



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

**Mentoring Migrants:  
A Qualitative Study of Needs, Employment & Integration in Denmark**

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## **Abstract**

In the wake of the so-called Refugee Crisis in 2015, Danish Government reformed the policy framework for immigrant integration. To support and promote the new changes, the Danish Government offered project funding to set up volunteer-based mentoring programmes aimed at improving newcomers' chances of accessing the labour market. Through qualitative interviews this thesis explores how needs of the newcomers are constructed and targeted within eight specific projects. Drawing on theoretical perspectives offered by Stuart Hall, Antonio Gramsci and Pierre Bourdieu, the study shows how a variety of actors – volunteer and professional, state and non-state – engage in promoting employment as the locus of immigrant integration, and how the needs of the migrant mentees are constructed and negotiated in relation to needs and requirements of key actors in the field of immigration. The study highlights the tensions involved when utilising volunteers as mentors to perform predefined activities.

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# 1. Introduction

In 2015, two events represented a decisive turn in the Danish discourse on immigration. The first was the June election of a new Liberal Party Government that sparked new life to debates about deservingness within the welfare state (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 331). The second event took place in September when some 300 people walked across the Southern border from Germany and the media declared that “*the Refugee Crisis has come to Denmark*” (Struck 2015). The ensuing panic this created linked to broader concerns about the growing number of asylum seeker opened a window of political opportunity to reform immigrant integration policies, including the compulsory Integration Programme<sup>1</sup> (Rytter and Ghandchi, *forthcoming*, 1; Bredgaard and Thomsen 2018, 21). In a 2016 Tripartite Agreement between the Government and social partners it was decided that refugees are obliged to either participate in job training or apprenticeship programmes with reduced benefits, or to accept employment for salaries below the minimum wage (Rytter and Ghandchi, *forthcoming*, 1). This obligation must be fulfilled within two weeks of their asylum applications approval because, as is stated in the Agreement: “*Labour market inclusion is an absolute necessity for the integration of people into Danish society*” (Government of Denmark 2016).

Whilst the events of 2015 and 2016 created the opportunity for these reforms, debates about immigration and deservingness are nothing new. Migration and discussion of in/exclusion of immigrants have been high on the political agenda in Europe for a long time (Siim 2013, 616), both as a question of physical border control at - and beyond - nation state borders; and of the incorporation of those who are allowed to reside within these borders. Scholars have noted that the past 40 years have seen the rise and fall of multiculturalism as a policy goal, aimed at accommodating diversity (e.g. minority rights), and in its place policy focus has shifted towards protecting states and majority populations (Kymlicka 2012, 2; Rytter 2018b, 8). In the Nordic context, immigration has been constructed as a threat to the maintenance of the welfare state (Rytter 2018b, 8). The “threat” is two-fold and draws partly on the perception of immigrants as a potential financial burden (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 348), and partly on the perception that immigration diminishes social cohesion, which is considered a precondition of the welfare system (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir, and Toivanen 2019, 1). Social cohesion is tied to a particular imagery of historical

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<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the formal name of the Integration Programme was changed to “Self-sufficiency & Repatriation Programme”. As the interview participants in this thesis all use the name “Integration Programme”, I have chosen to do the same.

homogeneity within which those perceived as culturally and ethnically different present a threat (ibid.). Since the turn of the millennium, especially immigrants from Muslim majority countries in the Middle East and Africa have been the subjects of negative “othering” discourses (Slootweg, van Reekum, and Schinkel 2019, 145). The association of the unwanted “other” with racialised “Muslim” immigrants and minorities is however not a new phenomenon but rests on a historical construction of the “West” as ontologically different from the “non-West” (Said 1978). This is of particular relevance to this study given that, according to the Danish Immigration Service in 2015 the majority of people seeking asylum in Denmark in 2015 were from Muslim-majority countries such as Syria, Iran, Eritrea, and Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>

This problematisation of heterogeneity in relation to the continued existence of financially and socially “coherent” states thus necessitates measures to “integrate” the migrant “other” (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir, and Toivanen 2019, 7). “Immigrant integration” is a contested and vaguely defined concept and understood to mean different things across the European countries (Rytter 2018b, 3). In the Danish context, integration describes both means and ends; it is a process and a direction but without a clear definition or way of measuring when the goal has been reached (ibid. 3, 5). In practice, the usage of the term is closer to the definition of “assimilation”, thus highlighting the understanding that integration is indeed primarily a job for the immigrants themselves (Buch, Berthou, and Bredgaard 2018, 1). The focus of integration measures has changed over time and is today primarily concerned with promotion of financial self-sufficiency and independence (Rytter 2018a, 13). Thus, reflecting a neoliberal definition of citizenship in which it is the “*duty of the individual to reduce his or her burden on society*” (Ong cited in Trudeau and Veronis 2009, 1125). Despite a lack of conceptual clarity, there appears to be a general agreement that immigrant and refugees in Denmark have not managed to integrate to a satisfactory degree (Buch, Berthou, and Bredgaard 2018, 1).

Individualisation of responsibility is not reserved for the “other” but is a general characteristic of the neoliberal state (Ferguson 2009, 172). An effect of neoliberal state-restructuring is the relocation of responsibility for welfare services including immigrant integration (Rose and Miller 2010, 295–98; Kurki et al. 2018). In Denmark, the responsibility for immigrant integration rests

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<sup>2</sup> Refugees.dk (2019) “*How many are coming and from where?*”  
<http://refugees.dk/en/facts/numbers-and-statistics/how-many-are-coming-and-from-where/>

with local municipalities but involves a wide range of actors including civil society and non-governmental organisations, non-profits and private enterprises. With the changes made in 2016 under the Tripartite Agreement, private employers have become central actors that are encouraged (and persuaded) to take a more explicit and active role in the integration process, e.g. through economic incentives. As recommended in the agreement, the Government also launched initiatives to support the development of mentor programmes to further support the employment agenda. And whilst the use of professional mentoring is already an element of the Integration Programme and employment schemes, initiatives under the Tripartite agreement were novel in their targeted effort to recruit ordinary citizens to *volunteer* as mentors. Mentoring is commonly understood as dyadic relationships oriented towards helping the mentee and associated with a variety of positive benefits (Eby and Allen 2008), yet research from the field has drawn attention to the disciplining effects of mentoring when applied as a means to achieve predefined objectives (Colley 2002, 2010). This research explores the practices of eight mentor projects established in the wake of recent immigrant integration reforms from the perspective of the project managers to investigate how external agenda are negotiated in the design, implementation and management of the projects.

This study follows and contributes to the qualitative research literature on state-responses to migration, in particular migration from Middle Eastern countries to Scandinavia, as well as research about othering of racialised migrants and reconceptualization of notions of needs and deservingness. This, by studying connections between discourses on migration and local practices within the mentor projects.

### 1.1. Research Question

In this thesis I approach mentor projects as a model of practice devised in relation to particular notions of “needs”. Thus, the research is guided by the following questions:

- *How is mentoring and integration conceptualised and practiced within the projects?*
- *How are notions of migrants’ needs constructed, presented, targeted and negotiated in relation to ideas about ‘the needs of society’ through the mentor projects?*

The formulation “needs of society” is used to consider the Mentor Projects as not merely an implementation of policy goals following specific political and/or funding requirements. Rather, I

consider the specific design and management of the respective Mentor Projects to be reflective of the Project Managers' configurations of more abstract ideas and ideals that inform their perceptions of *why* and *how* to develop and manage their respective projects. Thus, I follow Nikolas Rose's work on "configurations of the minor" highlighting the value of studying micro-practices to understand trends and changes as the macro-scale (2004, 11). I analyse the micro-scale practices and constructions of needs within these Mentor Projects because I consider the micro-scale as simultaneously productive and reproductive of broader changes in e.g. discourses on immigration and the relationship between the individual and the state.

## 1.2. Disposition

The structure of this thesis follows fairly standard procedure. Firstly, in the **Methodology** I present considerations about constructing a research field, the research design and its limitations. I introduce how the qualitative interview method is utilised in data production and reflect on the methodological implications of production of "knowledge" and "realities" within the constructionist paradigm. In the **Literature Review** I present and summarise theoretical debates on mentoring as focused upon opportunity or discipline, followed by a review of empirical studies of mentor programmes that target refugees and immigrant populations. The **Theoretical Framework** presents Nikolas Rose's concept of *translation*, Carol Bacchi's concept of *problematism*, Stuart Hall's understanding of *representation and culture*, Antonio Gramsci's *hegemony* and lastly, Bourdieu's concept of *field* as suitable tools for the analysis. In the **Empirical Findings** I present, in narrative form, the Project Managers' emic representations of the Mentor Projects upon which the subsequent **Analysis** is applied. This is divided into three parts. Firstly, *Practices and Conceptualisations of Mentoring* analyses how mentees are problematised and represented. *Employment as part of the "Common Sense"* investigates how to understand the support for an employment agenda using Gramscian hegemony, and *Approaching the Field of Mentoring* constructs mentoring as a field within immigrant integration to analyse how project managers engage in translation as conceptualised by Rose. Finally, the **Conclusion** in which I revisit and discuss my Research Question and findings in relations to notions of needs, employment, and integration.

## 2. Methodology & Research Design

In this thesis I utilise qualitative research methods in order to study how notions of needs are constructed and reflected in practices and conceptualisations of mentoring and integration within the selected mentor projects. The choice of methods reflects my ontological and epistemological position and, as such, the kind of knowledge that I produce. In this chapter, I present how the field of research has been constructed, the selection of interview participants and the processing of the data, as well as ethical and methodological reflection on the advantages and limitation of these choices.

### 2.1. Ontology and Epistemology: Knowledge and Realities

I take on an ethnographically inspired approach primarily following Karen O'Reilly's methodological observations. Karen O'Reilly views the scope of ethnographic research to be the study of social life (O'Reilly 2012, 1). I find Berger and Luckmann's (1991) reflections useful because I understand my data represent the interview participants' subjective experiences of their professional roles and the Mentor Projects. Berger and Luckmann consider reality to be a social construction and knowledge about reality is therefore subjective and produced. What is understood as 'reality' and 'knowledge' varies and is specific to social contexts (1991, 13-15). This represents a *relativist ontology* which acknowledges the multiplicity of social realities and a belief that these realities can be studied through interactions between the researcher and the subjects of research (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Situating my research approach within the field of non-positivist traditions of constructionism and interpretivism, I attempt to explore the "social world" of the Project Managers by focusing on their interpretations and how they ascribe meaning to their own professional roles, the roles of mentor and mentees, as well as their particular ways of managing the Projects. Hence, I conceive of the data as representations of the Project Managers's subjective perceptions.

In addition to the Project Managers' accounts of the practices *within* the mentor projects, I consider how the context impacts these practices, i.e. discourses on immigration and relations between different actors in the field. Within ethnographic research, social life is understood as "*the outcome of the interaction of structure and agency*" (O'Reilly 2012). This suggests that the object of research, in my case the specific Mentor Project practices as represented by Project Managers,

needs to be considered in the context of the surrounding structures. This reflects a dialectic understanding of the relationship between structure and agency as mutually reproductive. The ambition to analytically account for this duality is reflected in the choice of theoretical concepts as presented in the following chapter.

### 2.1.1. Bias and the Role of the Researcher

The methodologies suitable within this approach gives the researcher a central role with distinct responsibilities. It is not an objective and value-free endeavour, and the perspectives and values of the researcher inevitably influences the research process and findings. The researcher influences both the process and outcomes at various levels; from gaining access through data production to making sense of the material and writing about the findings. This is because social phenomena and their meanings are not constant but continuously revised and produced through social interaction, i.e. the researcher is co-producer of the data in an interview (O'Reilly 2012, 133). Therefore, ethnographically inspired research demands reflexivity. O'Reilly (2012) defines this as the “*full awareness of the myriad limitations and advantages associated with humans studying other human lives*” (17). This includes the confrontation of one’s own prejudices and preconceptions early on in the research because as the researcher makes sense of the data through “*own thinking and cognitive processing of data*” (ibid.).

To account for how my research design is inevitably biased by the researcher’s own experiences, values and assumptions, I present my reflections and decisions with regards to construction of the research field and approach to the study in the below sections. Just like I consider the perceptions and actions of the interview participants as shaped by both agency and structure, I acknowledge that mine are so as well. The fact that I myself is a Danish citizen and have lived most of my life in Denmark, I am attempting to do what has been called “ethnography at home” which can be challenging because the chances of sharing emic language and preconceptions with your interview participants are greater and thus requires particular attention to distinction between emic and etic concepts (Rytter 2018b).

## 2.2. Construction of the Research Field: Access & Ethical Reflections

I have constructed a field in which I consider mentor projects within a greater field of immigrant integration programmes in Denmark. This definition of the field structures the type of conclusions I can draw. This particular construction has been informed by an observation of the increasing political interest in mentoring for minority groups, in particular people of immigrant backgrounds.

Within this overall field, I have selected eight specific Mentor Projects. In the initial phase of my research, I did a rough mapping of the different mentor projects concerned with immigrant integration in one way or the other. I reached out to all of them and eight project managers agreed to participate in the research, whilst some declined and yet others did not reply or only did so later in the process in which case I did not make additional interviews due to the time limitation of this research project. While representativeness is not an objective in itself within this methodological approach, it instead calls upon some reflections about whether these eight projects may have distinct characteristics in comparison with other projects.

It appears relevant to ask the question: why did these eight accept to participate when others declined? Three observations may qualify a reflection upon this question. Firstly, all the interview participants speak proudly of the Mentor Projects, they were pleased to share their experiences and each of them invited me to contact them again in case of additional questions. Thus, they considered their efforts “successful” with regards to their own criteria. Secondly, the eight projects included are funded, fully or partially, by state or municipal funding and the Mentor Projects are not the primary activity of their organisations/institutions. On the other hand, those who declines were NGOs and CSOs, and a recurring explanation was preoccupation with funding applications. Thirdly, of the eight Mentor Projects included, only two were managed by an organisation/team with previous experience with mentoring, and lastly, these two were the only ones that have people with refugee status and/or immigrant backgrounds as their primary target group of the organisation’s/institution’s primary activities. On the other hand, those who declined were representatives of organisations that have long-term experience with either mentoring or other types of immigrant integration projects targeting these specific groups. Another recurring explanation for declining was the extensive interest in the target group from researchers, students, politicians, and journalists. Thus, they declined participation in order to “protect” their project participants.

Building trust in order to get access is known to be particularly time-demanding in conflict-ridden contexts (Romano 2016), and whilst Denmark in no way is to be compared with a violent conflict zone, immigration is in fact a highly politicised and divisive topic. This may explain why some actors may be particularly careful when letting outsiders “in”; both in order to protect their programme participants, and to avoid any risks regarding their own resume which might affect their funding opportunities. This necessitates a reflection about the ethical considerations when studying immigrant integration projects in this context.

### 2.2.1. Immigrant Integration Research & the “Overstudied Other”

Research on integration of so-called non-Western immigrants and refugees is of great interest to Nordic migration scholars (Larsen 2013, 333), and the massive interest in immigrant integration has been said to have created a veritable “integration industry” (Preis in Rytter 2018b). This suggests that the “raw material” of the industry, the people who are targeted by the various integration efforts, may have become what Tuck & Yang (in Paris and Winn 2014) call the “Overstudied Others”. Researchers often identify their research topics where they consider there is a problem (Tuck and Yang in Paris and Winn 2014, 336), thus, as a researcher it is imperative to be aware what kind of *problematization* we base our studies upon (Lauritzen and Nodeland 2018, 150). Researchers are not simply observers of discursive changes, but do themselves contribute to their creation (Brubaker 2013). Based on these reflections, I have chosen to focus my study on the problematisations that makes Mentor Projects for immigrants and refugees appear a plausible intervention - to support through public funding and for the respective organisations and teams represented by the Project Managers to take part in – and how these are reproduced or challenged in the practices and conceptualisations within the particular projects.

### 2.2.2. Research Design

The choice to conduct interviews with the Project Managers has implications for the knowledge this study can produce. Listening to the Project Managers’ accounts allows for an analysis of how they conceive of the projects, and how their perceptions of the needs and capabilities of the project participants informs the way they manage the projects. It allows for an understanding of how they construct problems of integration and how they see the potential of mentoring in relation to this problem. Thus, it allows me as the researcher to investigate how they interact with discourses that often disadvantage refugees and immigrants and locate the responsibility for assumed non-

integration with the individual (Buch, Berthou, and Bredgaard 2018, 1). An unexpected result of the choice to interview the Project Managers has been a disproportionate focus on the mentors as the majority of the Project Managers only or primarily engage with the mentors. While I do not consider this a limitation as such, it is an important observation that at least to some extent explain why the Project Managers do not have many reflections on how to support mentee participants, as it is evident from the presentation of the Empirical Findings. It is a limitation in the analysis that I do not have data to analyse the potential impact of their individual characteristics, such as political beliefs. This is only considered in my research in instances where the Project Managers themselves have brought it up.

To solely focus on the Project Managers delimits the analysis from consideration of the participants' experiences, as I have no means to evaluate the extent to which the Project Managers' perceptions manifest in their concrete supervision and management of activities. This is thus a methodological choice which I account for in the reflections on my conclusions.

### 2.3. The Qualitative Interview

Conduction of qualitative interviews has been the primary method utilised in this study. Qualitative interviews allow for "*ambiguous data, and to the private realm of ideas, thoughts, opinions and feelings, to what people actually do/did in given circumstances and how they felt about it*" (O'Reilly 2012, 119). I am interested in the detailed accounts about the specific practices in order to analyse conceptualisations as well as notions about needs as expressed either explicitly or implicitly. In a qualitative interview the interview participants express themselves using emic terms and concepts, and their vocabulary can provide data for the analysis of how they contribute to the construction of categories amongst other things.

Following initial email correspondence, I visited Project Managers at their workplaces to conduct the interviews. In two instances, this was not possible, and the interviews were conducted over the phone. Each of the interviews lasted approximately one hour and the interview style is collaborative, rather than interrogative and followed a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix). The guide included a list of overall topics to cover and was adapted to the respective Mentor Project. An advantage of this interview style is to allow for the interview participants to

emphasise aspects they themselves find important or ascribe particular meaning to (O'Reilly 2012, 128). As a result, I became aware of central themes that I had not foreseen, most interestingly the vast amount of time and effort the Project Managers allocate the mentors (as will be presented in the Empirical Findings).

Following my ontological and epistemological position, I acknowledge that I myself play a central role in the data production; through the selection of interview participants and because meaning is produced through social interaction in which I take part myself (Babbie 2013). It is possible that the Project Managers representations were informed by their knowledge about the political agenda and the intention from the side of the funders that these Mentor Projects should be contributing to these agenda. This may have caused them to emphasise topics of policy interest in particular, e.g. employment. I further acknowledge that a qualitative interview allows for an insight into their subjective reality at that time and place, thus they may have shared different reflections at a different time.

#### 2.4. Validation of Qualitative Data

The proposed methodology does not pursue objectivity or reliability in the traditional positivist sense. Alternative criteria for validation of research are arguably better suited for qualitative interpretivist inquiries. Instead of pursuing objectivity, a criterion of *confirmability* encourages minimising the impact of own biases to ensure that findings reflect ideas of the research subjects rather than the interests or preferences of the researcher (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Confirmability refers to “*the extent to which the findings of your research project can be confirmed by others in the field*” (34). Within the interpretivist/constructionist paradigm, the idea of reliability is rejected due to the ever-changing and context-specific nature of human behaviour and experience. Instead, *the criterion of dependability* has been suggested as a means of validation (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). Whilst representativeness is rarely considered a goal within ethnography/qualitative research, qualitative findings can in some cases be generalised to similar cases and find wider relevance. Specific phenomena may be transferred or lead to inferences for other groups but how this is done, and the interpretations supporting such generalisation, depends on the validity of the research and the reflexivity of the researcher (O'Reilly 2012, 225; Kivunja and Kuyini 2017).

## 2.5. Analytical Approach

Based upon the above presentation of the data production and how I perceive of the kind of knowledge this data can produce, the following section presents how I have processed the data and approached the analysis.

The point of departure for my analysis has been to investigate how Project Managers conceptualise *mentoring*, and how their understandings relate to those of each other Project Managers and to theoretical understandings of the concepts. Hence, mentoring and integration as concepts are used both as emic and as etic categories.

Within ethnographically inspired research, distinguishing a separate phase of analysis can be hard as analysis takes place in every part of the process (O'Reilly 2012, 180). I am inspired by *iterative-inductive* research practices emphasising how research is rarely a linear process (O'Reilly 2012, 180ff): Data production and analysis are overlapping and intertwined, and data is analytically digested as the research progresses. All the interviews have been recorded and subsequently transcribed in full length. As the interviews were conducted over a timespan of a few weeks, the process of producing and analysing data has been overlapping and insights from earlier interviews have influenced what type of questions I have asked in later interviews – however without changing the interview guide. As an example, I soon realised that working with the volunteer mentors was a big part of the Project Managers work and I noted this to be a theme for analysis. After transcribing all the interviews, I reviewed how they covered the topic from the Interview Guide and which new ones had arisen. Guided by *inductive reasoning* I then looked for empirical evidence of trends across the data (Babbie 2013, 21). I have found inspiration in *conceptualisation* as a method, as described by Babbie (2013), and in the somewhat overlapping *constant comparative method* employed by Grounded Theory scholars. Whilst my qualitative data production has been informed by theoretical conceptualisations of mentoring, the theoretical framework used in the analysis was established *after* the production of the analysis was initiated (Babbie 2013, 21). I look for the descriptions and understandings formulated by the Project Managers themselves - also called *emic* concepts. As specific concepts emerge in one case, the Grounded Theory approach encourages the researcher to look for appearances of those same emic concepts in other cases and comparing how they appear. An example of a trend or pattern is the following: I noticed that one of the Project Managers based the Project structure on *assumptions* of mentees' needs, thus I looked at how other

manager described needs of the mentee. As I noticed this to apply across the Projects, I then analysed how this caused to construct asymmetrical representations of the relationships between mentors and the mentees through language and practices. Thus, I returned to the mentoring literature to theoretically conceptualise these practices and selected additional theory to analyse the discursive representations of the mentees. When generalisable patterns did not emerge across the data, I chose theory to analyse the diversity.

### 3. Literature Review: Mentoring Refugee & Immigrants

This study is concerned with the use of mentoring as a means to promote integration and employment for people with refugee status and immigrant backgrounds. Mentoring as a method is applied to promote positive change at an individual level (Eby and Allen 2008). The purpose of this review is to evaluate literature on mentorship; the theoretical debates, conceptualisations of mentoring and themes within empirical studies of mentoring with the particular target groups. Lastly, I consider gaps in the literature and situate my own study.

#### 3.1. Introducing the selected literature

The majority of the literature focuses on youth, students and employees but mentor interventions can target a variety of people and issues (Eby and Allen 2008). The reviewed empirical studies focus on mentoring interventions targeting immigrants, of which some have refugee status, in different settings; some are *community-based* (Atkinson 2018b; Griffith, Sawrikar, and Muir 2009; Pryce, Kelly, and Lawinger 2018; Stewart et al. 2018), other have *educational* foci (Atkinson 2018a; Vickers, McCarthy, and Zammit 2017) or are concerned with *employment and/or professional life* (Young, Haffejee, and Corsun 2018; Shan and Butterwick 2017; Månsson and Delander 2017). Whilst not defining the target group based on migration history, another two studies are included: a qualitative study of a peer mentoring programme for ex-offender in the British criminal justice system focusing on the role of the mentor (Buck 2018), as well as a large-scale quantitative study on the role of mentoring in workplaces with racial discrimination in the US (Ragins et al. 2017). In addition to the empirical studies, I draw on four non-empirical studies. Reflecting the interdisciplinary character of mentoring research, as presented below, the theoretical positions represent schools of psychology (Eby and Allen 2008), managerial studies (Ragins 2016) and educational studies (Colley 2002; Ghosh 2018).

The literature on mentoring programmes largely consists of qualitative empirical studies: Interviews with mentors and/or mentees is the most commonly applied data collection method (Atkinson 2018a; Atkinson 2018b; Buck 2018; Griffith, Sawrikar, and Muir 2009; Shan and Butterwick 2017; Stewart et al. 2018), sometimes complemented by interviews with programme coordinators or

written reflections from participants. Quantitative (Månsson and Delander 2017; Ragins et al. 2017) or mixed-methods studies (Pryce, Kelly, and Lawinger 2018; Vickers, McCarthy, and Zammit 2017; Young, Haffejee, and Corsun 2018) utilise register data and questionnaires.

### 3.2. Theoretical debates on mentoring

Mentoring has been researched from different disciplines, applying different theories and focusing on different, but also overlapping, target groups (Eby and Allen 2008, 159). As mentoring scholars reviewing literature from the field, Eby & Allen (2008) find that the primary target groups of mentoring programmes are students, youth and employees, reflecting a predominance of research conducted within managerial and women's studies, social and educational studies as well as different branches of psychology (160). They find mentoring to be associated with a variety of positive outcomes for both mentors and mentees, however they do acknowledge a growing focus within research on potentially negative aspects. These, they present as "relational problems" exemplified as misunderstanding, conflicts and disappointments (164f). Eby and Allen (2008) identify differences in the definitions of what a mentor relationship is, both within and across disciplines (160) but list some defining features of "mentoring". Following these, mentoring relationships are 1) dyadic with one part as more experienced than the other, 2) reciprocal, yet asymmetrical, and 3) dynamic and changing over time. Lastly, they argue that the role of a mentor is distinctly different from that of e.g. a teacher or a role model (160). In Eby & Allen's (2008) understanding, "*mentoring relationships are oriented toward helping the protégé*" (160).

Challenging Eby & Allen's (2008) positive representation of mentoring, Helen Colley (2002) offers a critical, historical examination of the concept and practice. From her analysis, the potentially negative effects go beyond being merely a matter of disappointments and the like. Approaching it from a Marxist feminist position, she investigates the (shifting) relationship between essence and appearance in mentoring drawing on ancient Greek myths, research literature on mentoring and own research into mentor programmes targeting "disaffected" youth in UK. Colley's main argument is that mentoring, in its present-day form, has become a "*double-edged sword, with disciplinary implications for both mentor and mentee alike*" (268). And thus, she calls for more critical research into the purpose, functions and spread of mentoring, and the "*mechanisms by which it is legitimated and made powerful*" (270). In brief, Colley traces a historical development in which the "essence" of mentoring has undergone substantial changes: from the early (and mythical)

representations of mentoring up until the industrial revolution, mentorship can be characterised as an intra-class practice with the powerful mentoring the powerful (for the sake of reproducing status and hence against the interests of e.g. women and ethnic minorities, p 265); then follows a shift towards mentoring becoming an inter-class practice and an instrument utilised by dominant classes to preserve power and status (266, 268). Modern-day mentoring, Colley argues, has again seen a shift in which there now is a tendency towards “the weak mentoring the weak” (268). Colley also objects against the understanding of mentoring relationships as dyadic (as presented by Eby & Allen 2008). She argues that present-day mentoring programs targeting disenfranchised groups are better described as *triads* (263): the third party is the “*invisible but powerful insertion of agendas determined outside the dyad by dominant groupings*” (263). E.g. when utilised as a formal social intervention for “disaffected” youth, or through the institutionalisation of mentoring utilised to achieve policy goals such as increased employment rates (Colley 2002).

Looking specifically at the workplace setting, Belle Rose Ragins (2016), a leading scholar within managerial research on mentoring, represents a more positive approach. She offers a simple typology of mentorships describing four types of mentorships; the dysfunctional, the traditional, the relational and the transformative mentorship reflecting different levels of perceived quality, behavioural norms and outcomes. Whereas the traditional mentorship follows a teacher-student structure aimed at one-sided outcomes, the relational approach is defined by mutual benefits which are seen as a prerequisite for achieving the extraordinary, the “high quality” transformative mentoring relationship (230). High-quality mentoring relationships are characterised by trust, disclosure, vulnerability and commitment, and have additional benefits of not only promoting instrumental outcomes understood as work related improvements (228). Ragins believes this type of mentoring to be particularly beneficial for mentees from stigmatised or minority groups (based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity or other) because it offers a “safe haven” to develop professional identities (238) and a place to develop “thriving and surviving strategies” to handle micro (subtle or indirect) and macro (overt or) aggressions (239). Furthermore, it is an opportunity for mutual learning about diversity (240). Ragins has coined the term “diverse mentoring relation” (DMR) to describe mentorships in which participants are associated with respectively majority and minority groups (240). Majority-group mentors presumably having more power and influence which can be used to the benefit of mentee (Ragins 2016; 240). From an educational studies perspective, Rajashi Ghosh (2018) discusses some of the challenges related specifically to DMR in developing mutually

beneficial mentoring relations. As the participants in diverse mentor relationships are unequal in terms of privileges and social identities, the relationship is also defined by inherent power asymmetry which, Ghosh finds, makes it critical for the experience of benefits for both mentor and mentee to “*refrain from thinking of each other only as a representative of those groups*” (162).

Due to a scarcity in literature on the issue, Ghosh’s (2018) questions about the challenges specific to unequal power relations are an encouragement to mentoring scholars which indicates that Eby & Allen’s 2008 call for more research into cross-cultural issues in mentoring is still valid: “*Although there are increasing numbers of immigrant children, culturally and ethnically diverse college students, and an increasingly diverse workforce that may benefit from mentoring, there have been few studies to date that have examined cross-cultural issues in mentoring.*” (Eby and Allen 2008; 163).

### 3.3. Empirical Studies

The following section presents themes that have appeared across the empirical literature reviewed.

Whilst one-to-one relationships are the most common type in mentor programmes represented in the literature, four of the programmes use other types, the reviewed literature shows a flexibility in the definition today as mentorships can take different shapes including group mentoring with a supervisor, team mentoring, peer-mentoring and e-mentoring. Within mentoring literature, there is a distinction between formal and informal mentorship: formal mentoring relationships exist within the framework of a formal programme, and informal mentoring relationships are of a less structured and more spontaneous nature (Ragins 2016). Whilst formal mentorships have been found to generally have a more short-term character, literature from workplace mentoring does not suggest that one type results in better quality relationships or better objective outcomes than the other (Eby and Allen 2008; Ragins 2016, 241). All reviewed studies on programmes targeting immigrants specifically were *formal interventions*, either government-run or set-up by civil society organisations.

#### 3.3.1. Learning Potentials and Changes Within

Studies focused on the mentees’ experience are, as written above, concerned with the potential for relational developments and change within. E.g. it is found that participation in mentoring

programmes can create a sense of belonging which is critical for engaging in the wider community (Pryce, Kelly, and Lawinger 2018), and that having a high-quality relationship with a mentor can build resilience towards discriminatory environments (Ragins et al. 2017).

With regards to the mentor, the focus is on how they perceive minority cultures and the way in which participation in a mentoring programme can widen their horizons and potentially, in perspective, assist in reducing “cultural apprehension” (Vickers, McCarthy, and Zammit 2017). This, because the programme facilitated interactions between people from different background and the experiences led to mentors changing their views of immigrants and refugees, but also of Anglo-Australians like themselves (p.198). The study of native students mentoring adult refugees found that even short-term programmes had potential to increase mentors’ “cultural intelligence” understood as their ability to interact in different cultural context (Young, Haffejee, and Corsun 2018, 349).

### 3.3.2. Mutual Learning

It is widely recognised that mentoring relationships do not only benefit or impact the mentee but has the potential to be a mutual learning experience (Ragins 2016). The number of articles focused on the mentor experience witnesses this acknowledgement all though research also tells of mentors who understand themselves within a more traditional mentor role (ibid.). Some studies find that overcoming *difference* is a precondition for mutual learning: Atkinson (2018a) finds that recognition of a shared humanity can be a powerful theme to bridge differences, but the recognition of the limitations to how open the mentors are, representing a majority group, is equally important. For students, Vickers, McCarthy, and Zammit (2017) find that reducing barriers to a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for creating mutually beneficial intercultural relations.

### 3.3.3. Instrumentalising mentor programmes

All of the formal mentoring programmes were intended to be instrumental in creating a specific change/improvement which was not defined by the mentees themselves. In some cases, this meant that the criteria of success were defined within a results-driven framework which risks to overlook unquantifiable outcomes (Buck 2018). Another example is a mentoring programme for marginalised immigrants, in which the author finds that a learning discourse preoccupied with improving individual competencies was potentially disempowering for the mentees and reduced

opportunities for creating the desired change (Atkinson 2018a). This might reflect the transformation of previously dyadic relationships into triads in which powerful external forces push a specific agenda, as identified by Colley (2002). Colley (2002) is also critical of the widespread focus on making those who divert “fit in” rather than equipping mentees with tools to create societal change – what she describes as disciplining effects of mentoring as opposed to an ideal of emancipation.

### 3.4. Situating the Research: Power Imbalances & Individualised Responsibility

As the present study is concerned with use of mentoring to promote integration and employment for people with refugee status and immigrant backgrounds some gaps in the literature are particularly striking; the limited attention paid to power dynamics within the mentor relationship and the lack of consideration about the individualisation of responsibility.

As power difference is indeed at the core of mentor relationships as defined by one being more experienced than the other, it appears relevant to consider how power dynamics may be reflective or reproductive power imbalances beyond the mentorship and with what effects. Not the least in programmes targeting minority group members such as immigrants and refugees. Considering the theoretical literature on hierarchical relations within mentor relationships (primarily by Colley 2002, Ghosh 2018), this issue receives limited attention in the empirical literature. Two studies provide some interesting insights: Shan & Butterwick’ study (2017) documented the double role of mentors who on the one hand could be incredible helpful using their roles as “insiders” to provide access to professional networks, yet on the other hand the mentors engaged in processes of “cultural screening” deciding whether or not mentees were considered worthy of their help (13). Without focusing explicitly on power relations, Atkinson (2018b) also makes the interesting observation from his fieldwork highlighting that the expectation of mentors’ “expertise” was never challenged and that the principles for communication that structured the mentorship were in themselves part of a structural barrier to integration (Atkinson 2018b). These findings suggest that it is imperative to consider how project managers can take into account the impact of power imbalances and how the design and facilitation best accommodates this to improve the benefits and experience of both mentors and mentees. The second aspect which is particularly interesting with regards to the present study is the individualising effects of mentoring. The reviewed studies hardly consider the effect of mentoring programmes as instrumental in individualising responsibilities for the achievement of

pre-defined goals (e.g. finding employment). This needs to be dealt with more in detail, not the least as the Mentor Projects I study are implemented within a political discourse preoccupied with promoting employment. Colley (2002) suggests that the risk is to overlook the broader social, political and economic contexts in which the mentor projects are embedded.

The present research aims to address these issues by approaching mentor projects as devised in relation to particular notions of needs and analysing how these needs are constructed and reconstructed through the conceptualisation and practices of mentoring. As such, this study aims to explore the “mechanism” that legitimises the use of mentoring – as proposed by Colley (2002). It is furthermore noticeable that studies almost exclusively are based upon data about the mentor and mentees, thus suggesting that mentorships are primarily understood as a relationship between two people without consideration of external factors, not the least the structure of the programmes and the guidance provided by e.g. project managers. This thesis will thus contribute to the field by offering a less researched perspective by exploring the perspectives of project managers.

The above presented themes and theoretical debates from the mentoring literature have informed the design of this research. In the following chapters I draw upon this literature as I analyse conceptualisations of mentoring and the specific practices within the studied Mentor Projects.

## 4. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I present the theoretical concepts that make up the theoretical framework for the analysis. My choice to create a framework drawing on different theoretical concepts reflect an ambition to theoretically account for the diversity and nuances of my data, and how practices within the mentor projects are influenced by external dynamics.

I draw on Nikolas Rose's notions of "action at a distance" and "translation" which I use to theoretically conceptualise the relations (and alignments) between local practices and what is commonly understood as the political power centre i.e. a government and dominant political rationalities. I draw on Carol Bacchi's concept "problematization". Bacchi's critical approach allows for scrutiny of mentoring as a means to solve problems which is useful in order to analyse the mentor projects as devised in relation to particular assumptions and notions of needs. I present Stuart Hall's approach to cultural analysis and the "encoding/decoding" model which I use to analyse the project managers' representation of the project participants. That is to investigate how they perceive of the "needs" that the mentor projects attend to. Then I introduce Antonio Gramsci's notion of "hegemony" which I find useful in order to understand the managers' perceptions of the project objectives in relation to neoliberal discourses on responsibility. Lastly, I present Pierre Bourdieu's concept of "field" and related key concepts which I use to account for the diversity and ambiguity in the way project managers relate to political discourses on immigration.

As a framework, this provides me with the concepts needed to analyse how mentor projects can be understood as devised in relation to particular notions of needs, how these notions are constructed and reproduced by project managers through their practices and conceptualisation of mentoring, and how mentor projects connect local practices to abstract ideas and political discourses.

I subscribe to an understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power as proposed by Foucauldian governmentality studies, i.e. I understand power to be operating on a basis of knowledge about what it aims to control (Seidman 2013, 176). As I locate my study within constructionist and interpretivist paradigms, I consider reality and our knowledge about it to be social constructions (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017, 33). I consider knowledge production about groups of people or "problems" as constitutive of these very groups and problems, thus as a means to make

citizens governable (Rose and Miller 2010, 180). Thus, knowledge exercises power in shaping people's lives (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 118) and I understand social behaviour as shaped and regulated by power and knowledge (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 119).

#### 4.1. Translation and Action at a Distance

Drawing on Foucauldian notions of power, Nikolas Rose understands government as activities that are “*exercised in a myriad of micro-locales where authorities of all types exercise their power over the conduct of others*” (Rose 2004, 48). Thus, the theoretical concepts utilised in this thesis are concerned with the relations between micro practices and abstract political rationalities or ideas.

He calls the possibility of governance to take place in the multiple locales across geographical distances “action at a distance”<sup>3</sup> (Rose 2004, 49ff; Rose and Miller 2010). A state or a government's ability to act at a distance depends on the formations of associations or alliances with different actors that represent authorities of different types to align with its objectives and ideas. These actors include e.g. economic, spiritual or medical institutions (Rose and Miller 2010, 273), organisations and workplaces, and individuals such as parents, managers or social workers (ibid, 279). As such, governing (or regulation) of individual conduct does not happen solely through what is commonly recognised as political action such as imposition of law or policing, but through management of the activities of independent actors who partake in the exercise of power (Rose and Miller 2010, 279). “Translation” describes the process through which multiple actors partake in action at a distance but is not simply a matter of “realising” a policy or plan (Rose 2004, 48). It is the process through which different actors come to use the same language and logic to understand their situation and consider their individual goals to be entangled. It is also a move from one place or person to another (Rose and Miller 2010, 281). In their works, Rose & Miller (2010) have identified liberalism, welfarism and neoliberalism as representing different political rationalities which at different times have been, and are being, translated into everyday lives by this diversity of actors. Translation is not a straight-forward process but a dynamic and “*imperfect mechanism and one that is subject to innumerable pressures and distortions*” (Rose 2004, 51). And hence a process which usually is disrupted (Rose 2004, 50) as each actor along can resist to think or act in any particular way (Rose and Miller 2010, 288). Or because particular translations – that is particular ways of conducting their activities - serve the translators own interest (Rose 2004, 50). This

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<sup>3</sup> In his earlier work Rose uses the term “government at a distance” (Rose 2004, 49ff).

understanding of rule, or power, subverts common notions of “opposition” in which the state is seen as opposed to the civil society, the public to the private, or coercion to consent (Rose and Miller 2010, 272).

As a theoretical concept, translation offers a way to understand how mentor projects connect local activities to particular political rationalities (through concrete, local engagement in the conduct of others), i.e. how mentor projects are mechanisms of action at a distance.

Rose & Miller describe government as a “problematizing activity” understood as an ongoing process in which the “real” is measured against the ideal and problematised whenever it is found “wanting” (Rose and Miller 2010, 279). In the analysis of the mentor projects, I draw on the concept of “problematization” as developed by Carol Bacchi in order to understand them as devised in relation to particular problematisations and with what effects.

#### 4.2. Problematization, Problem-Solving and the Reproduction of Status Quo

Carol Bacchi has worked extensively on problematisations which she defines as “*the thinking that comes to constitute our condition*” (Bacchi 2012, 1). Problems are understood as discursively produced, hence neither fixed nor something “objective” or “neutral” (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 112). Bacchi perceives problem solving approaches to be inherently conservative and reproductive of a status quo and of the prevailing power relations in the given context (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, xvi). This, because society as a whole is presented as well-functioning and the disturbances to the prevailing order are defined as problems (ibid.). Instead of focusing on solutions, Bacchi suggests that we work “backwards” and question the implicit understandings that make us consider certain behaviour or conditions to be problematic in a specific time and place. Bacchi defines her field of analysis as policy but in an expansive sense which includes activities of state as well as non-state actors (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016, 18). The key characteristic is the prescriptive character and that it can be understood “as a form of proposal and a guide to conduct” (ibid., 18f). Policies are approached as cultural products because policy work is contextual and shaped under the given social, political and economic conditions (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 125) within a specific historical and (inter-)national context (Bacchi 2009, ix). Because an effect of particular problem representations is the silencing of alternative explanation, the deconstruction of problematisations

has the potential to visualise new ways of thinking about and dealing with social problems (Lauritzen and Nodeland 2018, 150).

Particular representations of “problems” serve to produce or reinforce categories of people as they elicit certain subject positions (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 112). These positions are not enforced and can be adopted or resisted, but they affect social interactions and how we ascribe meaning to those interactions (ibid.). Hence, policy or problem representations serve to construct “realities” which have real-life consequences and can impact e.g. distribution of legal rights, welfare benefits, or lead to stigmatisation (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 115). Therefore, Bacchi emphasised the productive nature of policy as producing problems with gender-ing, race-ing, class-ing effects (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, 120). I propose to also include *other-ing*.

The concept of problematisation proves analytically valuable in the analysis of mentoring as a “solution” to particular “problems”. Thus, I commence the analysis by scrutinising how the choice of mentoring reveals assumptions about the source of the “problem” and the people it involves. In order to make sense of these assumptions, I draw on concepts from Stuart Hall’s approach to cultural analysis.

#### 4.3. Representation, Culture and Hegemony

Together with his colleagues at the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall developed a new approach to the study of “culture” (Hall in Hall et al. 1980). Hall contends that is “*not so much a set of things - novels and paintings or TV programmes and comics - as a process, a set of practices*” (Hall in Hall 1997, 2). To conceive of culture as practices and relations allows for an understanding of culture as fields of struggle; it makes it possible to study how cultures are “ordered” and the practices that produce and sustain a particular order (ibid., 14). To study these processes renders visible how a dominant culture has come to be taken for granted as the “natural”. This implies the understanding that cultural practices interact with other practices – social, political, economic – and that the establishment of a particular cultural order is possible only through “*the active subordination of alternatives—their marginalization and incorporation into a dominant structure: hence, also, the resistances, antagonisms and struggles which result from regulation*” (Hall in Hall et al. 1980, 15). Thus, within this approach cultural analysis involves not only the

question of how a cultural order becomes dominant but also the analysis of who's interest this particular order serves and the effects it has on other "hierarchized social arrangements".

Culture is about "shared meanings" and objects, people and events are ascribed meaning through cultural practices (Hall in Hall 1997, 2f). The relevance of representation within culture can be summarised this way: Culture is meaning which is produced and exchanged through language – in a broad sense (ibid., 4) - and language works through systems of representation (Hall in Hall 1997, 61). Members of the same culture interpret things in fairly similar ways because they share "cultural codes" (ibid., 4). Meaning is central to the construction of identity and difference, to the definition of rules and norms, and thus the regulation of social conduct (ibid., 4). Thus, cultural codes, or meanings, are deeply rooted in power relations because codes define what is considered normal from abnormal, those who belong from those who are excluded (ibid., 10). The marking of difference is "*the basis of that symbolic order which we call culture*", and therefore cultures depend of classificatory systems in which binary oppositions are crucial to clearly demarcate differences (Hall in Hall 1997, 236). Binaries are defined by the relation of power in which one pole is dominant (ibid., 235). In this sense, the construction of difference, of the Other, is understood as essential to meaning.

Stuart Hall builds on Antonio Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" in his analysis of culture and power (Hall in Hall et al. 1980, 23). Hegemony is a "moment" or a state which is preceded by struggles or *relations of force* (Hall in Chen and Morley 1996, 423). The process towards a hegemony involves an "objective" positioning of different social groups, e.g. through state legislation, and the formation of a *bloc* of different fractions of social groups that have been constructed as a unity through "*the coordination of the interests of a dominant group with the general interests of other groups*" (ibid., 424). Thus, hegemony can be defined as a "bloc rule" with consent from the ruled (Hall in Chen and Morley 1996, 424). The use of the word rule can be misleading; Gramsci emphasises the difference between *domination* and *leadership* in which the first is limited by its dependence on coercive measures (ibid., 426). "Leadership" has coercive aspects too but has gained its position by winning consent from subordinate groups and through ongoing activities to maintain its popularity. In this sense, consent is implicit in the form of what Gramsci calls "common sense", which refers to the beliefs and opinions held by the population, informed by various narratives and accepted "facts" that are thus taken as reality (Crehan 2016, 44).

Thus, the question of rule cannot be understood in simplified terms as a matter of either coercion or consent. Hegemony does not imply an “absolute victory” but is unstable (423) and needs to constantly be reproduced (424). Hall (1996) defines the scope of hegemony as follows: “*Hegemony is not exercised in the economic and administrative fields alone, but encompasses the critical domains of cultural, moral, ethical and intellectual leadership*” (426). The multi-arena character of hegemony thus means that its reproduction also necessarily has to take place in multiple arenas. To gain support for a particular culture or meanings is a way to legitimise and thus reproduce the hegemony, hence bringing us back to the centrality of culture in questions of power and the construction and reproduction of hegemony.

In the analysis I draw on Hall’s understanding of representation and cultural codes to analyse the construction of the mentee target groups, and to make sense of the project managers’ representation of mentees. Following this analytical approach, I consider the commonalities in the way project managers perceive of their professional practice using Gramsci’s concept of hegemony.

Subsequently, and in order to account for the *differences* between the mentor projects, I use Bourdieu’s concepts of “field”.

#### 4.4. Fields of Practice

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of field is central to his theoretical work (Swartz 1997, 118). A field is a relational space, that is “*a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97). Bourdieu views a society as made up by fields that function with relative autonomy (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97). The autonomy of a field depends on its proximity to the competing fields of power (the economic field versus the cultural field) as the logic of these affect the internal organisation across all fields (Swartz 1997, 138). With Bourdieu’s words, the limits of a field “*is always at stake in the field itself*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 100). Actors in a field compete over the definition of its boundaries, hence the boundaries are dynamic (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 104). Actors also aim to establish monopoly of sub-fields within the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 100). Within a field, actors struggle for position, and within fields there are dominant and subordinate positions:

*In a field, agents and institutions constantly struggle, according to the regularities and the rules constitutive of this space of play (and, in given conjunctures, over those rules themselves), with various degrees of strength and therefore diverse probabilities of success,*

*to appropriate the specific products at stake in the game. Those who dominate in a given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage, but they must always contend with the resistance, the claims, the contention, "political" or otherwise, of the dominated.*

*(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 102)*

Bourdieu uses the analogy of a game to explain the concept, yet one that is “*much more fluid and complex than any game that one might ever design*” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 104). Different from a game, the rules of a field not explicit, neither is it a contractual relationship between the actors (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98). The position (relative force) and strategic orientation of an actor in a field depends both on the volume and the structure of capital, that is the particular combination of different capital resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99). But it is not only defined by capitals in that moment. It is furthermore shaped by the actors’ *habitus* (ibid.) – a concept which can be defined as embodied or “transposable dispositions” that structure actions (Swartz 1997, 100). Thus, the notions of field and capital are closely connected, and capital only functions in relation to a field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99, 101). Bourdieu has identified three main types of capital; *economic*, *cultural* and *social capital* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119). Capitals can transform into *symbolic capital*, also called the capital of recognition, if they are recognised by other actors within the given field (Bourdieu 1998, 102). Bourdieu holds that groups have common social capital which functions to differentiate them from other groups (ibid., 103f).

Actors within a field can either strive to increase or conserve their capital resources, or they can attempt to transform or subvert the rules of the game in order to change the way capitals are valued in the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99; Swartz 1997, 123). These strategies often represent established actor as opposed to new actors in a field (Swartz 1997, 123). But despite opposing ideas of how (and who) to control a field, the actors are united in a belief that the field is worth the struggle, hence they share an interest in the preservation of the field. Bourdieu calls this tacit yet fundamental agreement the *doxa* (Swartz 1997, 125).

I analyse the project managers as actors within a Field of Mentoring which I perceive as a sub-field within a greater Field of Immigrant Integration. Whilst Bourdieu is primarily concerned with the internal analysis of fields, he acknowledges external influences but stress that such influence never applies directly (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99, 105). It is retranslated by the logic of the field, but to lesser or greater extent depending on the field’s autonomy (ibid.). Thus, in the analysis I

consider the influence of the Field of Immigrant Integration as well of the influence from economic and political fields.

## 5. Empirical Findings

In this chapter I present the empirical data produced in qualitative interviews with eight Project Managers. The aim of the chapter is to introduce the Mentor Projects and provide an overview of the empirical data that I draw upon in the Analysis. It is presented as a narrative account highlighting both similarities and differences across the Projects, and all the terms and concepts are presented in the Project Managers' emic use. As discussed in further detail in the Methodology Chapter, I consider the data to be representations of how the individual Project Managers conceive of the Mentor Projects and the mentee participants.

To provide some structure the presentation, I have created four categories with sub-sections organising the themes as appeared during the processing of the data. The four categories are titled as follows: *Practice & Objectives*, *Actors in the Field of Immigrant Integration*; *Partnerships & Policies*; and *Working with Voluntary Mentors*. Within each category I unfold the Project Managers' accounts of mentoring as a practice, project objectives and the roles of participants and partners. In the subsequent sub-section, these accounts are the subject of analysis as I investigate how practises and conceptualisations reflect particular notions of needs. In order to do this, I firstly analyse representation of mentees drawing primarily but not solely on the Project Managers' vocabulary used to describe mentor "functions" and target groups ("Practice & Objectives"). Secondly, I attempt to analytically account for the differences across and within the Projects as presented in the three latter categories. Prior to unfolding the themes, I introduce the eight Mentor Projects.

### 5.1. Introduction to the Mentor Projects

As a rule, the responsibility for recruitment of mentors rests with the Mentoring Projects, while the mentees are recruited through municipal Job Centres. Importantly therefore, the participants of this research primarily have experience from and insights into the *mentors* of programmes, rather than the mentees, as it becomes clear in the findings below. Six of the projects have received funding from the Government Agency for Integration and International Recruitment (SIRI) for a project period of two years. Of these six projects, none had prior experience with mentor projects.

Project 1 and Project 2 are managed by municipal teams in two different cities and both are funded by SIRI and the target group is defined as refugees. Project 1 is represented by Larsen who is the manager of the Labour Market Section within the municipality. In Project 1, Larsen has contracted a private actor to help with the recruitment of mentors. Project 2 is represented by Engdal, the manager of the Integration Team within the municipality. In Project 2, mentors are recruited partly by the team itself, partly by civil society organisations with whom they cooperate. In Project 1 and 2 mentees are recruited in collaboration with colleagues in the municipal Job Centres.

Project 3 is managed by a team that represents five Labour Unions, and Project 4 is managed by an Employers Association. Like the previous projects, Project 3 and 4 are funded by SIRI and the mentee target group is defined as refugees. In both projects, mentees are recruited by Job Centre staff in municipalities across the country, and mentors are recruited from within their respective member base. Project 3 is represented by Buhr, who is a project coordinator and Project 4 is represented by Jensen, the Head of the Secretariat at the Association.

Project 5 and 6 also receive funding from SIRI but the target group of these projects is women with immigration backgrounds and includes both refugees and immigrants. Project 5 is managed by a not-for-profit organisation and represented by Falch who works at one of the organisation's Danish language schools. The structure of Project 5 is distinctive; they have only one mentor who is paid and whilst it is voluntary for mentees to join the Project, they are obliged to follow its activities over a 26 weeks long period once the Project starts. Project 6 is managed by a civil society organisation and represented by Thomsen, the project manager. The majority of the mentees are Syrian women who have come to Denmark post-2014.

Project 7 is managed by a team within a Job Centre working specifically with immigrants and refugees. The funding comes from within the municipality but is nevertheless time limited. The mentee target group of this particular project is refugees whom they recruit themselves. Project 7 is represented by Kofoed, the project manager. Project 7 is different from the others, because they cooperate with different civil society organisations (CSO) and non-governmental organisations who are responsible for recruitment of mentors. One of their partners is the CSO that also manages Project 8. Project 8 is managed by Khokar and stands out from the rest, because they only use mentors who themselves are women with immigrant backgrounds. Furthermore, they do not recruit

mentors for this particular project but have a large network of volunteers who are engaged in mentor style activities beyond this project.

## 5.2. The Practice and Objectives of Mentoring

This section presents how the Project Managers describe the role and functions of a mentor, how they relate to predefined objectives and target groups, and how they perceive of mentoring as a means to achieve the project objectives. The subsequent analysis of representations and constructions of the Mentee builds upon the below examples.

### 5.2.1. Doing Mentoring

In the Projects, the predominant style in the projects is ‘one-on-one mentoring’. Mentor and a mentee schedule meetings and plan activities at their own initiative but Project Managers encourage them to meet once or twice a month. As an exception, Project 5 applies a group-mentoring approach but with possibility for additional one-on-one sessions. Participation happens on a voluntary basis for mentor and mentees alike in all of the projects. Most of the Project Managers use the term ‘mentor’, although the official term in project 7 is ‘refugee host’. The ‘mentee’ is talked about as ‘refugee’, ‘woman’, ‘citizen’ (in Danish: *borger*) or simply ‘mentee’.

Mentoring is conceptualised as a relationship between a mentor whose role it is to help, support and motivate a mentee who needs local knowledge and access to network in order to find employment. The interviews show that mentors can take on different roles and engage in different types of activities. The Project Managers present the role of a mentor as someone who “helps” or “supports” mentee, and the opportunity to do so is emphasised when Project Managers recruit mentor with campaigns titled *Help a Refugee* and *Take Responsibility*. When recruiting, Buhr emphasises the “opportunity to make a difference”. A common conceptualisation of mentoring is help to “self-help”. As Khokar says: “*We aren’t supposed to hold her [the mentee’s] hand for the rest of her life*”. In some cases, the mentor is also described as a role model either due to him-/herself having immigrant background or for example, as a woman at the labour market.

In some projects the professional aspects are considered most important while other projects focus more on the social aspects where the role of the mentor is described as a “friend” and a “service”. As a professional support, the Managers emphasise that the mentor can be a “door opener” or a

“messenger”. Whilst several Project Managers stress the value of informality in the mentorships (due to the mentor being a private person not representing a Job Centre), the mentors are in some cases expected to take on a role as whip or authority as to make sure that mentee is working towards the agreed upon targets. Falch describes this as a fine balance between “[...] *on the one hand being on their [mentees’] side and have empathy [...] but also give a caring kick in the arse*” (Falch 2019). Specific functions of the mentor include acting as a ‘translator’; this, both in a metaphorical sense e.g. in cases where mentees need help to “decode” Danish “labour market culture”, and in a literal sense with regards to understanding official letters. Considering private aspects, a mentor is described as someone who can help to tackle everyday problems, metaphorically presented as “clearing the road” or “vacuum cleaning”. Buhr defines the relationship in familiar terms as a “*kind of a big brother-little brother or big sister-little sister relation*”. The Project Managers emphasise trust, confidentiality and to “meet as equals”<sup>4</sup> (in Danish: *at være i øjenhøjde*). In most Projects, the Managers try to facilitate the development of such relationships by instructing mentors how to align expectations at the beginning of a mentor relationship and e.g. write a “mentoring agreement” which outlines what the participants can expect from each other.

### 5.2.2. Defining Objectives and Target Groups

Reflecting current legislation, the formal objective of the Projects is to promote financial self-sufficiency, and mentor projects are financed as a means to promote this by moving mentees “closer to the labour market” (SIRI 2016a, 2016b, 2018). Within the official categorisation one is either *work-ready* or *activation-ready*, and the category defines what kind of compulsory activation programme, internship or employment scheme to follow. These are the activities that the mentor has to support.

How one “moves closer to the labour market” has been interpreted differently by the Project Managers. Representing municipal Projects, self-sufficiency through employment is *the* objective in the Projects managed by Larsen and Engdal. As Larsen, explains: “*That is how we’re assessed at the end of the day: Are we succeeding in making citizens financially self-sufficient. And that’s an easy parameter to measure. There isn’t much else [that matters]*” (Larsen 2019). According to Falch, the first step towards finding a job is to become aware of ones’ own capabilities, thus that is how she defines the objective: “*It’s about getting that experience that I can do some things*

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<sup>4</sup> A Danish expression which means to be at the same level or to be in solidarity with someone.

*differently from what I thought when I started here [...] because just telling people that they have other options, that doesn't work".* Project Managers also developed additional objectives according to their own agendas. Representing the united labour unions, Buhr explains that an objective within their project is for mentees to learn about labour market regulation and *"[...] that they have some rights but at the same time some duties in relation to the community, [a responsibility] to join a labour union and make sure not to do any undeclared work"*.

The target groups are predefined in terms of residency status and gender but have been adjusted during implementation; in some cases, because the Project Managers did not consider the Project type to suit everyone, in other cases because they did not find the mentees "suitable". The latter is e.g. the case as some have established language requirements to make sure mentee master Danish language to a certain level and to maintain a professional focus. For the projects funded by SIRI in 2018, the target group is formally defined as follows:

*Women with ethnic minority background who are far from the labour market, with none or limited educational background, and none or limited work experience from the Danish labour market, and who have social and integration related challenges other than the lack of employment. (SIRI 2018)*

But both Thomsen and Falch, who manage the Projects funded in 2018, tell that they find this target group to be "too heavy" for volunteers to work with. Thomsen has decided to simply recruit what she calls "resourceful" women, whereas Falch chose the option of group mentoring with a professional staff and a mentor.

The Project Managers are divided as to whether they believe mentoring can improve labour market rates, but they all agree that mentoring in one way or the other benefits the mentee. Examples of the positive impact of having a mentor include to help building trust in the Danish welfare institutions and its caseworkers, and in the initial phase of establishing a life in a new place. For those who have been in Denmark for a while, a mentor can also help to regain motivation to find a job after a setback.

### 5.3. Actors in the Field of "Integration"

This section introduces the Project Managers' motivations for embarking on the mentor projects, and how they perceive of their roles within the field of "integration" and in relation to other actors.

### 5.3.1. Motivations

The overall ambition of all the actors is to contribute positively to the life of mentees and to contribute to the integration agenda in general. Amongst others, Jensen describes the pleasure of "making a difference" by doing what you are good at. But most actors also tell of additional motivational factors, e.g. making themselves known, promoting the Danish labour market model and recruiting members. Buhr, who represent the united labour unions, tells about their motivation behind the project:

*Our mentor project is within the labour movement and that means that we'd like refugees to work under fair conditions and somehow, in the long run, maybe expect that some will become members. Our agenda is in a way to of course contribute to integration but also protect the Danish model. (Buhr 2019)*

Within the employers' association, represented by Jensen, the mentor project is perceived as an opportunity to make themselves known and set an example for others:

*We are obviously trying to make our presence felt in the media and in the political world. So it was a way for us to say 'hey, we can actually make a difference'. Not only do we have opinions but we can be a part of doing something on the ground too and to demonstrate best practice which others can benefit from. (Jensen 2019)*

The language school that Falch represents also has strategic and financial interests in the SIRI funded project. They have recently closed one of their schools as the provision of language courses is subject to competition and a private actor had won the tender. Thus, Falch hopes that a successful project will improve their chances to re-establish activities in the specific municipality: "So that's a whole different aspect to it. It's a business really, we're a business too, right". Larsen, representing a municipal project, simply described that he eyed an opportunity to get additional help to fulfil the requirements of placing refugees in jobs: "We were in a situation where we received many refugees, and the lists of things we had to do and succeed with were long".

### 5.3.2. Roles

The Project Managers perceive of their roles as either filling gaps or as “innovative”. An example of the first is Falch, who is of the opinion that the municipal Job Centres do not have the sufficient resources to properly help the “heavy group” – which is the term various Project Managers use to describe people who they see as very far from the labour market. Engdal and Larsen are examples of the latter as they view the funding as an opportunity to qualify volunteers to contribute actively to promote employment-focused interventions. This is innovative as volunteers within their municipalities previously only have been involved in social, rather than employment-focused, activities within immigrant integration.

Khokar identified a gap in the lack of caseworkers with minority-background experiences. She views the organisations she represents as a “missing link” between social workers and the immigrant population: *“We can reach places others can’t, where the public officials can’t get to. We dare. We open doors quicker for one another than for the others, so we aren’t wasting time. So they can get help sooner”* (Khokar 2019).

### 5.3.3. Relating to “The System”

Thomsen and Buhr speak of the mandatory official Integration Programme and its implementers as “the system”. Thomsen perceives of the Mentor Project as an alternative to the system in which the mentees can *“feel safe and enjoy coming around”* because *“it sort of has to be on their terms”*. Buhr also speaks of such a role that is outside the system as valuable, e.g. when recruiting potential mentees who sometimes are reluctant to participate because they perceive of the mentor as “yet another case worker”. Not accepting of this view of mentors as functionally the same as a case worker, she views the role of the voluntary mentors as helpful in getting the mentees out of the system: *“That’s when mentors are very important because they can say: ‘that sucks and I can totally understand [you] but if you follow this training it gives you the opportunity to apply that job and then you’ll be able to support yourself and get rid of this system’”* (Buhr 2019).

The municipal actors, as well as Jensen and Falch on the other hand, consider their projects as a means to achieve the national integration policy goals and fulfil the local immigrant integration strategies. Falch emphasises the importance of aligning the project activities with existing

municipal interventions and design it in a way that meets the policy requirements (e.g. in terms of number of weekly activity hours, number of internships etc.). According to Falch, this is because municipality workers tend to be “very preoccupied with succeeding in one way or the other”, and the Project depends on municipalities to refer mentees.

#### 5.4. Partnerships & Policies

This section presents the impact of factors external to the Mentor Projects. In the interviews, it becomes clear that a number of factors external to the Mentor Projects influence the Projects and the work of the Project Managers. These are in particular the dependency on collaborations with other actors and the frequent changes in immigration and integration policies.

The Projects depend on various actors and establishing and maintaining relations to other actors is time demanding. For the Projects managed by non-state actors, this is particularly with regards to relations with municipal Job Centres, whilst the Projects managed from within municipal teams depend on good relations with the local business communities.

According to the Integration Act it is the responsibility of the local municipalities to find internships or subsidised employment for people in the Integration Programme. Highlighting their dependence on private businesses in this, Larsen explains: *“If we don’t have businesses that are willing to open their doors for internships, for refugees and vulnerable ethnic citizens [...] Then it doesn’t matter how good we are at doing our job at the townhall”*. He speaks of the necessity to have prearranged internship positions which most people can fill, which he refers to as “off-the-shelf” (Danish: *hyldevarer*). Because many of the mandatory job training activities are “off-the-shelf”, mentors in some of the Projects take it upon them to help mentees finding internships relevant to their skills or professional background.

For the non-state actors, establishing cooperation with the local Job Centre is central as they refer mentee participants to the projects but, according to Jensen, this is not a straightforward process: *“There was a big difference between the different places. Their approach to the fact that we were now a partner and could play a role, contribute or help to get refugees into employment. It was approached differently. [...] They first had to see what kind of “strength” we are and how they could make use of us”* (Jensen 2019).

Buhr says that while the ongoing contact is important, the success of the mentor projects depends on whether or not the intervention is considered a priority politically within the given municipality: “[...] what we realised in the project is that it requires a municipal person who’s rather high up in the hierarchy to decide that this [mentor project] is something you have to prioritise. Because caseworkers are, like everyone else, given new tasks constantly. So if it isn’t clear that this needs to be prioritised, then it won’t be” (Buhr 2019). According to Buhr, recent policy changes are causing local municipalities to change their priorities in ways which threatens the continuation of the mentor project as fewer participants are being referred. At project management level, Kofoed and Falch also tell of how the politicised nature of immigration politics and ongoing policy changes makes it difficult to plan long-term and requires flexibility with regards to means and volume of the projects, and the process of applying for government agency funds “takes an awful lot of work” (Falch 2019).

Policy changes and the political discourse is also discouraging for the mentor. Buhr tell that some “have this frustration, that it’s totally pointless to be mentoring their mentees if they may be send home tomorrow” (Buhr 2019). This did in fact happen in the project managed by Thomsen where a mentee recently was deported after her asylum application was rejected. Thomsen and Buhr both tell how mentees are discouraged by the uncertainties about their residence permits and pending applications as well as the political discourse. Thus, Buhr sees it as an important role of the mentors to keep the mentees motivated despite the political situation, and to help them make sense of the various mandatory activities in the Integration Programme.

## 5.5. Working with Voluntary Mentors

Within the Projects using voluntary mentors, the recruitment and ongoing support of voluntary mentors require time and resources. This section presents how they recruit and work with the volunteers.

### 5.5.1. Recruiting Mentors

The Project Managers understand mentors’ motivations primarily as a desire to help and support a development for mentee and this has also been reflected in their strategies for mentor recruitment.

The project represented by Khokar is an exception where all mentors have immigrant background themselves. According to Khokar, these mentors are driven by their own potential to learn from their mentees and to act as “bridges” to better relations between majority and minority ethnic groups in society. Thomsen also tells that amongst a group of recently recruited elderly mentors, the motivation is to have their prejudices challenged and learn about new cultures “[...] *because these women here have probably never met or spoken to someone with a different ethnic background*”. According to Jensen, some mentors are motivated by factors beyond the mentorship, because participation in the Project gives access to networks with other mentors which are used to develop own professional relations and careers.

Several speaks of difficulties with regards to recruiting mentors and whilst having initially set criteria about labour market activity, some also recruit amongst retired people in order to try to reach the predefined target for the number of mentors. Buhr, Larsen and Thomsen notice how the political context has an impact on the level of interest from potential volunteers as well as on the perception of who needs or deserves help. As an example, Buhr has experienced that the mentors’ interests depends on whether the mentees are refugees or immigrants.

Engdal also tells that the Project’s focus on promoting employment deter some from volunteering, and it makes cooperation with some of the volunteers time-demanding to the extent where the project employees were “spending more time on the mentor than the mentees”. In some cases, the mentor’s role is even seen as obstructing. Engdal gives an example of the problem:

*The classic example is Mohammed who might have worked 20 years as an engineer but gets an internship at a warehouse. But they [the mentors] simply don’t agree to this, [and] they advise the refugee against starting because it’s degrading, it’s far below his qualifications. But that’s the worst case. In the slightly better scenario, they’re a bit skeptical and don’t understand. But that’s also enough to make the refugee uncertain and skeptical. (Engdal 2019)*

#### 5.5.2. Caring for the Needs of the Mentor

Catering for the needs of the voluntary mentors is a recurring theme in the interviews. The Project Managers act as contact persons for the mentors and are in charge of the ongoing supervision.

Buhr expresses surprise about the extent of the volunteers' need for support, feedback, and guidance: *“One thing is to make sure the mentor copes and the mentee is off to a good start, but there is definitely also a job to do when it comes to caring for the mentors. And make sure to give them what they need [...] it is a voluntary project, so the mentors need to feel cared for, [to] experience that there are contact persons who prioritise their wellbeing”* (Buhr 2019).

Thomsen, Jensen and Engdal organise network meetings for mentors only to facilitate exchange and knowledge sharing between the volunteers and host talks on issues relevant to their volunteering. Network meetings are a means to sustain motivation amongst the volunteers. Khokar organises network meetings as well, but they are open to both mentors and mentees as well as other local women.

The time and resources spent on training and catering for mentors led Engdal to conclude that mentor projects are better suited to volunteer organisations. An opinion which Kofoed, who also represents a municipal project, opposes. He believes that mentor projects indeed should be implemented by e.g. local authorities as many volunteer or civil society organisations do not have such resources. Easing the process and being able to make demands rather than accommodating those of the mentor is the reason Falch decided to employ a professional mentor: *“[...] we saw it as easier to work with someone who was paid. Hired. You can make demands in a different way [...] so it was to keep more control”*.

## 6. Analysis

In this analysis, I analyse how mentor projects can be understood as devised in relation to particular notions of needs - of society and individuals - and how mentor projects connect local practices of mentors and mentees to these abstract ideas.

I use Bacchi's concept of problematisation to analyse how mentoring can be understood as an individualisation of responsibility of "problems of integration", and how the target groups are constituted as particular with regards to this specific problem. On the basis of interviews with Project Managers of eight mentor projects, I draw on Hall's cultural analysis to analyse how the project managers represent the mentor and mentees, their agency and needs, and how they perceive of roles and responsibilities in a mentor relationship. Then I consider how the Project Managers' representation of the Projects may be understood with Gramsci's concept of Hegemony. Lastly, I draw on Bourdieu's concept of "field" to analyse how and why the managers' reproduce hegemonic discourses in the mentor projects in different ways.

Following the choice to present the empirical findings in a separate section, I include only selected quotations throughout the analysis. Hence, I do not include a volume of empirical examples to support each argument. In the first part of the analyses I primarily focus on general tendencies within the data, i.e. empirical findings represented in all or the majority of the interviews, and I target remarkable deviances separately. In the second part, I analyse the commitment to the employment agenda, and in the third part of the analysis, the attention is directed towards the diversity between and ambiguities within the projects.

### 6.1. Practices and Conceptualisations of Mentoring

#### 6.1.1. Representation

Two factors are central in the definition of the mentee target group: the first is the mentee's status as unemployed (or without formal employment/receiving welfare benefits), and the second is his/her legal status as refugee (with temporary residency permits) or as "an immigrant". The target groups are not set by project managers themselves but defined at policy level e.g. through SIRI funding requirements.

Drawing on Carol Bacchi's concept of *problematization*, we can understand mentoring programmes as policy makers' and municipal actors' proposed solution to the problem of unemployment amongst people with refugee status and women from immigrant backgrounds, which is assumed to impede integration. By funding mentor projects for this target group, they constitute the problem as one of the individual because mentoring – as conceptualised in these projects – aims to create developments or change within the mentee or his/her behaviour. Thus, to problematise refugees and female immigrants as particular, and similar, with regard to employment suggests that the fact of their unemployment can be explained by characteristics of their group. Or indeed, that because of presumed group characteristics they need to be dealt with differently from other groups of unemployed people.

For people with refugee status in Denmark, the latter has been the case since the 2016 introduction of the Integration Programme in which people with refugee status are subject to different requirements and have fewer labour market rights than the rest of the population. The legal category "refugee" is not fixed, neither is it merely a bureaucratic term to apply to people who apply for asylum and are granted or rejected the temporary protection status, instead such labels are political constructions that serve to construct a group in order to make it manageable (Zetter 2007, 184).

This is relevant to this study as the identification of refugees as a target group for Mentor Projects is thus not based on assessment of relevant professional skills or labour market trajectories, but instead on their label as "refugees".

*There was kind of this image ... well, our members wanted to help because they were refugees, not immigrants, but refugees. (Buhr 2019)*

When viewed as such a political construction, the label of "refugee" can be linked to current welfare discourses concerned with the question of deservingness. In the mentor project managed by Buhr, mentors offer their help specifically because they consider refugees as justifiably in need of, or deserving of, their help. It also provides insight into how individuals understand and evaluate the "rights" of others based on what Zetter refers to as "labels". The other target group identified by Mentor Projects was defined as "women with ethnic minority backgrounds" (SIRI 2018). This is similarly not a legal category, but rather a label that serves the purpose of constructing a group in order make it manageable.

The defining of mentee target groups according to such labels of “refugee” and “women with ethnic minority backgrounds” requires the construction of meaning through what Hall refers to as “representational system” (Hall in Hall 1997, 1). Within this system, language acts as media to produce, or reproduce, meaning within cultures (Hall in Hall 1997, 4), and culture, as defined by Hall, is shared meanings, and the construction of meaning depends on the marking of difference in order to draw it symbolic – moral, national, class – boundaries (Hall in Hall 1997, 236f). The representational system thus produces the meaning of these labels of the target groups. As such, these labels can be understood to be structured by “cultural codes” which are shared among members of the same culture, that allow them to “*think and feel about the world, and thus interpret the world, in roughly similar ways*” (Hall in Hall 1997, 4). The labels applied to the mentees are thus to be viewed as defined based on representations of ethnicity, gender and perceived legal status. Specific to the Danish context, ethnicity is commonly defined as Danish/ethnic or Western/non-Western<sup>5</sup> and reflects the public and political debate preoccupied with questions of “ethnicity” and “Danishness” (Schmidt 2019). Ethnicity, and perceived ethnic difference, is used to exclude those who are not considered part of the majority because it builds on an idea of Denmark as “ethnically homogenous” (Schmidt 2019, 47). To emphasise “ethnicity” is to racialize people with refugee status or immigration background who are perceived as “others” and to construct their “ethnic difference” as abnormal in the Danish context (ibid.). The construction of “women with ethnic minority backgrounds” as a label that has meaning within the Danish and North European context invokes widespread perceptions of Middle Eastern or North African heritage as traditional, backwards and menial (See e.g. Pedersen 2012; Killian and Manohar 2016; Eijberts and Ghorashi 2017).

The value of Hall’s analysis is not simply to describe these labels as related to culture but to show how these labels rely on cultural codes to produce meaning. Representations, he argues, are embedded in culture, and culture is a site of power struggles because it is used to legitimise social privilege (Hall in Hall et al. 1980, 14f). Migration scholars have argued that the representations of minority groups in Nordic countries as “non-Western” and/or “Muslim” draw on colonialist and Orientalist discourses, portraying minorities as e.g. threats or subordinates, and which legitimises social inequalities (Keskinen and Andreassen 2017, 64f). This perception of the mentees can be

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<sup>5</sup> The distinction Western/non-Western is used in political and public discourse as well as by the national office Statistics Denmark ([www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/dokumentation/statistikdokumentation/indvandriere-og-efterkommere/indhold](http://www.dst.dk/da/Statistik/dokumentation/statistikdokumentation/indvandriere-og-efterkommere/indhold)).

interpreted in the title of the campaign “Take Responsibility” used to recruit mentors. As this particular mentor project is funded by SIRI, the formal objective is “to promote labour market participation and thereby integration” (SIRI 2016b). If labour market integration is understood as a precondition to integration, it is thus implied that the possibility of integration is not possible without first finding employment. As such, mentors are asked to “take responsibility” for the preparation of mentees for the labour market. Accepting arguments in the literature that representations of minority groups in Denmark often draw on colonialist/Orientalist discourses, the focus upon the primacy of labour market activity prior to integration may be interpreted as perceiving mentees as potential threats as a collective financial burden on the welfare state.

Secondly, the stated aim of integration could be interpreted to imply that not doing so may threaten “social cohesion” in Denmark. The perception of mentees as a threat may also be seen in the labour union mentor project in which it is an objective to teach mentees about rights as well as rules and obligations at the Danish labour market; legally exemplified by “not doing undeclared work”, and contributing to the “community” by becoming members of a union. However, the production of meaning through representation is not only a matter of *encoding* – to communicate meaning through representations – but depends likewise on the interpretation by the receiver. That is how s/he *decodes* the representation (Hall in Hall 1997, 61f). As meanings are not fixed, individuals interact with and interpret the representations offered to them (*ibid.*).

To recognise agency is to see people “*as makers of their own life and treating them accordingly [and] they should be given room for choosing their own ends and life plans*” (Ottonelli and Torresi 2013; 789). As Buhr suggests in the above quotation, refugees are considered to be in “need of help”. This is also reflected in two of the campaigns for recruiting mentors called “Help a Refugee” and “Take Responsibility”; the latter suggesting that refugees by definition of their legal status cannot take responsibility for themselves. The tendency to perceive people with refugee status as being in need of help has been observed in policy as well as research, and their agency is often undermined as a consequence of their legal status (Kelly and Hedman 2016).

In the managers’ descriptions of the practices of mentoring, mentees are characterised by their situation (as “new” in the country or as unemployed) and needs (for help, support, motivation etc.). The mentors are described in terms of their knowledge (within specific professional fields and due to having lived in the country for longer) and capacities (to fulfil mentees’ needs). The managers’ view of agency is also reflected in the emic terms they use to describe the functions of a mentor.

Again, the mentors are the agents who can “open doors”, “clear the road”, are “messengers”. The mentors are depicted as people who have capacity to act and the mentees lack this capacity and need others to act on their behalf. Falch describes her view on the mentor role:

*I believe it demands a lot of the mentor. You have to be inclusive, determined, set a direction and be able to say no. Because it isn't hard to imagine that some would take both the little finger and the entire arm<sup>6</sup>. (Falch 2019)*

The quote suggests that mentees are difficult and demanding and may abuse the help offered by the mentor. Mentees need a mentor to “set direction” because they presumably cannot do so themselves – or maybe the direction they otherwise choose is not considered “right” as the title of the particular project “Women’s Life the Danish way”<sup>7</sup> may suggest.

The overarching focus on mentees’ need for help and support may also be a reflection not only of a deprivation of agency as a result of discursive constructions of “refugees” and “immigrant women”, but of the fact that many of these mentees may belong to groups that are socially and economically underprivileged due to societal structures e.g. the labor market, the school system etc. Thus, I do not attempt to argue that support in one way or the other is “wrong” *per se*, or belittling of the mentees, but rather question whether individualised employment-focused mentoring takes this into account.

Whilst the general tendency amongst project managers is to undermine the mentees’ agency in relation to the mentor projects, they do so to varying degrees, and there are exceptions to the rule. The question of “motivation” reflects a diversity in the managers’ perceptions of the mentees and mentee agency. Larsen recognises refugee agency as he suggests that the project had a hard time attracting enough mentees because the potential candidates have their own networks and capacity to manage without a mentor’s help. Another manager describes the mentees’ interest in the project as a reflection of their agency as she emphasises their participation as a result of their motivation, not simply their needs. She emphasises that they *do* want to learn the language and some of them perceive of their refuge in Denmark as a “great opportunity” in terms of employment - despite the involuntary journey here as refugees. Yet again, others consider potential mentees’ lack of interest

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<sup>6</sup> Danish expression equivalent to “give them an inch and they will take a mile”.

<sup>7</sup> Own translation. In Danish: ”Kvindelig på Dansk”.

in the mentor projects to be a result of ignorance about their own potential benefits or laziness, and thus not as an active choice.

**In summary**, the Mentor Projects reflect a problematisation of refugees' and immigrants' unemployment as particular. We can understand "employment" to be associated with the normal and moral, and with the native Danish majority population. Unemployed, on the other hand, is connected with the decadent and abnormal and, in this case, the ethnic minority. As proposed by Hall, representations are subject to interpretation as individuals interact with their meaning – when they engage in *decoding* (Hall in Hall 1997, 61f). I have analysed whether - and how - the project managers do so in their representations of mentees and the mentors respectively. I have found that project managers reproduce the meaning communicated from policy level through the definition of "problems" and project target groups. By emphasising the agency of the mentors and overlooking the mentees' agency in relation to the mentorships, they reproduce the binary positions of the active/passive and the intersection with categories of ethnicity and belonging. The construction of mentees as potential threats to the welfare state reproduce the importance placed on labour market activity, which is further emphasised in the demand for activity, professionalism and motivation. The representation of employment as the "acceptable, healthy, normal, and good" is legitimised in the project managers' understanding of their mentor projects.

#### 6.1.2. Mentee suitability: Casting the right people

*To put it differently; those who were left [still unemployed] were possibly not that motivated or had trouble with the language or because of other things. So sometimes it was a bit hard to cast the right people. (Larsen 2019)*

The question of motivation is not only interesting because it indicates the managers' recognition of agency but also their conception of who is deemed "suitable" for a mentor. Most of the managers emphasise that mentees are expected to be motivated to find a job in order to participate in the projects. The quote above was stated by the manager of a project titled "Mentor Active Integration" who explains that the title is intended to emphasise the "active" character of their approach. The demand for "motivation", and the perception that people have the potential to be "active" and to "develop" regardless of their situation, fits neatly with Ferguson's definition of the neoliberal subject as a "responsible," and "active" citizen (Ferguson 2009, 172). This view is predominant in

the approach to-, and systems of categorisation in the Danish welfare system in which everyone is categorised as either *work-ready* or *activity-ready* (Herup 2015, 52). As a part of the 2016 Tripartite Agreements that aimed to promote employment amongst people with refugee status, the then government and social partners decided to treat all refugees as work-ready upon arrival (Government of Denmark 2016). The individualisation of responsibility and the categorisation of people with refugee status as work-ready reflects the desire to deploy constructions of the neoliberal subject that “produce governmental results that do not depend on direct state intervention” (Ferguson 2009, 172).

With inspiration from Bacchi’s problematisation as well as Colley’s empirical studies of mentor projects, instrumentalised mentoring like the projects I study can be understood exactly as expressions of such an individualisation of responsibility.

The analysis above can help us understand why the same managers who describe the mentees’ in terms of their need for help, simultaneously expect of the mentees to be and sustain motivated regardless of their condition. Thomsen did question whether a vulnerable target group is compatible with the demands of the mentor project during project development and decided to be selective and only recruit mentees that she described to be “resourceful”. Asked how she defines resources; she answers that it primarily has to do with motivation. In the projects where motivation is not a prerequisite for becoming a mentee, the aim is to cultivate motivation e.g. in the meeting with “role models” (people with immigrant background who have jobs) or by making them aware of the financial opportunities it gives to have a salary.

The problems of “casting the right people” is not only limited to motivation. For the sake of the mentors, the project managers have found it necessary to set additional requirements. In the majority of the projects, mentees need to have sufficient language skills to communicate with their Danish speaking mentors. It is furthermore preferable if mentees do not have other “problems” which may interfere with their job search. Buhr explains that they further delimited the target group and excluded people with mental health problems because they did not want this to impact the relationship with the mentor. Larsen elaborates on the type of “trouble” that may deem a mentee unsuitable and shares an example of a woman who was motivated to find employment but had a husband who opposed her decision to search for a job. According to Larsen, this situation created

great frustration for the mentor, but he considered it beyond the scope of the mentor project to engage further as “*that definitely isn’t something we should be spending our time and effort on*”. Thomsen shares a similar concern for the mentors’ experience and reflects on the limitations with regards to what is acceptable for mentees to share with their mentor. If a mentee for example has a number of ongoing cases at the Job Centre, she considers it to be too much to expect of a mentor to help with these.

The demands on the mentee, and the explanations for these, illuminate an interesting dynamic between professionalism and unprofessionalism. Whether for the sake of the mentor or the mentee him/herself, the mentees are expected to be capable of putting aside everything that may “disturb” the mentor relationships or overburden the voluntary mentor. Buhr explains the demands on the mentees this way:

*Keeping in mind that our mentors aren’t professionals, they are volunteers [...] it meant that we’ve had to be quite clear with the Job Centre about what kind of people we can accept in this programme, also keeping in mind it was a professional one. It was not a social intervention. (Buhr 2019)*

Thus, the mentees are expected to act professionally precisely because the mentors are not and cannot be expected to.

The project, which is managed by Khokar, is an exception with regards to motivation, professionalism and language skills as requirements. They only use mentors who have immigrant backgrounds themselves and the manager prioritises to match mentor and mentee based on language and dialect to the extent possible. In their activities, there is no minimum requirement for mentees and no limits to what a mentor will help with on mentee’s requests.

**In summary**, the Project Managers have found it necessary to establish requirements for mentees such as level of language skills, professionalism, or motivation, or limitations on the type and/or volume of “support” the mentor can engage in. This is partly in order to not overburden the mentors, and partly because they consider the project focus to be professional development, thus the mentors, as volunteers, are not qualified to deal with issues not related to employment. This is

however not the case in the project represented by Khokar in which the mentors are prepared to help regardless.

### 6.1.3. Mentoring as a “One-way Street”

The managers’ descriptions of the mentor practice disclose an understanding of mentoring as a “one-way street” with almost exclusive focus on the mentees’ (assumed) needs to learn and develop. Notable in its absence was mutual learning as an aspect of mentoring (see e.g. Ragins 2016). It is especially remarkable in light of the managers’ predominant concern for the needs of the mentor, despite not actually perceiving them as “beneficiaries” of the projects as such. In the cases where managers observe that mentors have benefitted or changed in one way or the other, it is considered an unexpected “bonus” but nevertheless welcomed. Again, Khokar’s project is an exception and many of the mentors are themselves former mentees.

This one-way approach to mentoring reflects what Ragins calls the *traditional mentor* (Ragins 2016; 231f). According to Ragins, traditional mentor relationships share behavioural norms with professional relationships which are characterised by exchange where the motivation for giving something is the expectation to get something in return (Ragins 2016, 233). This is different from communal norms where actions are motivated by care for the other’s wellbeing and thus has higher chances of meeting the mentees actual needs (ibid.). Traditional mentor relationships mimic teacher-student relations that are *instrumental* and *hierarchical* (Ragins 2016; 231f). The mentorships established in the mentor projects studied are intended to be instrumental in improving the labour market participation rates of people with refugee status and women with immigration backgrounds, and the attention of the managers is directed towards what the relationship can *do* in terms of “improving” the mentee (or mentee’s skills or job status). Applying this traditional approach to mentoring thus reflects an acceptance, reproduction of the understanding of the problem to be (within) the mentee, hence an individualisation of responsibility.

When asked what characterises a constructive mentoring relationship, the project managers emphasise trust, confidentiality and to “meet as equals”. Following Ragins’ typology, these are characteristics of what she calls high quality relationships and beyond what can be developed in a professional-style traditional mentorship (Ragins 2016; 229, 232). Ragins highlights that *time* is a prerequisite for developing trust – something which is limited in most of the mentor projects.

Khokar is very critical of the short-term character of the mentor relationships in the project they did with the local municipality because her experience is that strong relationships are crucial but that relationship building takes time. Based on my data I have no grounds for evaluating the participants' qualitative experience of the mentor relationships. However, with contact time to be considered such an important factor in building trust in mentor relationships (Ragins 2016, 233), it is hard not to wonder how the managers expect trust and confidentiality to develop between strangers who meet once or twice a month over a 6-month time period.

Mentor-mentee relationships established in the eight projects are subject to difference in privilege between mentor and mentee based on their group affiliations. In mentoring theory this is known as Diversified Mentoring Relations (DMR) (Ghosh 2018). In this particular case, difference in privilege can be understood in terms of the representation of the mentee as the perceived "other", the "refugee", or "woman from minority background", and also in terms of the mentee not having equal access to the labour market, the welfare system and do not hold the same labour market rights (as a consequence of the Integration Programme). The inherent asymmetry in DMR can be an advantage if the mentor uses his/her influence and power to the benefit of the mentee but this requires of both parties to cease to view each other in terms of their differences (ibid., 162). Such an act could be seen as a break from the traditional mentorship norms observed in this study, instead conforming to more communal norms of mentorship (Ragins 2016, 233). The managers' choice of language reflects how they choose to represent the mentors and mentees in terms of their group affiliations, and how they reproduce difference in their framing. The prevailing representation was of mentees as "refugees" and mentors as "mentors"/"hosts", however one project referred to mentees as "citizens" (Danish: *borger*) which could be perceived as a more "neutral". The use of "women" for mentees in a number of projects can be understood as an attempt to direct attention to the mentor and mentee's common gender. Less so, however, when only mentees are, as a group, referred to as "women" working with "mentors" or "hosts".

## 6.2. Employment as part of the "common sense"

In this section, I analyse how their management of the mentor projects can be understood as simultaneously structured by and constitutive of a neoliberal *hegemony*.

The centrality of employment in the mentor projects (expressed in the managers' compliance with the above-defined objective of labour market participation) and the individualisation of responsibility may be understood as not just a construction of the neoliberal subject, but rather constitutive of a broader structure of neoliberal hegemony. Hegemony, as conceptualised by Gramsci, is *bloc rule* with consent from the ruled (Hall in Chen and Morley 1996, 424). Recalling Gramsci's conceptualisation of blocs, these are alliances that cut across classes in the traditional meaning; they include some but not all groups of the privileged classes, and they furthermore include groups from dominated or subaltern classes (ibid.). *Consent* refers to Gramsci's understanding that a hegemony needs to be considered legitimate e.g. through the construction of a shared culture (ibid., 439).

In the previous section, I drew on mentoring literature to propose that we understand the mentor projects as *instrumental* in achieving the predefined objective of promoting labour market participation. I also suggested that this type of mentoring has *disciplinary* implications for the mentees. To approach the commitment to the centrality of employment as hegemonic is to consider it a representation of the values of the hegemony. Hegemony however is unstable and needs to be maintained through various means. I view the mentor projects can be analysed as both structured by and participating in the maintenance of this hegemonic structure.

The means to become, and sustain, a hegemony includes the use of state power, the forging of alliances across class-divides and building legitimacy (Hall in Chen and Morley 1996, 423–26; Seidman 2013, 137). Workfare policies, the Integration Programme and the Integration Act can be understood as an expression of state power as it defines the positions of social groups in society. The engagement of a diverse group of mentors resembles a bloc alliance as it includes, amongst others, workers, employers, retired women and young people with immigrant backgrounds all together. Recalling Rose's notion of *translation*, we can add the project managers to the list "authorities" who partake in regulation of individual conduct because they consider the objectives to be legitimate and aligned with their own interests and objectives (Rose and Miller 2010, 281). Lastly, and crucially, the bloc's values need to be considered legitimate across society as a whole. The mentoring projects can be understood as instrumental in "winning the consent" of newcomers and unemployed immigrant women; that is consensus about the legitimacy of the employment agenda and neoliberal views of individuals and their responsibility to provide for themselves. The

analytical value of hegemony in this regard is to illuminate that project managers are not *coerced* to do so, neither do they try to coerce the mentors or mentees. It is not simply a matter of following a job description, but rather that the project managers act in their professional roles based on the “common sense” within the hegemony.

As the empirical data includes interviews with Project Managers only, it is important to remember that the importance placed on work within the hegemony is represented in their descriptions of the objectives and practices of the mentor projects – not in the mentors’ own accounts.

### 6.3. Approaching a Field of Mentoring

The concept of hegemony proposes a way of understanding the mentor projects as actively sustaining a neoliberal hegemony in which individuals are expected to work and provide for themselves. This, by attempts to win consent from racialised unemployed minority groups. It does not, however, account for why the project managers design and manage the projects in different ways and how they relate to other actors. In the Empirical Findings section, I present themes that appear across all eight projects analysed in this study but how the managers represent their projects in relation to these themes varies. Most remarkable are the differences in managers’ perception of their projects in relation to activities of the mandatory Integration Programme and the rules and obligations of the benefit system in general. This is what some of them refer to as “the system”.

In the following, I use Bourdieu’s notion of *field* to analyse how we may understand these differences. To analyse the Project Managers as actors within a field serves to nuance our understanding of how and why they connect discourses on immigration to local practices in different ways through the mentor projects. With Rose’s concept, that is to analyse how project managers engage in *translation* in particular ways. To consider the project managers as actors in a Field of Mentoring is to move beyond an understanding of the managers as eight fairly independent actors who interact by their own logics (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98f). Instead, their actions are guided by their location in the field as well as their individual habitus (ibid., 99).

### 6.3.1. A Field within the Greater Field of Immigrant Integration

I perceive of the project managers as actors within a Field of Mentoring which is a sub-field of, and thus influenced by, the Field of Immigrant Integration. The concept of field presupposes some degree of autonomy, but the autonomy of this field is restricted by its proximity to the powerful economic field (Swartz 1997, 138). This is because immigrant integration is a political project, and the majority of immigrant integration activities are funded by the state, hence funding opportunities reflect current immigration politics. The eight projects included for this study have all received state-funding, either through SIRI or through local municipalities.

*In my view, employment and self-support is the way to integration. I know it may be a bit rigid but it is hugely important to be a part of the labour market in Denmark because that's just where you align your views on what it means to be in Denmark, to be Danish, and what kind of values we value. So that part [employment] was primary in the project. (Larsen 2019)*

Larsen and Engdal in particular place importance on employment and do not consider it decisive whether the job or internship matches the mentees' skills. They both represent municipalities and they see the opportunity to engage volunteer in employment interventions as the value of the mentor projects. They do not simply consider their objective aligned with those defined at policy level, rather they consider the policy objectives to be the objectives of their projects. And as this target is to increase employment, it is taken for granted that high labour market participation rates are in the interest of the society and the migrants alike. In the quote above, stated by Larsen, he explains the centrality of employment in the project.

In the interviews, the non-state Project Managers describe the process of establishing relationships with Job Centres at the local municipalities as a time demanding process. But they depend on these collaborations because the municipalities refer mentees to their projects. The non-state actors' dependency on state actors in the field, illuminates differences in power between the different actors. There is a diversity of actors within the Field of Mentoring; state actors, civil society actors and increasingly private actors as well as a result of neoliberal state restructuring and political priorities – e.g. as a result of the 2016 Tripartite Agreement. But municipalities are the dominant agents because their participation in the field is secured in Danish legislation as implementors of the

Integration Programme. The mentees who have refugee status are all enrolled in the mandatory programme, and the female immigrants are also referred by the municipal Job Centres because they as unemployed have to follow mandatory “activation” programmes<sup>8</sup>.

Thus, amongst the eight project managers, those representing the municipalities are dominant in the Field of Mentoring. They have the power to set the terms to which the less powerful actors have to attend. As the “old” and established actors, they also have an interest in conserving the rules of the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99). But at the same time, the municipal actor cannot freely define what is considered valuable in the field because of their close relations to the political and economic field.

*[We] try to follow the individual refugee. That’s what we do here at the Job Centre [for immigrants]. The first 5 years is the Integration Period and they belong here with us, and we find legal basis in the Integration Act to do the things we find relevant. Afterwards they are fall under the other Job Centre with other activities and rules. (Kofoed 2019)*

Kofoed, the third of the municipal managers, is equally preoccupied with promoting employment but considers the mentor project as an opportunity to use different means, and to prioritise interventions that are not strictly employment oriented. Just like Larsen and Engdal, he utilises his position to do what he believes to be best for the refugee. The difference in how the three Project Managers act despite their comparable location in the field shows that actions are not only structurally defined but also guided by their individual habitus. Kofoed has previous work experience with mentor projects from a civil society organisation which may affect his perception of the potential of mentor projects. Other additional factors such as the political majority within the particular municipality may play a role as well.

### 6.3.2. Sub-fields of Mentoring?

The quote above shows how Kofoed uses his position to find ways to “buffer” refugees in the Integration Programme whom he does not considers suitable for the very employment-oriented activities. Buhr and Thomsen express a wish to represent something different from what they

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<sup>8</sup> Activation programmes are a central element of workfare policies, and include various activities which the unemployed person is obliged to participate in in order to receive benefits.

perceive of the Integration Programme to be – with their own words, by effect of being an “alternative” to or outside of “the system”.

Thomsen and Khokar emphasise the value of representing an alternative. Neither of them disapproves of “the system” but they perceive it as inadequate in meeting the needs of the mentees. Using Bourdieu’s concept of capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 119), we can understand “alternative” to mean that the valorisation of capital resources follows a different logic. Khokar does not narrate her work as an alternative but rather as complimentary and as a necessary addition. With her own words, she describes her mentors as a “missing link” (in the system’s activities). This may be understood as attempts to create a sub-field in which other means are legitimate and other capitals are valued – other than what they perceive to be pertinent to “the system”. To establish a separate field in which employment status and promotion were less important would also entail a strengthening of their location in the field as representatives of their respective organisations.

However, the empirical findings do not suggest that any of the project managers actually establish *autonomous* sub-fields. Instead, the mentor projects may better be understood as temporary fields that remain within and under the influence of the larger Field of Mentoring – which again is a sub-field within the Field of Immigrant Integration. As an example, Thomsen’s explanation of what it means to be an “alternative” is more of a breathing space than a replacement; she emphasises a positive and informal atmosphere and an ambition to transfer “ownership” of the mentorship to the participants as best as possible – but with awareness as issues related to “the system” are beyond what can be expected of the mentor.

In the following quote, Falch reflects on the difficulties that mentees face when their capital resources do not translate into symbolic capital at the Danish labour market:

*Some of them did have work experience but obviously from a different labour market than the Danish, and considerably different. And then they’ve been through some internships where they didn’t succeed. Simply because they don’t understand the context [...] and then they become disillusioned when it’s happened a couple of times and that’s just not really nice.*  
(Falch 2019)

In Falch's view, the value of the mentor project lies in creating a field in where the disguise of capitals into symbolic capital depends to a lesser degree on employment status and labour market knowledge. However, Falch does not suggest a new Field of Mentoring as such. Rather, she considers the mentor project to be a temporary intervention with the aim of preparing the mentees for the Field of Immigrant Integration or Labour Market Integration which they have to "return to" unless they become self-supported within the 10 weeks' duration of the project.

The fact that none of the managers of non-state projects disregard the hegemony and the importance placed on employment suggests that they remain within the Field of Mentoring (and Immigrant Integration), thus their thinking is delimited by the field's doxa. Bourdieu uses the concept of *doxa* to describe the rules of the field and the "*categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world*" (Bourdieu in Doblytè 2019, 283), e.g. the assumption that unemployment is a problem and employment is desirable. It may also be the assumption that "integration" is in the interest of society and migrants alike, and that interventions to promote the common good are legitimate. The doxa thus appears to reproduce the predominant meaning ascribed by cultural codes as well as that of Gramscian hegemony. Following the logic of field, the doxa may remain unquestioned because the non-state actors do not hold enough power in the field to challenge it (Bourdieu 1991, 242); they depend on the powerful for funding for these and future projects, and because the municipalities refer mentees to their projects.

Thus, Khokar's use of the phrase "missing link" can be understood as an attempt to position her project in the Field of Mentoring and possibly the greater field of Immigrant Integration too. In a field with multiple actors in more powerful positions, Khokar and her mentors have something that makes them particular; they have immigrant backgrounds themselves which she believes to be a valuable resource in the field. Her emphasis on the organisations' compilation of particular cultural capital resources can thus be understood as an attempt to strengthen their symbolic capital in the field.

**In summary**, the way that the managers simultaneously strive to establish separate fields and to improve their location in relation to other actors show that they remain actors within the Field of Mentoring and thus the Field of Immigrant Integration – despite of what may be interpreted as "separatist" attempts. It shows how the managers translate discourses and political objectives in

particular ways that work to their advantage e.g. strategically or in order to align the project activities with the values and objectives of their organisations.

### 6.3.3. Centrality of Mentors and Discipline of Mentor Compliance

*It is - don't get me wrong – often the old guard<sup>9</sup>; elderly women who have time and so on. And maybe they don't exactly have the 'employment mindset'. By recruiting people from the business community, we thought we could strengthen this focus. (Larsen 2019)*

Within the Field of Mentoring, the influence of the political and economic fields determines that the ability to make unemployed financially self-supported is considered valuable and serves to strengthen an actor's the location in the field. The municipalities are financially incentivised through financial compensation for the costs of providing “integration services” i.e. language training and workfare programmes, and non-state actors increase prospects of renewed or additional funding opportunities. The awareness about how actions and “results” are valorised in the field is e.g. expressed by Falch who tells that she hopes measurable success within the mentor project will increase their chances when competing for other funds and public tenders. Therefore, she has designed the particular project to meet all the formal requirements of the Integration Programme so that municipalities that struggle to meet their targets can buy their services.

But while the project managers may design and promote the projects in ways they believe can improve their position in the field, the managers themselves hardly or never interact directly with the mentees. Thus, the mentors are crucial “tools” in order for the managers to achieve their objectives. This is reflected in the project managers strategies for mentor recruitment as the quote above shows. Project managers from municipal as well as non-state projects describes that the mentors are valuable in order to keep mentees motivated in their job search. However, not always easy to “control”:

*Working with the mentors was most difficult when they didn't have any idea about the employment [interventions]. But they had lots of opinions, wishes and dreams on behalf of the refugee. That often creates a bit of a clash and in the worst cases it was almost as if they – instead of being a partner – counteracted the plans, we made. (Engdal 2019)*

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<sup>9</sup> In Danish: ”Tordenskjolds soldater”.

The project managers tell that a lot of time and effort goes into nurturing the mentors. As described in the first part of the analysis, the managers establish criteria to ensure that the mentee can act professionally in relation to their mentor and to make sure the mentors are not overburdened. The project managers also offer supervision and arrange network meeting to make the mentors feel valued and to keep them motivated.

This can be understood as an expression of the managers' dependency on the mentors as means to keep their mentoring "on track" – that is to ensure that the mentors work towards the objectives that can be transformed into symbolic capital in the Field of Mentoring. Mentors who do not partake pose a problem to the managers' ambitions as expressed in the quote above. And with Rose's term, the mentors' resistance towards the predefined objectives and procedures can be viewed as disruption of translation processes. Whilst the managers are portrayed as, and valued for, their agency, this agency becomes a problem if they disrupt the translation e.g. by questioning the legitimacy of the activities of the Integration Programme or for other reasons lose faith in the purpose of the project. An example of this is the mentors in the unions' project who became disillusioned by the uncertainty of the mentees' permission to remain in the country. In this situation, the project manager explained that it is particularly important to stay in close contact and follow up to keep the mentors motivated. Hence, when project managers prioritise mentors' needs and wellbeing, this may be understood as a disciplining activity in order to ensure that the mentors continue to mentor in the desired results-oriented ways.

**In summary**, the findings show that project managers' ability to define the objectives and activities of the projects is conditioned by their location in the Field of Mentoring. The municipal actors are dominant but even their space for action is restricted due to the field's proximity to the political-economic field. The demand to work remains unquestioned and the project managers who attempt to create mentoring fields in order to valorise alternative capital resources remain within the doxa of the Field of Mentoring. The project activities thus translate tendencies of the neoliberal hegemonic structure into local practices within their individual projects but in different ways shaped by the interests and values of the workplaces they represent. Whilst none of the managers *disrupt* the translation, some mentors do. Within this understanding, the managers attentiveness towards the mentors' needs may be understood as a disciplining activity due to the managers' dependence on mentors in order to gain position in the field.

#### 6.4. Summary of Analysis

In the above, I have analysed how mentor projects are devised in relation to particular notions of needs – constructed in relation to discourses on immigration and employment - and how mentor projects connect local practices of mentors and mentees to these discourses in particular ways.

In the analysis, I find that the project managers conceive of their projects and the participants in ways that reflect a neoliberal hegemony and its particular notions of the individual and its relationship with and responsibilities towards the state. The choice of individual mentoring as a means to handle “problems of integration” constructs the problem as one of the individual; the practices of mentoring, as described by the project managers, are characteristic of student-teacher relations defined by one-way learning and an exclusive focus on the mentee’s need to change. This type of mentoring has individualising effects as it places the responsibility on the individual mentee and silences other explanations for the “problem of unemployment”. It is implicitly assumed that those who are problematised themselves hold the key to their solutions – but they may need help from mentors in order to choose solutions that are considered legitimate within the dominant culture in society. Within a neoliberal hegemony, this is to be financially self-supported commonly defined as employment. The managers furthermore become complicit in othering, racializing and, in some instances, gendering the problem when they reproduce the perception of the mentee target groups as special in relation to the “problem of unemployment”. To make the problem a question of race and ethnicized gender echoes to the problematisation of “ethnic difference” which is dominant in current discourses on immigration. Mentoring thus appears to be a disciplining effort to make the mentees “fit in”.

The analysis shows contradictory expectations for mentees. On the one hand, the managers’ perception of the mentees’ “need for help” deprives them of their agency (in the mentor relationship). On the other, they are expected to act professionally and to meet the neoliberal demands on individuals to be active and motivated. But mentees can also be in need of too much help if the needs go beyond professional matters, and therefore some Project Managers establish criteria for participation. This is partly in consideration of potential mentees, but mostly it appears to be in order not to overburden the mentors who are volunteering their time.

It appears paradoxical that the managers on the one hand do not consider mentors as “beneficiaries” of the mentor projects (not considered to learn and develop), yet at the same time they assign much time and attention to the mentors’ needs. Approaching the project managers as actors in the Field of Mentoring allows for an analysis of the importance placed on the needs of the mentors. To consider the managers as actors within a field suggests that their actions are structured by certain rules and their pursue of symbolic capital to strengthen their position in field hierarchy. Due to the field’s proximity to the powerful political and economic fields, the hierarchisation of actors and the actors’ locations within the field (based on symbolic capital) depends on the extent to which they contribute to the fulfilment of political targets for integration – defined as self-support. In the professional practice, they are navigating a field in which their power and – for the non-state actors – continued participation is to some extent dependent on whether they are successful in activating mentees through jobs or internships. In this endeavour, they rely on the mentors to work towards the same objectives, thus the managers’ care for mentors can be understood as a disciplining activity. In different ways, projects managers contribute to the translation and reproduction of a neoliberal hegemony by regulating individual conduct of both mentors and mentees.

## 7. Conclusion

In performing a micro-scale analysis of mentor projects aimed at providing mentoring opportunities for people with refugee status and women with immigrant backgrounds through qualitative interviews with Project Managers, this research shows the ways in which migrants' needs are constructed, presented, targeted and negotiated in relation to the needs of society. The "needs of society" are expressed in a policy framework that centralises employment as the means to become "integrated". By using the theoretical perspective offered by Nikolas Rose, the Mentor Projects have been analysed as translators of a neoliberal political rationality that promotes financial self-sufficiency and individualised responsibility.

The study offers an analysis of *how* we may understand the Project Managers' motivations for doing so through Gramsci's concept of hegemony and finds that the unquestioned support for this agenda is possible due to neoliberal hegemonic discourse. A discourse which the Projects are part in the constitution and maintenance of through activities that seeks to promote the "needs of the state". As concepts, *translation* and *hegemony* are valuable as they suggest how the discourse on employment is not considered a "forced agenda" but rather the "common sense" – to promote self-sufficiency is considered in the interest of the mentee participants as well as everyone else. Because the mentees only are viewed in relations to the demand for employment, the Project Managers' represent the mentees based on their "differences". With theoretical perspectives on the role of representations in defining the boundaries of a culture offered by Hall, the study suggests that the attempts to *include* the migrants through Mentor Projects are simultaneously contributing to mechanisms of *exclusion* by constructing mentees as "unemployed Others".

The particular interest of this study lies in the mobilisation of ordinary volunteers as central actors in the implementation of the employment-focused agenda. Whilst this fits neatly within a neoliberal idea of reducing dependency on the state, this study shows that use of volunteers to provide predefined services creates unforeseen tensions. The "needs" of the mentees are negotiated in relation to those of the mentor as Project Managers delimit what type of "needs" they believe to be appropriate to be dealt with for a volunteer mentor. The particular conceptualisations of mentoring in the Projects centralises the needs of mentees – as defined externally – within the mentor relationship, thus creating a situation in which the Managers have to cater for the needs of the

mentor. The consequence is that Managers spend a lot of time on keeping mentors motivated and supervising them to continue fulfilling their predefined roles in relation to the mentee. The mentors' needs take priority because the Project Managers depend on their participation for the continuation of the Projects – and to meet project targets in order to meet specific funding requirements as well as concerns for future funding opportunities.

From the perspective of the Projects Managers, the use of voluntary mentors is perceived as a way to support migrants to meet the demand to integrate. But the “traditional” style of mentoring as a one-way learning process, that focus one-sidedly on creating changes for/within the mentee, mimics the predominant discourses on immigrant integration in which “integration” is a demand and a job for the migrants themselves.

The study is limited in its analysis to the construction of mentees' needs through the prism of political demands for integration and employment. Therefore, the analytical findings do not suggest that the specific activities do not respond to *actual* needs of refugees and people with immigrant backgrounds in Denmark. They are obliged under the law to participate in and meet the requirements of the compulsory employment-schemes, internships, and similar activities under the Integration Programme and/or within the Job Centres. Thus, the support of a mentor may indeed be valued to meet these ends – as is suggested by the Project Managers' accounts of the mentoring experience – and these conclusions are by no means intended to discount the time and ambition all involved parties put in the practices of mentoring.

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