be picked out which would help organize the analysis of the remaining material. One aim was to reconstruct implicit meanings. The interviews were analyzed almost entirely in the context of an interpretation group (a minimum of four eyes). For practical and financial reasons, but above all due to the explorative nature of the research, the decision was made to carry out the analysis as a cross-section of the individual cases, following the method of content analysis. The intensive occupation with the three interviews, which were initially processed on a case-by-case basis, showed that this approach was a good means of setting out the information and making the expected findings. It was thus possible to identify thematic clusters indicating

how, for instance, the mentors link their experiences to their biography. As is usual in qualitative social research, the process of analyzing, interpreting and theorizing data was circular.

3.5 Methodology

It needs to be emphasized we started from the assumption that the storying of experience is highly connected to us as investigators and shaped by both closer and more distant environments of data collection. We did not think that we simply "activate" narrations of (past) events on the side of the interviewee through "techniques". On the contrary, and following Gubrium and Hollstein's ideas on "analyzing narrative reality"[32], we were aware of the fact that the accomplishment of situational narrative work depends on many aspects. Organizational environments, interactive settings and institutionalized "cultures" of youth mentoring and social support for URMs, as well as of scientific data collection, all influence the staging of narrative events and enable mentors to talk about themselves, mentoring and the other(ed) in a particular manner.

As a result, though our questions were open-ended, even the location of the pilot project already created certain frameworks. Certain social positionings and images of being a mentor were specified by the pilot program and, therein, the compulsory mentor training, such as the figures of the "family-like godparent," the "professional godparent" and the "committed-contractual godparent"[11]. We expected the "godparents" to adopt a position towards these figures, including the moral obligations connected to different membership categorizations. The pilot program thus undoubtedly proposed normative and moral interpretations of "godparenthood." It was therefore to be assumed that young people's categorization and problematization as URMs was an important background, in the light of which all other social processes and images of the self and others were constructed.

As the ombuds agency carrying out the program sees itself as concerned with the universal rights of the child, this problematization was based on the following central aspects: Firstly, URMs were publicly shown to be a particularly vulnerable social group, but above all a group of young people in public care who were discriminated against by (welfare) state institutions and protection systems. Secondly, the overall pilot program was promoted as one (if not the only) practical means of developing concrete forms of social support for these young people who are separated from their families, with the help of volunteers from civil society.

4　Presentation of findings

The following paragraphs will highlight a number of descriptive clusters which we were able to build. Quotes, originally most of them in a Bavarian or Austrian German dialect, will show how the mentors developed their ideas on mentoring and connected them to various elements from their biography and personal life. In addition, I will exemplify how we interpreted some parts of mentors' stories.

4.1　Biographical connection: "family", "migration" and "previous occupation"

All the interviewees linked their participation as "godparents" to central aspects of their own life story, with the connections made in the narratives proving to be varied and multi-dimensional. Many participants made a connection to their own family. These connections were constructed in widely varying ways, partly depending on the possibilities and limitations of their own biographical context:

"... how our children would feel if they had to go somewhere on their own." (Jovanovic, 58)

"Goodness, that would be nice; we have [several] children ourselves, if another child, uh, was simply with us." (Neubauer, 9-10)

"I come from a big family (...) I've, um, got godchildren." (Novak, 51-56)

These statements also make it clear how, as they logically and emotionally process the prospective relationship with the as yet unknown (always male) young person, prospective mentors used analogies to create biographical links to existing relationships. These quotes refer to pre-existing parental and familial care relationships. The future relationship is thus located in the space of the family and presented as a care relationship that is in some way "normal." In some cases, connections were made with care relationships which have already come to an end, as can be seen from this statement:

"Well the two of us are doing well. The children have grown up. (...) and I think you can definitely do something constructive." (Eiser, 55)

This quote shows that the resources and capacities previously used by their own children now seem to be free. In other words, their capacity for a familial care relationship with a young refugee is, on one hand, only actively produced through an analogy with their own family or parenting. On the other hand, this enables them to imagine resources being used for this new, developing relationship placed in the context of childhood and family, as there is now enough "space" in the family. The significance of placing it in a family context can also be seen

in the following statement:

"It was the whole family, (...) we wouldn't have done it if the whole family wasn't behind it and asking actually and when, huh, when are we getting the refugee." (Neubauer, 43-45)

In this quote, the prospective young "refugee" is indeed placed inside the structure of this multi-member family; "integrated" into it, as it were. The interviewee's own family thus provides context and limits. Studying the future godparents' meaning-making, this act of situating the URMs in the space of the family can be reconstructed as a pattern of creating biographical ties. It is strongly reminiscent of the figure of the "family-like godparent" from the triangle of godparenthood which we derived from participant observation of the information events and the training modules (above)[11]. In this triangle, the three figures of godparenthood reflect ideal-type images presented to future mentors of what it means to be a "godparent." Thus, these figures are a core structure underlying the overall pilot project. Hence, the figure of the "family-like godparent" entails an idea of a hierarchical, generational relatedness to others. Inherently, it is based on the notion of a semi-natural, almost pedagogical relationship, from which a sort of responsibility of care and for the enculturation of the younger generation is deduced. Obviously, the biographical meaning-making of the trained mentors in the interviews "fits" this picture.

In summary, from the perspective of social problematization and processing social problems, it can be said with regard to the family aspect that when an analogy is drawn to a godparent's own children and care relationships in a familial context, the young person, the URM, is "normalized" to a certain extent. This normalization emerges from what is actually a perceived difference: the relationship is not, after all, a "natural" one that has developed in this family space. To be processed as such, it first needs to be *defined* as such. From the family perspective, the young people are imagined as being in a relationship that is unequal both generationally and pedagogically (parent/child and adult/child). What this also means, however, is that issues of childraising and authority principally come to the fore with regard to the shape the future relationship will take.

Another biographical link was the godparents' experience of migration. That included their own experience of migration, or that of someone close to them. Associations which appeared disparate in fact proved to share common elements. On one hand, migration was linked to cultural and geographical distance; for example, parallels were drawn between the young people's experience of migration and that of the interviewee's spouse. In an-

other case, the interviewee used their own family's origins story to situate their becoming a godparent:

"The main reason for this godparentship is, I think is because of my wife, because she herself, uh, has a background of migration [einen Migrationshintergrund] (...) And she herself also more or less had something like a godparent." (Koller, 10-11)

The German term "Migrationshintergrund" used here represents a highly politicized concept which is used in everyday life and the media in the context in which the data was gathered. In everyday life, the media and the scientific discourse, this term is associated with foreign cultures, difficulties achieving societal agency or insurmountable differences based on a notion of people's origins related to their geographical extraction[33]. On one hand, use of this term refers to the interviewee's own experience of migration-related difference; on the other hand, the characterization is also attached to the young people, as they also have "this Migrationshintergrund." In this particular case, the perceived difference is viewed as something which can be "worked on" and tackled with positive results by means of a mentorship:

"... and I myself had the impression that it helped her a great deal (...) uh, when it came to integration, when it came to schooling, it really, yes, was certainly extremely helpful." (Koller, 14-17)

Another story links migration to the context of a collective historical experience connected with the interviewee's own biography:

"Sure, the thing about unaccompanied refugee minors is definitely an issue I know and I come from a town where we, I grew up with it, that is, we had a reception center (...) or like a like a center that's::: always been a trad... like even wh, when Germany was still divided, then all the, all the people from the Eastern bloc already came to us via Hungary and so that was, migration was already an issue for us." (Novak, p. 3, 46-52)

Here, a link is being made to migration as a basic, historical social element, with a clear analogy being drawn to the young people as URMs. The interviewee is interpreting the current social phenomenon by placing it in a historical context. At the same time, it can be relativized and normalized as something that is actually "nothing new:" something that was already around and taking place a long time ago. The speaker is also suggesting that there is some valuable experience in her own positioning, as it is something she "grew up with." Nonetheless, the phenomenon is associated with unknown, unclear and possibly negative connotations, as can be seen from the description of the places as *"a reception center (...) or like a like a center"* and the people there as *"all the, all the people from the Eastern bloc."*

All in all, the following main trends can be seen in the connections interviewees make with their own experiences of migration. The prospective mentors see "migration" as linked to foreignness, difficulty and confusion. These tendentially problematic associations are portrayed as something which can very much be worked on by a mentorship. From their own point of view, these mentors see migration and the difficulties associated with it not as a new set of problems, but as one which has always been around.

Another link the interviewees find with their own biography is the connection they see with a past activity. Here, too, the spectrum is broad. One connection, for example, might be past involvement with similar groups:

"In the past I once worked in youth welfare // mhm // and there I also worked on a project with [social aid organization for children]." (Seidl, 9-10)

"I um uh (.) was also already socially active at home." (Novak, p. 3, 12)

The last quote shows that this kind of "past activity" can also be related to the idea of (their own) social or civic engagement: the speakers are positioning themselves in the idea of public, social affairs. "Socially active" and "youth welfare" refer to a public sphere; to a civil society structure designed to deal with perceived social problems. It is no great leap to imagine that in this case, taking part in the mentoring program is not motivated only by the interviewee's notion about the target group (the young people or URMs) or by the perceived opportunity to take up a previous activity again. Rather, it also seems significant that this can be placed in a public, socially active context. Perhaps this is partly due to the public positioning of the ombuds organization which developed and implemented the scheme.

In addition to this, taking up a past activity again is connected to other aspects. Some future mentors obviously imagine being a godparent as creating a time and place in which they can experience and actively bring about personal change. Godparents locate their "taking part" in their own biography, describing the time as having *now* come or been chosen for them to make space for change in their current situation in life. This becomes clear from the following statements, among other things:

"I want to cut back a bit, cut back my working hours." (Steiner, 14)

"My wife and I are doing it as a bit of a joint venture so to speak." (Jovanovic, 21)

In summary, this means prospective mentors in our study make sense of their being part of the mentoring program *here* as godparents with relation to their own biography. This depends on their personal ideas, experiences, associations and wishes. Even when they describe

relevant prior experience from their occupation, their future relationship with this young person, and their being a mentor, are placed in a private, personal and/or public, social context. They thus do not frequently place it in a professional context, even though that would certainly also have come into question, as many of the mentors have related professional qualifications or have worked in social fields. The prospective godparentship can also be reconstructed as a possibility to make personal life changes. This can come in many shapes, from attempts to create a work-life balance to a project involving their family and partner. This description and theorization of the statements shows that future godparents try to connect the prospective mentorship to their own biography, drawing on relevant and important motifs and aspects from their life history. The main patterns revealed by the analysis are links to experiences of migration, family relationships and previous work. Here, "migration" is presented in a problematic context emphasizing expected culturally specific differences which are hard to overcome, but also considered something that can be dealt with to some extent through godparentships.

4.2 Connections to the social environment and embeddedness

Our study was also interested in how the prospective mentors situate themselves in their social presence. Reactions from their environment, opinions and comments they hear all indicate the position assigned to this new development, being a godparent, in our respondents' current social situation. Here, too, there is a very wide range. Basically, the interviewees reported what was certainly positive feedback on their upcoming mentorship from their social environment:

"They actually all think it's pretty good (...) and promised to help us." (Eiser, 125)

"Well my sister for example she says yes brilliant or at work they do say: yes great, I like it." (Aigner, p. 4, 56)

Often, people near to them are interested in their becoming a mentor. This often goes as far, for example, as such people evidently also wanting to train to be a godparent, or considering it something they should aim for:

"And my neighbor knows; at first she was thinking about doing it too, but she is just changing jobs at the moment." (Aigner, p. 4, 34)

The perceived support from their working environment, especially, is seen as positive:

"And I was only able to do it [the training] because everyone said, 'Great idea, we'll put everything off so you can do that in the morning' //mhm// and things like that gave me positive encouragement and sometimes even amazed me." (Seidl, 57)

All these perceived reactions, support from their family, support from their working environment and people from their social environment potentially emulating them, evidently enable the prospective godparents to paint the future relationship in an appreciative light. Moreover, from their own descriptions the future mentors were also very much able to position themselves as "knowledgeable" vis-à-vis their environment. The following shows how mentors describe the reaction of people in their everyday social environment (fellow workers, neighbors, family):

"Well there's, there are also lots of questions, lots of people interested in exactly how it works and what happens and what you can expect and so on." (Jovanovic, 27)

Through the training, especially, a prospective mentor thus seems to gain a kind of "expert status." This is in the context of refugee migration being a very current, politicized social topic in Europe which was, at the time (from the second half of 2015) being discussed at length by the public at large and the media. In many places, *e.g.* at railroad stations and border crossings, the population as a whole was made aware of refugee migration on a daily basis.

Although reactions from their environment were perceived as positive throughout, at second glance some godparents' statements show signs of a kind of sensitive restraint. A societal, political and social aspect of the subject of refugees was brought up:

"OK, so I'd say it was naturally positive, so to speak, as I choose who I talk to about it." (Steiner, 63)

"Very (2) mixed. Well, mixed might not be, we haven't, for a start we haven't told everyone, with good reason, because we simply both know that there are some people around us who really wouldn't know what to think of the subject. To put it diplomatically." (Koller, 26)

The prospective mentors evidently chose very carefully who they told about their becoming a "godparent". This can be interpreted as meaning that they saw their decision to become a mentor for an URM as requiring them to take up an imagined position *vis-à-vis* their environment. They also seemed to experience their social environment *demanding* that they take up an active position of this kind. Some seemed to be afraid, or were even sure that people around them would express negative opinions about it.

It must be emphasized that these reflections and experiences all took place *before* a real mentoring relationship even came about. Put even more simply, it can thus be said that for the respondents, wanting to become a godparent to an URM also meant having to adopt a societal, social and political position. On one hand, this position

was constructed in light of or through reflecting on their own experiences (longitudinally, over the "length of the biography"). On the other hand, though, the prospective mentors also thought this position had to be sensitively brought up with regard to their social environment, and supported and possibly legitimized towards that social environment (transversely, across the "breadth of their life").

At the same time, it appears that this new position was thus also co-constructed by their social environment. This shared construction appears especially clear when two dimensions are examined. On one hand, their becoming a "godparent" was negotiated within their social environment, turning their social environment into an observer, evaluator and commentator. On the other hand, their deliberate selection of who to tell about their mentorship shows that they had reflective knowledge about their environment occupying these positions. In describing the perceived reactions of their social environment, the future godparents were also describing the potential conflict and problems that being a godparent could involve:

"Uh, pfffffh, well our oldest daughter talks about it a lot on school, that there is something like that, and lots of parents have talked to me about it, like, 'wow, you're really prepared to do that?!!' (2) Someone from such a different culture, with such traumatic experiences uh, then you have to deal with something like that uh right up close." (Neubauer, 27)

"Yes, a friend a very dear friend who really worries, well doesn't worry about me but he treats me with great, great care he was mh::: 'look after yourself and don't overdo things."' (Novak, 22-23)

Their social environment saw the future godparents at least to some extent as "risk-takers." What is interesting about this is that in an intergenerational relationship, between adults and young people as, for example, with youth mentoring, the younger side is normally ascribed a vulnerable position. In a relationship between an adult and a child, the child or young person is normally considered to have less agency due to their development. In everyday discourse and in the pedagogical literature, it is often assumed that "children" or "young people" are more subject to the negative consequences of the parents' "adult" actions than the reverse. In the case of the prospective mentorship, however, the opposite was true in the narratives from our sample of reactions from their social environment. There, the "adult" side was seen as the one which could be "vulnerable" and was thus told to "take care." Here, too, it is possible to reconstruct the process by which their social environment asks the potentially critical question of whether this relationship is

"right" or should be entered into at all. The other side, the young person, tends to be construed as the partner in the relationship that is "non-adequate:"

"Well, no idea what it's like, or what it'll be like if we go to a village of 2,000 people where my parents live and all of a sudden two dark-skinned young men are there, there'll certainly be someone who says 'who on earth are they' or 'what are you two doing here' (draws breath)." (Seidl, 79-82)

"Well, I think that probably something will only come when (...) when it really comes down to it and when I just like, say hey, we're coming over today and yeah, we're bringing Kamal." (Aigner, p. 5, 10)

Here it can be seen that the prospective mentors' ideas of how their social environment might possibly react are more or less at odds with basic normative convictions about a "modern," open, democratic society. After all, a liberal understanding of society sees free choice in people's personal (and economic) relationships as a basic element of individuality. Nonetheless, the reactions and judgements that the godparents imagine could come from their social environment reflect an idea that this kind of relationship with "that kind" of young people is not "proper" or "seemly", and could cause social sanctions.

Further uncertainty about the social impact of the new godparent relationship can be seen from the fact that the prospective mentors were not (always) sure how far, how long or to what extent their social environment would be willing to support the mentorship:

"And my parents they live in [place] so quite some distance from here, they responded with 'yes OK.' They didn't make any comment, either positive or negative. It was, 'sure, go ahead and do that then."' (Steiner, 70)

In conclusion, the men and women we interviewed had already spent a long time before they entered into a relationship with the young people negotiating their new position as a "godparent" with themselves and with and within their existing social contacts. They can almost be said, at least for the time being, to have negotiated this new development and the change in their social network *pre-emptively*, taking in and processing the reactions and opinions coming from their environment. In some cases, this enabled new, additional networks to be created, or existing ones to change in terms of their quality and function, as they "unexpectedly" proved to be a source of social support. Some workmates, family members and neighbors evidently seemed to be entering into the new relationship as well. Sometimes, however, certain elements of their social networks and personal relationships were excluded from the future mentorship. They "deliberately" chose not to talk about the subject with everyone

in their social environment.

As researchers, we took this to mean that the social field in which the prospective mentors were active, and which they were processing through reflection, was very likely be part of the relationship that was about to develop. This would ultimately be the source of the specific, nuanced possibilities and restrictions affecting the young people's "integration" and "support." Conversely, this might also affect the godparents' social environment: after all, both the adult(s) and the young person become facilitators in their respective social networks. They become negotiators and brokers; hubs (potentially) both enabling and hindering the spread of knowledge, relationships, connections and discussion. However the future mentorship relationship was specifically linked to the social environment in each case, one aspect which can be reconstructed is that the godparents did not only imagine the extent of the relationship and its possible effects within a "mentor/mentee" dyad. Rather, they saw their social environment as part of the relationship and, at the same time, saw themselves as being challenged by their social environment to adopt a position with regard to their "new" relationship.

5 Methodological reflection and critique

It would have been an option to analyze each and every one of the transcribed interviews with a "deeper" approach, *e.g.* narrative-sequential analysis, and to move forward "case by case" throughout the whole sample. This could have led to a reconstruction of different ways in which prospective "godparents" made sense of and oriented towards their aspired future of developing a relationship and engaging with an "URM." One reason why we did not do so was pragmatic. Though the public and media awareness of the "refugee issue" was quite high at the time of data collection, we were not able to organize third-party funding for the project in the Austrian context within the short period between the relatively unexpected start of the pilot program and the indicated time for data collection and subsequent processing. The main reason, however, was that we intended from the very beginning to generate and analyze qualitative processual data on how local volunteers develop their experiences over time. Thus, we wanted to collect data within a longitudinal qualitative study. In that respect, we have realized three interview waves up to now. The narrative analysis of this data, which will follow the design of case-by-case narrative analysis, is still ongoing.

6 Discussion

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss how youth mentoring programs can make use of these insights on an operational, practical level, *e.g.* for the supervision or training of mentors. In a research-oriented perspective striving for the production of fundamental scientific knowledge, the particular findings we have achieved up to now could be pushed forward in multiple directions. They connect to a variety of fields of study, *e.g.* on volunteering and civic action, on the social transformation of welfare systems and forms of social support, or even on the public and private forms of dealing with "refugee migration." Here, I will keep to the questions I announced at the outset, asking what the study adds to fill the indicated research gap.

6.1 Core findings

One of the core findings of this study is that these already trained, local voluntary future adult mentors within our overall one-case study negotiated their prospective mentoring role and related capacities with their social environment or milieu much before they were "matched" into a mentoring relationship. I thus see this as one important indication that mentoring relationships are not constructed entirely "out of thin air," but begin well in advance, in people's imagination and the rewriting of their own biography. At the same time, the mentors' social environment can range from social support to a critical stance questioning their relationship with the young person and ascribing them the characteristics of personal risk-taking and placing themselves at risk by being godparents. In addition, mentors oriented towards their future, but still unknown young counterpart using various elements from their own biography. A third finding strongly connected to these two aspects is that "our" mentors used and developed their engagement in mentoring as a way to shape their own life or at least to attempt to achieve this.

6.2 Connection to other, closely connected studies

As I have explained, the focus, setting and environment of our study is unique. However, as the state of the art showed, there are a few qualitative studies close to our research interest, design and approach. Without a doubt, Basualdo-Delmonico and Spencer[18] showed how ("fresh" and "trained") mentors try to rationalize their role and possible happenings, including social encounters with members of the mentees' social network. They also convincingly demonstrated how vaguely the interviewed mentors formulated this kind of perspective,

including an anticipation of possible ways they could react to it, at the beginning of a mentoring relationship. However, we were able to provide empirically grounded knowledge on how *future* "godparents for unaccompanied refugee minors" negotiated their development with their social environment and rationalized it against the background of their own biography and life history, including how they fit into historical and contemporary social and political contexts.

Colley[4] reveals a lot about the biographical and social embeddedness of mentors' sense-making in her noteworthy study on "mentoring for social inclusion", already published in 2003. She used data from multiple sources (*e.g.* interviews with mentors and mentees, talks with staff, ethnographic notes) to elaborate thick narratives on a number of matches. Amongst other things, this approach showed how mentors "stilled" or fed their own desires through mentoring and how mentoring was enmeshed in their biographies. In addition, Colley was able to connect the storied happenings to the mentoring relationship and to the social networks of both the mentors and mentees. However, without diminishing her achievements, I want to emphasize that Colley first interviewed mentors shortly *after* they took up their relationship, whereas we did so *beforehand*. Whereas Colley[4] was more interested in revealing the uniqueness of every single mentor-mentee case, our analysis yields topological findings based on empirically saturated clusters. Hence, rather than providing a "deep" understanding of each individual mentoring case and of the complexity and ambivalences of "mentoring for social inclusion"[4] for so-called "disaffected youth" within a particular, employability-oriented youth mentoring program (something which Colley mastered without a doubt), our selected findings are more suitable for a conceptual and methodological discussion. Nonetheless, I am convinced that Colley's sensitivity towards issues of power, her attentiveness to the socio-economic position and habitus of mentors and, connected to her Bourdieusian perspective, her mindfulness of various forms of capital can feed into the development of a theoretically saturated, empirically based, extended concept of mentoring.

7 Conclusion and outlook

This article elaborated only a few, selected insights from 17 narrative interviews within a sub-study on prospective mentors. It was embedded in a much broader, multi-method qualitative case study on a pilot project of youth mentoring for "unaccompanied refugee minors" in an Austrian region, starting in the "long summer of migration" in Europe in 2015[10]. Hence, en-

riching our own findings with those of closely connected studies, it is safe to say that (future or early) mentors do not only take the social environments of their mentees into account when considering possible obstacles, conditions and limitations for future relationships: they also consider their own, hitherto existing "personal life"[23]. Basualdo-Delmonico and Spencer showed how mentors' values and views about mentoring (and about the families who were served by these programs) mediated the mentors' perspective on their mentees[18]. Adding to this substantially, we were able to reveal that and how (prospective) mentors deal with both their biographies and social embeddedness to make sense of their (future) activity, thus already shaping their orientations in the relationships that later develop with a mentee.

7.1 Towards a heuristic, grounded extension of the mentoring concept

The findings of Basualdo-Delmonico and Spencer[18], and of Colley[4], suggest that a mentor's view on his or her mentee's social conditions and relatedness to others strongly informs what a mentor perceives as the needs or motivations he or she brings to the relationship and activities. Enhancing this view, heuristically it can be formulated that future mentors' personal set-up is highly shaped by the ways they integrate their own biography and social environments into (self-oriented) meaning-making and social interactions. This happens long before the time when and far beyond the space where this "thing" that is normally called mentoring actually takes place.

My findings can certainly be considered persuasive evidence for a fundamental insight that requires further empirical testing and extends beyond this specific research project: that, empirically, youth mentoring cannot be seen as a singular, dyadic relationship. Instead, it should be reconstructed as an extended web of relationships, especially on the side of the mentors as well as at their various sites, i.e. where they locate and move. In many ways, it does not come about through matching or the "first date," but is already constructed, processed, qualified and evaluated beforehand, or in the early stages before later volunteering as a mentor.

Based on this and as an orientation for future activities in research and theory, I make the following claim considering the relevance of these findings for the overall field of study: Current conceptualizations of, and subsequent research on, (youth) mentoring have to be extended in their temporal, spatial and social dimensions. Further, they also need to embrace the dimensions of biography and social network with regard to some of the actors involved. The very few examples using qualitative

longitudinal data on multiple actors, including on mentor matches (the "dyad") and organizational environments, have shown the value of these approaches in data collection and analysis. Data from my ongoing sub-study using a narrative approach within a longitudinal analysis will add to existing knowledge. However, going far beyond what can generally be achieved when using a design and approach of this kind, not only the conceptual repertoire but also the traditional methods and designs in (qualitative) youth mentoring studies also have to be updated.

7.2 Towards an extension of methods and approaches in youth mentoring research

The social and biographical side of mentors and its impact on the construction and achievements of youth mentoring are largely unexplored fields of mentoring. I would go so far as to hypothesize that in order to dig deeper, it will not be enough to merely operationalize the social network dimension in established quantitative designs. Nor will it suffice to adapt what quantitative mentoring research in other fields factorized as various aspects of "antecedents" to the study of youth mentoring programs (see above in subsection 2.2). However, one way to include these dimensions in a more sophisticated way could be to combine qualitative ego-centered network analysis and narrative interviews within a "qualitative structural analysis" as proposed by Herz, Peters and Truschkat[34], but using a longitudinal research design which collects data from several actors. For the mentors' side, this could offer fresh knowledge not only through a processual dimension in analysis (*e.g.* a narrative, sequential analysis of experience), but by adding a processual dimension even at the stage of data collection. This would give us a more profound insight into how mentors' biographies and current social embeddedness feed into their construction of mentoring and what might be achieved in it. In addition, and this seems vital to me, it would also allow us to "see" and understand that mentoring activities take place and relationships are shaped over time in a particular way, and to grasp how and possibly why that occurs.

Beyond this, there are also signs pointing towards future research tracks, connecting mentoring research to other fields of study. The strong biographical reflexivity of mentors that we were able to describe suggests that mentoring research could be connected to current efforts being made to grasp and understand how people *do* particular things, such as working on their biography or shaping their personal life. Based on the popularity of what some call the "practice turn"[35], in biography and life course research, investigation has increas-

ingly focused on these "doings." Hence, to truly examine the social practices that were only indirectly visible in the narrations of mentors in our investigation, mentoring research could be connected to a "doing transition" perspective[36] and to a perspective on "doing biography"[37]. In my view, and based on findings from other parts of our research, *e.g.* on mentor training[11, 12], this would clearly require multi-sited ethnographic and mobile research *inside* mentoring. This approach would require researchers to become more deeply involved in various parts of actors' lives, the everyday activities of mentoring organizations and the institutional "culture" of social problems work in social services. This, however, could be inspired by innovations in mobility studies which could possibly show how mentoring simultaneously affects and effects physical/spatial, social and biographical mobilities.

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