Universitat de Girona

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING, SOCIAL SUPPORT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL OF UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT YOUTHS AND YOUNG ASYLUM SEEKERS: THE ROLE OF MENTORING PROGRAMMES WITH FOREIGN YOUTHS IN CATALONIA

Xavier Alarcón Galindo

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DOCTORAL THESIS

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Xavier Alarcón Galindo

2021

EDUCATION DOCTORAL PROGRAMME

Directed and supervised by Dr Òscar Prieto-Flores

Work presented to apply for the doctoral degree by the University of Girona

List of Publications

The thesis is a compendium of the following published research articles:

- Alarcón, X., Bobowik, M., & Prieto-Flores, Ò. (2021). Mentoring for Improving the Self-Esteem, Resilience, and Hope of Unaccompanied Migrant Youth in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(10), 5210. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105210
    - Impact factor (2020): 3.390
      JCR: Q1 (Public, Environmental & Occupational Health)
      Journal Impact Factor Rank (SSCI): 42/176 (Public, Environmental & Occupational Health)

- Alarcón, X., & Prieto-Flores, Ò. (2021). Transnational family ties and networks of support for unaccompanied immigrant youths in Spain: The role of youth mentoring in Barcelona. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 128, 106140. **https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106140**
    - Impact factor (2020): 2.393
      JCR: Q2 (Family Studies)
      Journal Impact Factor Rank (SSCI): 19/46 (Family Studies)

- Alarcón, X., Casademont, X., Lendzhova, V., & Erdoğan, E. (2021). Inclusive Settlement of Young Asylum Seekers in a Rural Region: The Role of Informal Support and Mentoring. *Sustainability*, 13(9), 5132. **https://doi.org/10.3390/su13095132**
    - Impact factor (2020): 3.251
      JCR: Q2 (Environmental Studies)
      Journal Impact Factor Rank (SSCI): 59/125 (Environmental Studies)

Acknowledgments

A doctoral thesis is a long and tedious process that falls upon young individuals who are just starting in the field of research. But this process would not be possible without the support of other professionals who generously contribute their knowledge and effort to help the doctoral student achieve his objectives. Over the course of three plus years, I have felt deeply supported by many people without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

First, I want to thank my thesis supervisor. Oscar Prieto-Flores has been profoundly committed to this project and has been a vital player in the completion of this long research project. His knowledge and his extensive research experience have contributed to the foundation necessary to develop my thesis. And his patience and moral support have helped me carry out my work in a productive and welcoming environment.

Secondly, several researchers, from the University of Girona as well as from other universities, have supported the development of my thesis at various times. Magda Bobowik, Xavier Casademont, Vladislava Lendzhova and Emre Erdogan contributed to some of the articles that make up this thesis. I want to acknowledge their help in this section, since, without them, the publication of these articles would not have been possible. I am deeply grateful for their extensive knowledge, professionalism, and contributions to this thesis.

I must also thank all the professionals who worked at Punt de Referència during my fieldwork. Their openness and willingness to help and learn were essential for me to access to the young migrants who participated in this study. Specifically, I want to thank Núria Martínez, Cristina Ruano, Bárbara Bort and Alba Pi for their support. Also, Rita Grané, director of the association, deserves enormous thanks. In addition to being the person that opened the necessary doors for me to pursue this doctorate, she has been an outstanding professional partner. Her passion for this field guaranteed that all fieldwork activities were carried out under the best of standards and thanks to her I gained access to other organizations that worked with migrant youths. I also want to thank the professionals at the organizations Mercè Fontanilles, Sinergia, CFP Maresme, Servei Solidari, Fundació Natzareth and Probens for their collaboration.

I am also grateful for all the professionals that provided their support before I embarked on this doctoral thesis. Thanks to them I gained the mentoring skills that have proven essential to complete this thesis. These people include Marina Claverias, Montse Garcia and Aurora Perez who were my first mentoring work team. Joke Aerts, Laura Terradas and Marta Lopez have also been instrumental in my professional training as a mentoring practitioner, and I deeply appreciate the time and dedication they invested in me.

In addition, I want to thank all those friends who supported me through this long research journey. I especially want to thank Julia Devin for her advice and commitment to this work. I am grateful for Abilio Alarcón, my father, who has been a role model for me in my life and who has inspired me to do this work studying the role models of other people. Finally, an eternal thanks to my partner, Roxana Poblete. Without her constant support throughs both good and bad times it would have been impossible to finish this thesis.

List of abbreviations

AMB	Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (Barcelona Metropolitan Area)
ASJTET	Àrea de Suport als Joves Tutelats i Extutelats (Department for the support of youths leaving the minor care System)
CEAR	Comisión Española de Ayuda al Refugiado (Spanish Commission for Helping Refugees)
DGAIA	Direcció General d'Atenció a la Infància i l'Adolescència (Department for the care of Children and Adolescents)
FEPA	Federació d'Entitats amb Projectes i Pisos Assistits (Catalan Federation of Residence Care Organizations)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PCR	Programa Català de Refugi (Refugee Catalan Programme)
PFI	Programa de formació i inserció (Insertion and Training Programme)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

Abstract

Over the last decade the number of unaccompanied immigrant youths and asylum seekers has increased worldwide. The arrival of minors from Northwestern Africa and asylum seekers, mainly from Latin America and the Middle East, has triggered a series of responses and initiatives by governments and social entities. These young people in search of more promising futures follow different routes within the reception system. However, both groups (asylum seekers and unaccompanied immigrants) face similar difficulties during this settlement process. This process becomes an indeterminate stage in their lives in which they suffer from a wide range of vulnerabilities that have an impact on their mental health. In addition, the lack of support networks and social capital makes it difficult for these people to develop full autonomy and maintaining psychological and emotional well-being.

In this context, several mentoring programmes have begun to respond to the difficulties faced by foreigners through fostering supportive relationships with people from civil society. This implies a change in the trend of population groups targeted by this social intervention methodology since it mainly has focused on accompanying general young population in their development. This thesis analyses the impact that these mentoring programmes have on unaccompanied young people and asylum seekers. For this research project, two studies were developed on mentoring programmes with young people of foreign origin.

The first study consisted of a longitudinal mixed methods study in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (AMB) with unaccompanied youths. Data was obtained from 44 surveys with mentored (treatment group) and non-mentored (control group) male youths who had recently turned 18, as well as through 30 semi-structured interviews with mentored youths, their adult mentors, and non-mentored youths. The results of this study were presented in two of the published articles of this thesis. In the first article, we demonstrated that participation in the mentoring programme improved the mentored youths' self-esteem, resilience and hope, as well as their desired or expected educational outcomes in this new context. We conclude that well-targeted and problem-specific mentoring programmes have positive and marked effects on unaccompanied migrant

youths' mental health. In the second article, we expose how the formal support provided by institutional agents is insufficient to fulfil the emotional needs of unaccompanied youths and we explore how the support of family caregivers and mentors encourages them to overcome challenges regarding their well-being.

In the second study, we worked with asylum seekers who participated in a mentoring programme in a rural area of Catalonia. We interviewed almost all participants of that programme in this rural area, conducting in-depth interviews with mentees (eight young asylum seekers) and two discussion groups with their mentors (who lived in the main town of the region). In the third published article of this thesis, we discuss the various outcomes of this study as well as the different types of support that were present in mentoring relationships. The article also shows how bonding and bridging social capital were fostered, two important dynamics that can promote a more inclusive and welcoming rural community.

Resumen

Durante la última década se ha incrementado el número de jóvenes inmigrantes no acompañados y solicitantes de asilo en todo el mundo. La llegada de menores provenientes del noroeste de África y de solicitantes de asilo, principalmente de américa latina y de oriente medio, ha desencadenado una serie de respuestas e iniciativas por parte de gobiernos y entidades sociales. Estos jóvenes en búsqueda de futuros más prometedores realizan recorridos dentro del sistema de recepción parcialmente diferentes. Sin embargo, ambos grupos de población extranjera enfrentan durante este proceso de asentamiento dificultade similares. El proceso de asentamiento se vuelve un estadio indeterminado en sus vidas en el que sufren una amplia variedad de vulnerabilidades que tienen un impacto en su salud mental. Además, la falta de redes de apoyo y de capital social dificulta que estas personas puedan desarrollarse con plena autonomía y también, que puedan mantener un bienestar psicológico y emocional.

Bajo este contexto varios programas de mentoria han empezado a dar respuesta a las dificultades de las personas extranjeras a través de fomentar relaciones de apoyo con personas de la sociedad civil. Esto implica un cambio en la tendencia de grupos de población a los que se dirigía esta metodología de intervención social, ya que principalmente se centraba en acompañar a la población joven en general en su desarrollo. Es por toda esta situación descrita que esta tesis se ha centrado en analizar el impacto que tienen estos programas de mentoria en los jóvenes no acompañados y solicitantes de asilo. Para poder cumplir con este objetivo, se han desarrollado dos estudios sobre programas de mentoria con jóvenes de origen extranjero.

Por un lado, se desarrolló un estudio longitudinal, a través de métodos mixtos, en el Área Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB) con jóvenes no acompañados. Los datos se obtuvieron de 44 encuestas con jóvenes mentorados (grupo de tratamiento) y no mentorados (grupo de control) que habían cumplido recientemente los 18, así como a través de treinta entrevistas semiestructuradas que incluían jóvenes con mentores, sus mentores adultos y jóvenes sin mentores. En el primer artículo publicado que forma parte de esta tesis se indica que la participación en el programa de mentores mejoró la autoestima, la resiliencia y la esperanza de los jóvenes con mentores, así como sus

resultados educativos deseados o esperados en este nuevo contexto. Llegamos a la conclusión de que los programas de mentoria bien orientados y centrados en problema específicos tienen efectos positivos en la salud mental de los jóvenes migrantes no acompañados. En el segundo artículo publicado que conforma esta tesis destacamos cómo el apoyo formal brindado por los agentes institucionales es insuficiente para satisfacer las necesidades emocionales de los jóvenes no acompañados y profundizamos sobre cómo el apoyo de los familiares y mentores los impulsa a superar desafíos en cuanto a su bienestar.

Por otro lado, realizamos un segundo estudio con solicitantes de asilo que participaron en un programa de mentoria en una zona rural de Cataluña. Entrevistamos a casi todos los participantes de ese programa en esta zona rural, realizando entrevistas en profundidad con mentorados (con ocho jóvenes solicitantes de asilo) y dos grupos de discusión con sus mentores (que viven en la ciudad principal de la región). En este tercer artículo publicado se discuten varios resultados que consideran los tipos de apoyo que estuvieron presentes en las relaciones de mentoría y cómo se fomentó el capital social, es decir, los elementos que pueden promover una comunidad rural más inclusiva y acogedora.

Resum

Durant l'última dècada s'ha incrementat el nombre de joves immigrants no acompanyats i sol·licitants d'asil a tot el món. L'arribada de menors provinents de nord-oest d'Àfrica i de sol·licitants d'asil, principalment d'Amèrica llatina i d'orient mitjà, ha desencadenat una sèrie de respostes i iniciatives per part de governs i entitats socials. Aquests joves en recerca de futurs més prometedors realitzen recorreguts dins el sistema de recepció parcialment diferents. No obstant això, els dos grups de població estrangera s'enfronten durant aquest procés d'assentament a dificultats similars. El procés d'assentament es torna un estadi indeterminat en les seves vides en el que pateixen una àmplia varietat de vulnerabilitats que tenen un impacte en la seva salut mental. A més, la manca de xarxes de suport i de capital social dificulta que aquestes persones puguin desenvolupar-se amb plena autonomia i també, que puguin mantenir un benestar psicològic i emocional.

Sota aquest context diversos programes de mentoria han començat a donar resposta a les dificultats de les persones estrangeres a través de fomentar relacions de suport amb persones de la societat civil. Això implica un canvi en la tendència de grups de població als quals es dirigia aquesta metodologia d'intervenció social, ja que principalment es centrava en acompanyar a la població jove en general en el seu desenvolupament. És per tota aquesta situació descrita que aquesta tesi s'ha centrat en avaluar l'impacte que tenen aquests programes de mentoria en els joves no acompanyats i sol·licitants d'asil. Per poder complir amb aquest objectiu, s'han desenvolupat dos estudis sobre programes de mentoria amb joves d'origen estranger.

D'una banda, es va desenvolupar un estudi longitudinal, a través de mètodes mixtos, a l'Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB) amb joves no acompanyats. Les dades es van obtenir de 44 enquestes amb joves mentorats (grup de tractament) i no mentorats (grup de control) que havien complert recentment els 18, així com a través de trenta entrevistes semiestructurades que incloïen joves amb mentors, els seus mentors adults i joves sense mentors. En el primer article publicat que forma part d'aquesta tesi s'indica que la participació en el programa de mentoria va millorar l'autoestima, la resiliència i l'esperança dels joves amb mentors, així com els seus resultats educatius desitjats o esperats en aquest nou context. Arribem a la conclusió que els programes de mentoria

ben orientats i centrats en problema específics tenen efectes positius en la salut mental dels joves migrants no acompanyats. En el segon article publicat que conforma aquesta tesi destaquem com el suport formal que donen els agents institucionals és insuficient per satisfer les necessitats emocionals dels joves no acompanyats i aprofundim sobre com el suport dels familiars i mentors els impulsa a superar reptes pel que fa a el seu benestar.

D'altra banda, vam realitzar un segon estudi amb sol·licitants d'asil que van participar en un programa de mentoria en una zona rural de Catalunya. Entrevistem a gairebé tots els participants d'aquest programa en aquesta zona rural, realitzant entrevistes en profunditat amb mentorats (amb vuit joves sol·licitants d'asil) i dos grups de discussió amb els seus mentors (que viuen a la ciutat principal de la regió). En aquest tercer article publicat es discuteixen diversos resultats que consideren els tipus de suport que van estar presents en les relacions de mentoria i com es va fomentar el capital social, és a dir, els elements que poden promoure una comunitat rural més inclusiva i acollidora.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview: mentoring for migrant people

This doctoral thesis has been developed as part of the *Applying Mentoring*[1] research project, which aims to evaluate the impact of different social mentoring programmes with migrant and refugee people in Spain. The population groups involved in these mentoring initiatives were children and adolescents with migrant and refugee background, unaccompanied young migrants, and asylum seekers. In particular, this thesis has focused on the last two groups, aiming to explore the effects of mentoring in foreign youngsters considering the elements that can condition their transition to adulthood and settlement in the new country.

Formal mentoring programmes started appearing at the turn of the 20th century in the United States. These programs were narrow until the 1980's, when several mentoring programs emerged and began to experiment with alternative formats and models (Preston, Prieto-Flores & Rhodes, 2018). They did not gain prominence until the 1990's when they were established as legitimate intervention strategies to improve the social, personal and professional skills of young people (MacCallum & Beltman, 2003). The first mentoring programmes focused on providing support to foreign populations also began to sprout with the aim of creating societies with greater intercultural competencies (Prieto-Flores, Feu & Casademont, 2016). As an example, the Nightingale programme was born in Malmö (Sweden) in 1997. It engaged university students to act as mentors to children of migrant origin with the aim of fostering a greater interest in higher education and to help the children feel safer at school (Nilsson, 2003). This mentoring programme model has since been replicated in different European countries, creating a network that allows these programmes to share knowledge between them (The Nightingale Mentoring Network, 2021).

[1] "Applying Mentoring: Social and Technological Innovations for Inclusion" is funded by the RecerCaixa programme, a collaboration of "La Caixa" Welfare Projects and the Catalan Association of Public Universities (RECERCAIXA2017UdG). The project aims to describe which of the characteristics of mentoring programs have greater effectivity according to the scientific literature in terms of the social inclusion of immigrant and refugee people (http://mentoringapp.udg.edu/en/).

In the last decade, different European mentoring programmes have emerged to facilitate the social and cultural inclusion of migrants, which have stressed significantly the acquisition of the language and the interaction between different cultural groups (Preston, Prieto-Flores & Rhodes, 2018). Oberoi (2016) emphasizes that mentors act as cultural translators and interpreters in the new system, in addition to promoting greater academic success. In Spain, it has been shown that the mentoring of migrant adolescents can improve their linguistic competences and widen their social support networks (Feu, 2015).

One of the regions in Spain where this intervention methodology has the greatest presence is Catalonia. In fact, Punt de Referència, one of the programmes studied in this research project, is one of the longest-standing initiatives in Spain. The Referents project of the Punt de Referència association, appeared in 1998. It promotes supporting relationships between adult mentors and young people who, after having been under the tutelage of the Catalan administration, start a process of emancipation and transition to adulthood (Punt de Referència, 2021). Another example is a recent initiative of the Catalan government to support refugees of any age, which is also a focus of this thesis. The Programa Català de Refugi (Catalan Refuge Programme), or PCR, was created in 2017 by the Catalan administration in collaboration with other third sector entities and it was the first initiative promoting the mentoring of refugee and asylum seekers in Spain. This programme supports asylum seekers in their settlement in the host country through groups of adult volunteers (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2021).

Nowadays, mentoring is closely associated with volunteer projects and it is mostly bidirectional. In other words, both the mentor and the mentee participate in a mutually beneficial relationship where each party obtains knowledge or other benefits. This dynamic demonstrates a distancing from classic models of mentoring based on developmental psychology in which there is a mercantilist conception of empowerment: the mentor possesses a power that is transmitted to the mentee (Colley, 2003). Despite this evolution towards a more empowering and bidirectional model, mentoring has limitations. One of the challenges that mentoring faces in the Spanish context are the various social policies of the different public administrations. Smith, Blazek, Brown and van Blerk (2016) show that mentoring cannot be understood as an intervention tool that

has a strong impact on its own. Rather, it must be accompanied by social policies that address existing structural inequalities. In other words, governments cannot assign responsibility to citizens through the promotion of mentoring programmes and maintain austerity policies.

In this sense, civil society can become a complementary agent through the creation of mentoring programmes, thanks to its ability to tackle issues that the administration has little purview or capacity to address (Prieto-Flores & Feu, 2018). This framing creates a model of shared responsibility that allows groups in situations of social exclusion to develop as citizens with full rights. This thesis has been developed under this complementarity frame which was strengthened by the fact that the unaccompanied youths and young people seeking asylum who participated in the study received support from other foundations and/or public administrations while they were in the mentoring programme.

As previously mentioned, there is still limited information about the effects that programmes specifically targeting migrant adolescents and youths have (Oberoi, 2016; Birman & Morland, 2014). The meta-analyses, mostly with evidence from US programmes for general youth populations, highlight that youth mentoring interventions have a modest but significant effect on improving diverse outcomes across the behavioural, emotional, social, and academic domains (Raposa et al., 2019; Dubois, et al., 2002). These studies have also shown that mentoring programmes are more effective among mentored youths who have significant levels of environmental risk and among samples with greater proportions of male youths (Dubois et al. 2011). However, as far as we know, there is no research showing the effects of mentoring on the psychological wellbeing and social capital of unaccompanied migrant youths or young asylum-seekers. What we know is that mentoring programmes can widen their social networks (Raithelhuber, 2019) and improve a sense of belonging and hope in the receiving society among migrant children living with their families in their new context (Pryce, Kelly & Lawinger, 2019).

1.2 Situation of unaccompanied migrant youths and young asylum seekers

The increase in the arrival of unaccompanied minors migrating to Europe from countries in North and East Africa as well as from the Middle East is a situation that worries governments and NGOs that work for the social inclusion of these groups. In 2020, more than 10,000 unaccompanied minors arrived in Europe on the so-called Mediterranean routes. Of these, over 3,000 unaccompanied or separated minors arrived in Spain, a figure that has increased compared to the previous year by 56% (UNHCR, UNICEF & IOM 2021).

When these minors arrive in Spain and are detected by the responsible authorities, they are put under the custody of the child protection system. In 2020 in Catalonia, where our study was carried out, foreign minors without family references represented 21% (1,671) of the population of children and adolescents who were under the tutelage of the administration (DGAIA, 2020). Many of the difficulties faced by this migrant group grow exponentially when they reach the age of 18. In the case of the Barcelona metropolitan area, the Catalan ombudsman reported the deficits in the current system for ensuring the settlement of unaccompanied immigrant minors and to positively favour a smooth transition to adulthood once they have turned 18 (Catalan Ombudsman, 2021).

One of the major challenges they face is their legal status, since the authorities guarantee a residence permit while they are minors. The permit is renewable when they turn 18, but this does not grant them the right to work. In addition, delays in the processing of their documentation while they are minors are common as well as the administrative difficulties that are encountered when they try to renew the permit (related to the non-fulfilment of certain requirements). All these obstacles with their legal status have severe consequences for their mental health as well as for their settlement process as they can become invisible, homeless, and excluded from participating in the formal economy (Gonzales, 2016; Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco & Dedios-Sanguineti, 2013).

Upon reaching the age of 18, those who have their residence permit can apply to an assisted flats service managed by the regional administration. This service accompanies

these migrants in their transition to adult life by providing housing and the assistance of youth workers until they turn 21. Access to this service presents an additional challenge, since the administration uses a strict selection process and some migrants are excluded from this service. Those who have access to this resource participate in the development of a personal work plan during their stay in which they are tutored by the youth workers, who work to achieve maximise the autonomy of the youths (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2021). As we will see in this thesis, in this period of transition towards adult life, migrant youths lack various types of social support, especially those related to their emotional needs. This is a key reason why young people in the programme turn to their mentors for a space to express their concerns and reflect on their future pathways.

The reality of asylum seekers or refugees is partially different. In the last decade, there have been 16.2 million asylum applications worldwide. This is primarily due to the outbreak of wars and internal conflicts in Middle Eastern countries and the departure of Venezuelans to other American countries, amongst other reasons (UNHCR, 2021). In 2020, 88,762 asylum applications were made in Spain. That same year, 60% of applications were denied out of a total of 114,919 resolutions (CEAR, 2021). The nationalities that lead these requests are mostly Latin American, out of which Venezuela and Colombia make up a significant portion. Therefore, the origin of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors is usually different, although the ages of both groups are not very different, since about half of the asylum applications in 2020 were submitted by young people between 18 and 34 years of age.

In Spain, people who access the state reception programme (because they are asylum seekers) go through three different phases of 6 months each, which are managed by non-profit organisations (Godino & Barrientos, 2021). The first phase is called "temporary reception", in which applicants can participate in vocational training courses and have access to accommodation and financial support. At this stage, they do not have a work permit, but they do have a residence permit. The second phase is called "integration", in which they must find a place to live. In this stage, applicants receive a work permit for the first time, however, if they get a job, they stop receiving the financial support. Finally, the third phase, called "autonomy", applicants maintain their residence and work permits but lose access to the financial support. In this phase,

applicants only receive the assistance of non-profit organisations in terms of finding training courses and work. The Spanish state officially establishes a limit of 6 months to respond to requests for international protection, but in practice, the response to the requests may take one or even two years (Garcés & Moreno, 2019). If international protection is denied, asylum seeking-applicants lose their residence and work permits, thus becoming irregular migrants, unless the organisations that support them find an alternative way to renew their permits (Godino & Barrientos, 2021).

Despite the differences described above between the reception and integration systems faced by the two different types of foreigners, these face similar difficulties in resettling and integrating to the new country. Both groups find themselves in the final stages of their migration process while at the same time facing their transition to adult life which is characterised by important physical, mental and emotional developments (Earnest et al., 2015). The confluence of these two processes makes the integration procedures inherently more complex and problematic. There are also commonalities in the challenges that both groups face during their settlement. Specifically, these involve getting their basic needs covered, environmental difficulties (related to legal status, culture and language), and the impact that the settlement process has on their wellbeing (discrimination, loneliness, lack of support networks, etc.) (Leon-Pinilla, Soto-Rubio & Prado-Gascó, 2020).

1.3 The impact of settlement on young migrants and asylum seekers

The settlement of migrants and refugees is understood as the final stage in which these groups end their migratory journey, which is conditioned by various environmental, structural and individual factors (for example, the inclusion strategies and policies of the country of reception or personal characteristics of migrants) (Bloch, 2002). Therefore, they are elements that affect each of them differently and condition areas of their lives in different ways (Nunn et al., 2017). That is, a person may lack legal status, but have guaranteed access to housing or vice versa, among many other examples.

The psychological well-being of young unaccompanied migrants, who can feel insecure in their new environment, is affected by the difficulties that arise from the bureaucratic processes they have to follow (Chase, 2019). In addition, legally becoming an adult may

lead to an increase in stressors, since the review of their legal situation generates uncertainty about their right to continue in the country in which they are settling (Wade, Mitchell & Baylis, 2005). Additionally, the particular housing arrangements have also been shown to affect the mental health of young migrants, who report more psychological distress when they move to more independent living arrangements (Hodes, Hagdev, 2008).

Following the principle of “in the best interest of the child”, scholars have highlighted the need to promote political measures that ensure the favourable reception and protection of unaccompanied minors and facilitate a safe transition to adulthood taking into consideration the youths’ needs (Menjivar & Perreira, 2017; Allsopp & Chase 2017). Several studies indicate that social and public health policies can increase or reduce the risk of suffering mental health problems (Clayton, Gupta & Willis 2019). Social inclusion experiences such as feeling welcomed in a broader social environment, positively reinforce the sense of feeling socially valued, as well as of the feeling of belonging and being able to participate in and contribute to the society in which they are settling (Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010).

The young asylum seekers of this study were resettled in a rural area in Catalonia. As a result of several successful initiatives to rehabilitate rural areas, the European Union has urged its member states to develop innovative initiatives in rural environments with the aim of achieving more investment in services and connections with urban areas (European Commission, 2021). However, some studies show that refugee settlements in rural areas have led to negative integration outcomes such as failing to develop social networks, facing discrimination or become isolated (Hynie, 2018). Additionally, the lack of receptiveness of local people may exacerbate feelings of exclusion, which can lead to further deterioration of asylum seekers’ mental health (Bakker et al., 2016)

There are numerous studies identifying community and friends as important factors of social support for asylum seekers and refugees in the host country. For this reason, scholars highlight the need to promote government initiatives designed to provide refugee youths and families with the support they need during integration, which in turn strengthen their psychosocial well-being (Earnest, 2006). Some scholars have

highlighted the importance of the context of the settlement of asylum seekers (Platts-Fowler & Robinson 2015). According to Hynie (2018), the contact between asylum seekers or refugees and their host communities plays a particularly important role in rural areas. Feelings of intimacy and equality between group members, having common goals and motivations to cooperate as well as institutional norms, are listed as the preconditions of a qualified contact which expected to have a positive impact on asylum seekers.

It is for these reasons that this research considered mentoring programmes as initiatives that can improve the integration and settlement of young asylum seekers and unaccompanied youths. Mentoring can promote supporting relationships between population groups. The different types of support present in mentoring relationships can improve some of the factors that determine the success of both the settlement process and the transition to adulthood by migrant youths (psychological wellbeing, social capital, educational aspirations and expectations, etc.). More generally, mentoring can positively contribute to the social inclusion in the receiving country. In the following sections, we lay out the specific characteristics of the mentoring programmes and the objectives and methodology of this research as well as those for each published paper. Finally, the conclusions address how mentoring contributes to improved social inclusion.

1.4 Social Support and Social Capital in mentoring

The concept of social support has been predominantly used in psychology research for many decades. Contributions to this field by a variety of authors provide valuable approaches for assessment and result interpretation (I. Sarason, B. Sarason & Pierce, 1990). Likewise, social capital, more related to sociology research, but also having a great influence on social or community psychology, has been a useful conceptual tool for the development of research focused on social fabrics (Saegert & Carpiano, 2017). In general, social capital helps to understand that social relationships are structured by group membership and social positions, as well as to understand that collective resources influence individual outcomes (Coleman, 1988). Without going deep into conceptual theories of social support and social capital, this thesis integrates these two

concepts for their contributions to useful knowledge about the well-being of communities and individuals (Saegert & Carpiano, 2017).

On one hand, social support has been defined as one's perception of being loved, cared, esteemed, and valued by others, as well as perceiving oneself as part of a social network of mutual assistance and obligations (Wills, 1991). Generally, partners, relatives, friends, co-workers or other social and community ties are analysed as contributors of social support. Social support research focuses on three different levels. Those focused on (1) interpersonal connectedness of the individual's social network, based on networks' structural features; (2) the role of the different disaggregated elements. Research argues that beneficial effects of social support are related to the proper adjustment between the social support received and the specific needs of individuals; and (3) the individual sense of being supported, related with the perception of support availability (I. Sarason, B. Sarason & Pierce, 1990).

This thesis mainly focuses on the second level mentioned, understanding that social relationships (with mentors and other social agents evaluated) can be providers of different specific types of social support, which is expected to facilitate coping with particular stressful life circumstances of immigrant youths (Cohen, Mermelstein, Kamarck, & Hoberman, 1985; Cutrona & Russell, 1987). This perspective also leads the researcher to identify the supportive elements and specify their functions. Although this thesis also takes into account the support perceived by youths, which is more consistently related to outcomes measure (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Therefore, perceived needs and elements of support identified by youths were key for analysing the outcomes of the mentoring programmes.

Barrera and Bonds (2005) highlighted the different forms of social support that can be given in mentoring relationships, which are primarily emotional support, cognitive guidance, positive feedback and tangible assistance. Furthermore, recent research on youth mentoring has focused on the types of social support (see Brady et al., 2015), based on the assumption that caring adults in the lives of youths can help in dealing with stress and improve mental well-being (Dooley & Fitzgerald 2012). A large body of

research also illustrates the benefits on mental and physical health outcomes from supportive relationships during adolescence (Bal et al. 2003).

On the other hand, social capital definitions commonly refer to social networks, the norms of reciprocity that arises from them, and the value of this to achieve (mutual) goals (Schuller, Baron & Field, 2000). Concretely, Putnam (2000) defined social capital as “features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit”. Authors that have contributed to the definition of social capital construct posit that individuals cannot create social capital by themselves since it is more than the sum of individuals’ social capital (C. Flora & J. Flora, 2012). This thesis has focused on two fundamental aspects of social capital: bonding and bridging, understanding that these elements can help highlight the outcomes of mentoring programmes.

Bonding social capital refers to close and repeated ties that operate to develop a community, while bridging social capital involves ample ties that link organisations and communities together (Emry, Fey & Flora, 2006). When bridging and bonding social capital is high, communities are prepared for action and hence outcomes can be realised. According to Small (2009), organizations can connect people with other individuals or other organizations and, therefore, with a broader network of resources through a process called institution-driven brokerage. Therefore, mentoring programmes should aim to become institutional brokers of social capital (Prieto-Flores et al., 2020). This thesis is written on the assumption that mentoring has to aim to connect communities when focusing on ethnic minorities and that it should provide bonding social capital through strengthening ties between mentees and mentors, thus providing mentees with channels to a series of resources that are present in the host community.

2. Mentoring programmes

This thesis studies the impact of two mentoring projects with young migrants and asylum seekers. In this section we will focus on describing the nature of both projects, trying to provide the necessary information to understand the findings highlighted in the published articles.

The first mentoring project in question is the Referents project. Two of the three articles that make up this thesis aim to understand the effects of this programme on unaccompanied youths. The programme is developed by the "Punt de Referència" association in Barcelona and its main goal is to support young people who have been under the tutelage of the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan government), don't have family support networks and are starting their transition to adulthood upon turning 18. The association was constituted in 1997 and since its inception, it was focused on supporting vulnerable youth groups. In 1999, began the first edition of the Referents Project, which focused on supporting young people who were leaving the tutelage of the public administration (Punt de Referència, 2021). At the end of the last century in Catalonia, more than 80% of youths leaving the minor care system were nationals (ASJTET, 2013). This was changing across the beginning of the 21st century, reaching approximately the same number of nationals and foreigners in some years of the past decade. In fact, since 2015 almost all mentees of the Referents project are former unaccompanied minors who had been in the minor protection system before turning 18.

The mentoring programme looks for adult volunteers who are established in Barcelona. Essential requirements are to be between 25 and 65 years old, have knowledge of Catalan and Spanish, reside in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, have a minimum availability of two weekly time slots, be adaptable, responsible, and assertive. Having an understanding of the different city resources and services is also highly valued (Punt de Referència, 2021). Meanwhile, mentoring practitioners are also tasked with looking for new migrant youth candidates for their programme. They pursue their search strategy by working together with youth workers from the various foundations that provide housing to their target population.

After the process for selecting the adult volunteers and the young migrants, the mentors receive training on the socio-legal situation of migrant youths, as well as of the various tasks and responsibilities of being a mentor. Each mentoring relationship (consisting of one adult and one youth) is instructed to meet once a week during a period of six months to carry out an activity. Mentoring programme practitioners suggest starting with leisure activities such as going to museums, activities in local public services or doing sport-related activities. In the beginning, the focus of the practitioners is to help the mentor and mentee create a bond that facilitates conversations about the young person (concerns about administrative procedures, emotional problems, doubts about their educational and occupational path, etc.). In other words, a relation that provides different types of social support.

The Referents programme can be considered as a problem-specific programme since specific objectives for each relationship are established (Christensen et al., 2020). This is implemented through the constant coordination with the other care professionals that intervene in the young person’s development (in order to specify what the focus of the intervention should be), the exhaustive training with the mentors on the obstacles that the youths need support on, and the strong monitoring of the relationship (with regular meetings with the mentor; the mentee; and, on some occasions, with both). It is also a well-targeted programme since the youth group to which it provides support is clearly defined, unlike other mentoring programmes where the mentee's profile responds to a more general description.

The second mentoring programme in question is the Catalan Refugee Programme (PCR), which as we have already mentioned launched in 2017 through the Catalan Government and through the collaboration of various social entities, some of them with experience in mentoring and others with experience in the reception of asylum seekers. Since 2015, the centralized structure of the Spanish asylum system has been complemented by initiatives from regional and local administrations which cover existing shortcomings. There is also a growing presence of social organizations in the management of the asylum process (Garcés & Moreno, 2021).

The pressure carried out by entities such as "Stop Mare Mortum" or through the "Volem Acollir" campaign led the Catalan government to consider the option of developing its own reception program. The lack of compliance with the commitments assumed by the European Union and by the different member states generated social discontent due to the negligent response that the West was giving to a humanitarian crisis. In addition, during the so-called "refugee crisis" the Spanish reception system received severe criticism from entities such as Amnesty International or organizations such as the Spanish Ombudsman, who expressed concern through their reports considering it discriminatory (due to the shortage of favourable asylum resolutions) and collapsed (due to the long delay in resolving the cases) (CIDOB, 2016). As a result of this situation and the pressure of civil society to improve the refugee welcoming system, the Catalan Government promoted the PCR.

The PCR initiative, in addition to facilitating the access of housing resources and other benefits to people seeking international protection, provides a mentoring programme through groups of civil society volunteers. The volunteers meet weekly with either an asylum seeker or a refugee person or family for a period of 8 months that is extendable to 1 year. The goal of these meetings is to assist the mentees in achieving full social and labour autonomy (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2021). Between 2017 and the end of 2020, more than six hundred asylum seekers or refugee people and more than five hundred mentors have participated in the mentoring programme (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2019).

The programme works through groups of mentors of 2 to 5 people who are guided through a 12-hour training and who, after a process of selection, are matched with asylum seekers. Their main tasks are teaching and consolidating the mentees' language skills, helping mentees become familiarised with their new environment, the expansion of the mentee's social network as well as supporting mentees in their journey to find a job or career. Once enrolled in the programme they become part of the voluntary service of one of the entities adhered to the programme, which gives support to the group of mentors and monitor their relationship.

The PCR is developed in several municipalities around the region (in those localities where there are established refugee reception entities), but it is important to note that this research was carried out in a small rural area in Catalonia. Therefore, one of the main differences between the two studies is the environment in which the mentors are located. One of them is set in an urban area characterised for its cosmopolitan qualities and the other is set in a rural area characterised for the absence of co-ethnic communities. The individual characteristics of the mentees are different as well. In the Referents programme the majority of mentees are unaccompanied migrant minors around the age of 18, whereas the PCR mentees are asylum seekers across a wider age range. However, in this study we have focused on the younger population at PCR (people who are in their early twenties up to their early thirties). Also, there are differences in the design of the programme (type of monitoring seasons, timing of the formal mentoring relationship, group encounters versus individual encounters, etc).

Additionally, the Referents programme is a problem-specific and well-targeted programme with more longevity and experience in mentoring. The PCR has less than four years of experience and both the Catalan administration and refugee entities involved lacked previous experience in mentoring. It is also difficult to determine the characteristics of a programme that takes place in so many different environments simultaneously, with the participation of different foundations and due to a constant process of self-evaluation and redefinition

Therefore, this thesis is focused on two initiatives that, despite having very similar objectives, are developed in partially different ways. This allows us to analyse many aspects regarding mentoring with foreigners. For this reason, this thesis can be useful for future studies interested in evaluating mentoring with foreigners in different environments and establishing the effectiveness of mentoring programmes with foreign people.

3. Objectives

In the last decade, several mentoring programmes have emerged both in Spain and in other European countries focusing on the inclusion of foreigners (Prieto-Flores, Pryce & Rhodes, 2018). This thesis was born within this context of a growing number of mentoring projects for foreigners in Spain which influenced the goal of this thesis to answer the following research question:

- What impact do mentoring programmes have on the settlement and transition to adulthood of young migrants and refugees?

To answer this question, the following main objective was established:

- To explore the effects of mentoring in foreign youngsters considering the elements that can condition their transition to adulthood and settlement in the new country.

To address this main objective, the study was divided into two population groups that participated in two different mentoring programmes, as explained in the introduction. On the one hand, unaccompanied youths and on the other, young asylum seekers.

Two scientific publications emerged from the study conducted with unaccompanied youths. In the first article we evaluated the impact that mentoring had on young people through mixed methods. After exploring multiple variables that could help us understand what this impact was, we were able to highlight the effects that mentoring had on the psychological well-being and educational futures of young people. In this paper we used qualitative methods to explore how the different types of social support present in mentoring relationships could explain the quantitative findings. In addition, the article exposes how the Referents programme addresses the needs of young people thanks to its programme design.

1. Paper title: *Mentoring for improving the self-esteem, resilience, and hope of unaccompanied migrant youth in the Barcelona metropolitan area.*

- **Aim:** Identifying whether the absence or presence of adult mentors providing social support can condition unaccompanied youths' well-being and their future

prospects in their new context, with a particular focus on the effects of the mentoring on the mentees' transition to adulthood.

In the second paper, we use qualitative methods to study the support networks of these young people during their settlement and transition into adulthood. After identifying the different agents present in their lives providing different types of support, we focused on exploring the social support role that family members abroad, mentors and youth workers play in the lives of youths. These agents were chosen because they were mentioned the most often by young people when asked about their perceptions of social support.

2. Paper title: *Transnational family ties and networks of support for unaccompanied immigrant youths in Spain: The role of youth mentoring in Barcelona*

- **Aim:** Exploring and understanding how participation in a mentoring programme conditions the support networks of mentees, complementing the pre-existing social support received from relatives and professionals.

Finally, we focus on studying the impact of the PCR on young asylum seekers in a rural area of Catalonia. This study was carried out using qualitative methods and was affected by some limitations, since the fieldwork coincided with the beginning of the state-mandated restrictions for SARS-COV-2 in Spain. As a result, the study could not be carried out as originally planned, that is, comparing the impact of the project in a rural area versus in an urban area. However, the material collected in the rural area was rich enough to publish an article. The research found that the mentors were able to expand the social capital of their mentees, as well as alleviate the psychological discomfort typical of the resettlement process.

3. Paper title: *Inclusive settlement of young asylum seekers in a rural region: The role of informal support and mentoring.*

- **Aim:** Analysing what challenges young adult asylum seekers face in their settlement in a rural area in Catalonia and how the presence of mentors providing social support alleviates the various existing challenges for arriving youths.

4. Methodology

This thesis followed a multicase study design, which is characterized by the similarities between a group of cases. Every asylum seeker or unaccompanied immigrant youth experience is conceptualised as a case, grouping them in different samples according to their participation in different mentoring programs. The purpose of this multicase study is predominantly instrumental, where cases were used to generalise from a set of specific situations. The cases were examined to delve into a topic in such a way that each case played a secondary and supporting role to arrive at the formulation of statements or suggestions about the object of study (Stake, 2005).

As we have seen, the objectives of this thesis condition this study to a descriptive level, seeking to establish a knowledge base that allows future researchers to explore the highlighted findings in greater depth. This approach is also a result of the scarcity of studies focused on the impact of mentoring foreign people (Oberoi, 2016), as well as due to the scarcity of locally relevant studies. Most of the meta-analyses on the effects of mentoring young populations (mainly behavioural, emotional, social and academic analyses) have been conducted using research from US-based programmes (Dubois et. al 2002; Raposa et. al 2019). These analyses revolve around a different socio-political context and focus on mentoring programmes that have a different background compared with European ones (Preston, Prieto-Flores and Rhodes, 2018; Prieto-Flores & Feu, 2018).

4.1 Methods

To meet the first objective of this thesis, we developed a longitudinal study through mixed methods with the group of young people who participated in the Referents programme. It was followed by a sequential explanatory mixed method design in which we analysed the quantitative data before capturing the qualitative data, in order to ensure both methods complement each other leading to a stronger analysis (Creswell et. al, 2003; Ivankova, Kreswell & Stick, 2006). This methodological process is presented in greater detail in the published article that we make available after this section.

The study with young unaccompanied migrants had two waves of surveys, one before (T1) and one after (T2) the mentoring intervention. We also surveyed the control group twice. Every survey wave included the same questions in order to compare results between groups. Survey data was gathered from October 2018 to October 2019, coinciding with the date that the Referents programme matches its mentors with their mentees. We conducted surveys with a total of 58 young people in T1 (32 mentees and 26 non-mentored) and 46 young people in T2 (23 from the exposed group and 23 from the control group). Due to a strong gender imbalance two female participants from the mentored group were dropped from the T2 round resulting in a total of 21 mentored and 23 non-mentored youths.

Initially we asked participants for sociodemographic information: place of birth, year of arrival, who accompanied them on the trip, with whom they reside, where they reside, whether or not they maintain contact with the family and with which members, their parents' education level, whether or not they are working, their own education level and whether they receive any type of benefit or financial aid (the results can be seen in the Annexes section). Later, in the same survey, we incorporated a series of variables that allowed us to identify the impact of the mentoring. The first article incorporates the methodological information regarding the variables related to the psychological well-being and educational futures. Next, we detail how all the variables of the survey were constructed, including the variables used in the first article as well as those that were not published due to inconsistent results:

- Self-esteem: we implemented the *Rosenberg scale* (1965) to measure self-esteem. Participants indicated their agreement on a 4-point (i.e., *"completely disagree"*, *"agree"*, *"disagree"*, *"completely agree"*) Likert-type scale with ten statements referring to their self-image (e.g., *"On the whole, I am satisfied with myself"*).
- Youth hope: we adapted the *Children and youth hope scale* (Snyder et. al, 1997) for the migrant youths who were asked to indicate on a 6-point scale (i.e., *"always", "most of the time", "frequently", "sometimes", "rarely", "never")*

the degree to which they agree with six statements regarding their lives (e.g., *"When I have a problem, I can find many ways of solving it").*

- Youth environment stressors: youths responded to a 7-item scale based on facts that could occur in their surrounding and which can affect them positively (e.g., *"I made a new good friend"*) or negatively (e.g., *"I had to move from my flat"*) during the last year. Respondents indicate in each question if it occurs or not (*"yes", "no"*) and we coded *"yes"* as 1 and *"no"* as 0.
- Resilience: we used a short 12-item version of the *Children and youth resilience measure* (Liebenberg, Ungar & LeBlanc, 2013). Mentored youths were asked to respond to a series of questions about themselves, their community, and their relationships with others. They indicated the frequency with which they experience these events (e.g., *"Do you have people around you who show interest in you?")* on a 3-point scale (*"yes", "no"* and *"sometimes"*). All items were dichotomised, with *"yes"* and *"sometimes"* coded as 1, and *"no"* coded as 0.
- Symptoms of Psychological Distress: we adapted the *Kessler psychological distress scale* (Mewton, et al., 2016) to our participants' situation. Youths indicated frequency with regards to ten questions about their psychological functioning (e.g., *"I Feel lonely"*) on a 3-point scale (*"yes", "no"* and *"sometimes"*)
- Educational Aspirations: participants were asked about their educational aspirations (i.e., *"Which of the following levels of education would you like to achieve one day?"*). They could choose from one of eight categories which were then dichotomised into low versus high educational aspirations. The small sample size does not allow for creating more than two categories. We thus considered it logical to compare aspirations to finish courses oriented towards quicker job placements with more formal forms of education that included a secondary education (which still opens up the possibility of further education) as well as a university degree. Three options (i.e., *"Finish an Insertion and Training Programme (PFI)", "I don't know",* and *"Finish some adult training*

course (Catalan, Spanish, others)") were categorised as low educational aspirations, while the remaining five options (*"Finish an intermediate vocational training diploma", "Finish an advanced vocational training diploma", "Finish a university degree", "Finish a master's degree or a Ph.D.",* and *"Finish compulsory secondary education (ESO)"*), were coded as high educational aspirations. We have decided to include the *"I don't know"* option in the category of low educational aspirations in order not to lose participants who fell under this response.

- Educational Expectations: participants were also asked about the level of education they think they could achieve *("Realistically, what studies do you think you can finally achieve?"*). As in the case of educational aspirations, they could choose one of eight categories, which were then dichotomised into low versus high educational expectations. Again, three options (i.e., *"Finish an Insertion and Training Programme (PFI)", "I don't know",* and *"Finish some adult training course (Catalan, Spanish, others)"*) were categorised as low educational expectations, and the remaining five options *("Finish an intermediate vocational training diploma", "Finish an advanced vocational training diploma", "Finish a university degree", "Finish a Master's degree or a Ph.D.",* and *"Finish compulsory secondary education (ESO)"*), as high educational expectations.

- Language Skills: we asked participants about their self-perceived level of language skills across four areas (oral communication, oral comprehension, reading and writing) for both official languages used in Catalonia (Catalan and Spanish). Youths responded using a 5-point scale *("I have a lot of difficulties", "enough", "good", "very good"* and *"excellent").*

- Occupational Aspirations: participants were asked about the profession they would like to have (*"What would you like to work as?"*). Respondents could choose from one of 25 options (23 specific professions, one option *was "other with required university studies"* and *"other with non-required university*

studies"). Responses were dichotomised as 0 (professions with non-required university studies) and 1 (professions with required university studies).

- Occupational Expectations: participants were also asked about if they think they could achieve the profession they note as their aspiration (i.e., *"Dou you think you will have this job in the future?"*). They had five different possible responses (*"definitely not", "improbable" "I don't know", "probably"* and *"definitely yes"*) that were dichotomised as 0 (not favourable response) and 1 (favourable response). *"I don't know"* responses were coded as unfavourable.

- Social Support: we covered social support with four ad hoc created items according to literature review (Sierau, Schneider, Nesterko and Glaesmer, 2018). Youths were asked on a scale from 0 (never) to 5 (always) to what extent they would turn to the following people for help when they had a problem: friends and family *(*two items, *"parents" or "formal tutors", "friends in their age group"),* and responsible adults (two items, *"teachers", "other reference adults (trainers, imams, etc.)"*).

- Self-efficacy for enlisting support: we used a 6-items scale to ask youths about their satisfaction with their capacity for enlisting support (e.g., *"How good do you consider yourself at getting others to help you in your studies?"*). Participants indicated their satisfaction on a 4-point *("not good", "not very good", "good"* and *"very good"*) Likert-type scale.

- Non-family adults role models: youths were asked about the non-kin adults they are close to and whom they admire (i.e., *"Who are the non-family adult people that you admire and are close to you?"*). The possible responses were four ad hoc possibilities *("teachers", "school adults", "community adults"* and *"mentors"),* and an open-ending option answer. Responses were dichotomised as 0 (absence of people) and 1 (presence of people).

- Sense of Belonging: we covered sense of belonging with a 7-items scale grading their feelings about the city where they are settling in (e.g., *"I feel that people in [city name] accept me"*). They indicated their agreement on a 7-point

(*“completely disagree”, “disagree”, “a little bit disagree”, “neither agree or disagree”, “a little bit agree”, “agree”* and *“completely agree”*) Likert-type scale.

- Future prospects in the city: participants were asked about whether they plan to continue living in the city where they are settling in 10 years or more (i.e., *“Do you think you will be living in [city name] in ten years?”*). Answers were dichotomised, with *“yes”* coded as 1, and *“no”* and *“I don’t know”* as 0.

- Self-identification and relevance: we used an open question to ask respondents about their self-identification (i.e., *“How would you define yourself? For example, Moroccan, Afro-Catalan, Catalan, etc.”*) and we coded the answers as 0 (native) and 1 (mixed). None of the participants self-identified as feeling mostly Catalan or Spanish. Responses that said *“I don’t know”* were considered missing answers and were not dichotomised. After asking for self-identification, we asked respondents about the relevance that their identity had for them using a 3-point Likert-type scale (*“not relevant”, “somewhat relevant”* and *“very relevant”*). If respondents had answered saying *“I don’t know”* to the first question we gave them the possibility of not responding to the relevance section.

- Self-reported discrimination and by whom: youths were asked to indicate whether they suffered discrimination using three response options *(“yes”, “no”* and *“I don’t know”*). We coded the answers as 0 (*“no”*) and 1 (*“yes”*). *“I don’t know”* answers were considered missing responses. Participants were also asked about who had discriminated them with 5 ad hoc items (*"shelter centre/flat professionals”, “shelter centre/flat mate”, “students from courses”, “Catalan/Spanish people in general”* and *“police officers”*) and an open-ending option.

- Cultural mistrust: we covered cultural mistrust with 4-point (*“completely disagree”, “disagree”, “agree”* and *“completely agree”*) Likert-type scale with five statements referring to their trust in cultural groups that are different than their own (e.g., *“They tend to break their promises”*).

- Attitudes toward language: Participants were asked about this area using a 4-point (*"completely disagree", "disagree", "agree"* and *"completely agree"*) Likert-type scale with ten statements referring to their satisfaction learning Catalan or Spanish (e.g., *"It is nice to study Catalan/Spanish"*).
- Gender: youths were asked about their gender consciousness using a 4-point (*"completely disagree", "disagree", "agree"* and *"completely agree"*) Likert-type scale with seven statements (e.g., *"Girls do not value enough what boys do for them"*).

One of the main challenges of this fieldwork was to adequately select and follow, for more than six months, former unaccompanied minors between the ages of 18 and 23. With this aim in mind, we counted on the active support and collaboration of Punt de Referència and the Catalan Federation of Residence Care Organizations (FEPA). Their technical staff contacted the participants, informed them about the purpose of the study, and scheduled appointments for data collection. From all the surveyed youth, we selected 10 mentees, their 10 mentors, and 10 non-mentored youths using a typical case purposive sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) and carried out thirty semi-structured interviews right after completing the T2 surveys. For the selection process, we chose youths who were not outliers in the quantitative outcomes, who had the ability to express their feelings and thoughts in Spanish, and who were engaged with their mentoring. For the latter, we avoided choosing those most and least engaged youths. For the non-mentored youths (control group), we selected those that expressed some ability to seek assistance.

For the elaboration of the interview guidelines (included in the Annexes), we conducted a discussion group with four former unaccompanied minors who had participated in previous editions of the mentoring programme. They helped us adjust the main topics of the interview to their needs and their perspectives as young people. Mentors and mentees were interviewed individually at different times and places by the researchers to provide a space to freely talk about their experiences.

For the construction of the mentor interviews, it was of great help to be able to do a group interview with the mentoring practitioner. This served to gain an in-depth

understanding of the guidelines given to the mentors, such as the monitoring and design of the programmes, etc.

The youths were asked about their migration journey, how they reached Barcelona, the types of support they received upon arrival, about stressful experiences they have in their current lives, how they cope with them, what their aspirations and needs are, and how their mentors or other types of support had helped them in their coming-of-age. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. We coded the materials using ATLAS.ti (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany) following a flexible coding strategy (Deterding & Waters, 2018) and paying attention inductively to the information provided by the interviewees.

After the first round of coding, reviewed by a member of the research group, it was determined that family support had an implication in the young people's lives that we did not expect to find. As a result, we carried out a more deductive coding strategy that enabled us to delve more deeply into transnational family support and the differences and similarities with other agents that gave them support in the new country. This led us to the publishing of a second article, in which we consider the support network in a more extensive way and delve deeper into the existing types of support. Finally, we also decided to codify the content according to the types of social support that predominated in the youths' networks of support.

We also carried out the PCR research using qualitative methods. As we have commented previously, the objective of this study was to carry out a comparative case study between mentees from rural areas and urban areas. However, this was not possible due to Covid-related mobility limitations and other existing restrictions in Spain during the period in which the fieldwork was planned (first semester of 2020). Fortunately, it was possible to carry out a large part of the planned interviews in the rural area. This enabled the publication of the third article, the results of which come from primarily in-depth interviews and focus groups with eight asylum seekers and ten volunteers.

The study was carried out in a small rural area in the province of Girona. This area was chosen because it was one of the first rural territories where the programme started so those involved had a little more experience on the development of mentoring as an

intervention strategy. We conducted the interviews and focus groups whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the data and the anonymisation of the results. The anonymisation was carefully performed with the aim of keeping the balance of showing as much information as possible but, at the same time, anonymising the personal stories, data and context. During the selection process for the interviews, priority was given to people who had recently completed the formal relationship (inside of the programme), as their memories and lived experiences are still fresh and thus less susceptible to misrepresentation (i.e., what neuroscience refers to as "the phone game") (Chen et al., 2017). Groups that were at an advanced stage of the relationship and were still formally participating in the PCR mentoring programme were also selected.

Regarding the mentees, a total of eight asylum seekers participating in five mentoring relationships in the programme were interviewed. Within this group, the majority are couples, some of whom have children as well. All of them have a similar administrative status: they are asylum seekers (they have the "red card", a personal identity document of asylum seekers in Spain) and are of similar ages (between their early twenties and early thirties). However, their education, socioeconomic class and countries of origin are diverse. The mentors participated in two focus groups and a semi-open interview representing a total of ten volunteers who integrated six mentoring relationships.

Once the interviews and discussion groups were conducted, the audio and audio-visual files that were collected were transcribed and manually coded and anonymised for further analysis. We also coded the materials using ATLAS.ti following a flexible coding strategy (Bean, Eurelings-Bontekoe & Spinhoven, 2007) by creating categories taking into consideration what mentees and mentors said during interviews and focus groups. These categories were: initial mentoring expectations, future mentoring perspectives, emotional wellbeing, Catalan language; social capital, labour sphere and finally, impact on mentors' environment.

4.2 Methodological analysis approach

Flexible coding strategy is an approach that flips traditional grounded theory on its head to take advantage of modern qualitative data analysis software (the one used for this thesis was Atlas.ti). Rather than begin with small and concrete conceptualized codes it

consists of starting with a big index code to which analytic codes are applied over time. This strategy allows the researcher to reduce the amount of data under analysis because it can be just focused on specific categories developed during the indexing process (Deterding & Waters, 2018).

The approach was useful to analyse interviews, taking into account that research with unaccompanied youths followed a sequential explanatory mixed method design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutman & Hanson, 2003), which is characterised by gathering quantitative data and analysis before carrying out the qualitative fieldwork. This design allows the researcher to focus the interviews on meaningful themes. Furthermore, combining this design with the flexible coding strategy facilitates the analysis because the researcher could create some categories during the big index based on subthemes derived from quantitative data, but also paying attention inductively to the information provided by the interviewees.

Following the same process of indexing with the research focused on asylum seekers the researcher could know their data by creating big categories (as those mentioned in the third paper) instead of applying fine-grained coding. Subsequently, the analyst can refine concepts across interview cases. To make the most of this strategy researchers use the base created by the initial thematic categories to apply the analytic codes across the data. This process enables researchers to (more) reliably and efficiently apply analytic codes.

In contrast, other qualitative analysis methods could be complex and laborious. For example, in other approaches derived from grounded theory, coding begins by describing a small part of the data (generating many codes) and in late stages the data is connected to previous research. These approaches have been considered difficult to apply with this type of research, not only because of its time-consuming nature but also because it was considered particularly difficult to code and ignore completely particular theoretical constructs. Likewise, other approaches as discourse analysis, for example, require that the researcher is familiar with complex theoretical perspectives on language (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

4.3 Authorship

As it has been explained, this thesis constitutes part of the results of the Applying Mentoring project led by Òscar Prieto-Flores at the University of Girona (Spain). The project included the participation of different members from European and North American entities or institutions (universities and social foundations) interested in analysing the impact of mentoring programmes focused on foreign populations.

The project was developed to shed some light on one of the biggest challenges facing our society today: to promote and effectively manage foster care and social inclusion processes with immigrant and refugee populations. Aiming to combat the vulnerability of these populations when they arrive to Europe, a number of social initiatives have emerged in Spain. Concretely, social mentoring programmes have been developed with this purpose over the last decade. Unfortunately, there were very few evaluations providing relevant data on the effects of social mentoring programs on the social inclusion of foreign populations. For this reason, it was necessary to implement a research project to gain scientific knowledge on this topic.

The author of this thesis collaborated with the Applying Mentoring project so that the results of this thesis contribute to the research project. Summarizing, this thesis helped the project to report that (1) mentoring can improve the psychological wellbeing and future aspirations and expectations of unaccompanied immigrant youths; (2) mentors can become a source of informal social support that complements the formal support provided by care workers, which leads to the improvement on the emotional wellbeing of immigrant youths and asylum seekers; (3) mentoring programmes with asylum seekers can improve the access to resources and services of the host community; (4) mentors also benefit by mentoring because through a better understanding of the reality of asylum seekers they are better prepared to fight discriminatory discourses that circulate within their community (Applying Mentoring, 2021). Likewise, other authors collaborated on the Applying Mentoring project by getting involved in the production of scientific knowledge derived from the research with children and adolescents with migrant and refugee backgrounds that participated in mentoring programmes (see Sánchez-Aragón, Belzunegui-Eraso & Prieto-Flores, 2021).

This thesis was developed through a collaborative approach, understanding that scientific knowledge production is a collective process that is enriched because of the participation of different people at diverse levels. The collection of data on unaccompanied youths was entirely developed by the author of this thesis, but data collected from asylum seekers was possible to obtain thanks to Bernat De Quintana (Assistant Professor at the University of Girona). Òscar Prieto-Flores, the principal investigator of the Applying Mentoring project and general supervisor of the research group was an important figure in the development of this thesis because of their guidance. Co-researchers of the project Magda Bobowik (Associate Professor at the UPV-EHU) and Xavier Casademont (Assistant Professor at the University of Girona) were key contributors in some of the articles compiled in this thesis thanks to their help analysing and interpreting data and writing original drafts. Moreover, external researchers of the project, such as Vladislava Lendzhova (Assistant Professor at the South-West University of Bulgaria) and Emre Erdogan (Associate Professor at Istanbul Bilgi University) contributed to the article on asylum seekers by collaborating in the conceptualisation and preparation of the original draft.

Otherwise, substantial contributions to conception and design, the acquisition of data, qualitative analysis and interpretation of data, drafting the article and revising it critically were the main responsibilities of the author of this thesis, which constitutes the reasons for being the principal author of the articles (COPE, 2003).

4.4 Ethical approach

Social science studies present a number of challenges at different stages of the research project. Various practical issues that difficulted the data collection during fieldwork were manifested in the articles but had not been reported particular reflections related with the nature of this study. Durham (2000) argues that to study youths means to pay special attention to the relationships and social structures that youths are entangled with. Therefore, I considered that the research needed a component of "being there" which involved integrating myself into the context of what I was researching (Rabinow, 2007).

As a researcher focused on youth and foreign populations one of the most important risks of the work is in the relational approach to participants. Scholar literature defines

vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied youths as hard-to-reach populations (Bilger, 2009). For this reason, the most relevant task before interviewing youths was to create trusting relationships with social care professionals who already had a trusting relationship with foreign youths. In conversations with youths, it helped to begin with a friendly conversation about how their day was going and to establish a confident first contact in which I gave them the possibility of learning more about the research and signing the consent forms for their participation. The young age and social position of our research participants also meant we had to be careful with how we approached them, because from their perspective I could be seen as a "strange adult making questions". I am just around ten years older than them, but the age difference also relates to questions of social status and power (Cohen, 1994).

This approach was based on my own experiences with younger people. Likewise, I never thought of research participants as mere repositories of data, but rather as the protagonists of the research (Hecht, 1998). Therefore, semi-structured interviews with them allowed for more opportunities to let them express what they wanted to say. Sometimes the problem was to redirect our conversation from topics not related to the research (such as how they perceive the monarchy in Morocco or the Catalonian independence movement) back to the questions in my interview guidelines.

This research adopted a participatory approach (McIntyre, 2000) putting together a discussion group before the interviews to better understand the needs and difficulties of youths. This approach helps researchers assume a closely discourse with their reflections. Previous meetings with professionals and associations of immigrant youths helped us understand what approaches would work best for the participant youths. For example, I spoke with an association of former unaccompanied minors that were at that moment beginning to develop activist actions to show the vulnerability of unaccompanied youths in Spain and the stigmatized and discriminatory treatment they receive. After meeting with them I could understand that this research was not always going to be perceived as an opportunity to highlight the voice of their underrepresented group but rather as another person/institution that wanted to profit from the experiences of others.

This experience made me realise and learn that youths were probably going to see me more as a nuisance than as a beneficial. After other similar experiences I began to understand that my research was as an opportunity for me, instead of an opportunity for them. This has led me to understand research with young people as a dialogue between researchers and youths who are meaning-makers and epistemic partners aiming to co-construct a third space characterized by a mutual ethic (Meloni, Vanthuyne & Rousseau, 2015).

Another issue for take into account in research is the position of the researcher in the interview text. Research writing has ethical consequences because the writer is in a position of social power by virtue of being able to produce written representations (Rhodes, 2000). This question of power is related to what Lather (1991) called "post-representational theory", which assumes that language does not reflect reality, but is productive and constitutive of reality. As it was mentioned in the authorship section, data collection of asylum seekers was conducted by other researchers because of a pragmatic decision. Data collection of all groups participating in the Applying Mentoring project was conducted approximately at the same time and my involvement with the development of the fieldwork with unaccompanied youths brought the research team to assume this decision. Therefore, qualitative analysis was developed taking into account data collector interpretation of interviews and discussion groups. This has led me to take more responsibility in my textual practice, being constantly in contact with data collector while writing the article about asylum seekers in order to not lose fidelity with the asylum seekers' words.

5. Findings and articles

5.1 Mentoring for unaccompanied immigrant youths

In this section we will present the published articles that make up this thesis. The two groups of young foreigners involved are also presented here to better contextualize the case studies and to present some unpublished results.

The young unaccompanied migrants who participated in the research were mostly men (91.37% in T1 and 95.65% in T2). They were between 17 and 23 years old in the case of the mentees, and between 17 and 19 years old in the case of the non-mentored. The time of arrival in Spain is between 2016 and 2018 in most cases, in other words interviewees were minors between the ages of 15 and 17 when they arrived in Spain. Generally, the young people were from Morocco. The rest were from other African countries (Algeria, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Guinea Conakry and Somalia), Latin American countries (such as Ecuador, Brazil or Colombia) and Pakistan. This matches the characteristics of the minors that DGAIA assisted through its minor protection mechanisms during the same years that we carried out the fieldwork (DGAIA, 2018; DGAIA, 2019).

In general, these young people resided in Barcelona city during fieldwork, the others lived in municipalities of the Barcelona metropolitan area or localities adjacent to it. They stated that they arrived in Spanish territory using small boats or by hiding in trucks and buses, accompanied by friends from their city of origin or alone mostly. Generally, they resided in assisted flats for youths transitioning to adulthood. Those who were minors resided in shelters, although a small number of them already lived in rented rooms or with a family member in T2. This is something that is reflected in the surveys, since according to what they said, it was common for them to have a member of their family (a brother, cousin, or uncle) residing somewhere in Spain. They also stated in the surveys that they maintained contact with their relatives abroad, with the support of parents and siblings. We were also able to find out the educational level of the parents of the respondents. In general, the group of young people stated that they had fathers and mothers without studies.

In general, interviewees had their legal status in order, normally possessing a residence permit without the right to work. This is because without a job offer it is very difficult to have a work permit. However, it should be noted that some of them were in a stage of irregularity. Most of them had completed primary studies and during the year that we carried out the survey, many respondents were studying occupational or PFI courses. Very few had a job when we surveyed them for the first time (3.45%) and it is important to note that of the few who had a job in T2 (10.87%), only one of the group of mentees got it thanks to their mentor. Therefore, it seems that the Referents programme does not usually have an impact on the employment of the young people who participate, at least in the short term. This is something that the analysis of effect sizes carried out also suggests (in terms of occupational aspirations and expectations). However, a large part of respondents also had financial benefits from the administration that made it easier for them to function without major problems in their day-to-day life.

As we have already mentioned, the effect sizes between T1 and T2 of the measured variables can be observed in the Annexes section. The self-identity and self-perceived discrimination variables were difficult to measure and their analysis showed little reliability. As a result, we decided to present the responses that the young people gave us along these variables in a very descriptive way. Regarding identity, respondents identified mostly as feeling or being from their country of origin (e.g., Morocco) or ethnic group (e.g., Amazigh) and very few had a mixed identity (e.g., Catalan-Moroccan). None of them identified solely with the country or region in which they are settling and a half stated that their national or ethnic identity was very relevant to them.

Regarding discrimination, we obtained different percentages between T1 and T2. During T1, 29.31% of respondents said that they felt discriminated against while in T2 52.17% felt discriminated against. Unfortunately, no particular differentiating factor was found that could explain a causality in this change. Rather it seems to be due to multiple factors involved. However, respondents across both groups indicated that, when they felt discriminated against, it was usually by the same groups. First, they stated that they had felt discriminated against by Catalans or Spaniards in general (35.13% in T1 and 36.59 in T2) and in the interviews we could hear some examples (usually due to prejudices in public transport where people may distance themselves

from respondents due to their physical appearance or where people suddenly take greater care of their belongings when one of the young people approached). Secondly (27.02% in T1 and 21.95% in T2) respondents felt discriminated against by the police (also due to prejudiced attitudes which resulted in detentions or frisks in the street for no apparent reason).

The quantitative results that we have mentioned may be slightly different from those of the first article that we present in this thesis, because here we have not taken young girls out of the analysis to describe the aspects mentioned. The findings from the qualitative results were explored in depth in the two articles presented below. The only material that was not used in any of the published articles was the interview with mentoring practitioners, since we believe the interview only repeated the arguments of the first article about whether the Referents programme is a well-targeted and problem-specific programme. As such, we excluded it to avoid repetition. All the interview guidelines (discussion group, mentoring practitioners, unaccompanied youths, and mentors) are attached in the Annexes section so that the reader can better understand the fieldwork carried out.

5.1.1 Mentoring for improving the self-esteem, resilience, and hope of unaccompanied migrant youth in the Barcelona metropolitan area.

International Journal of
Environmental Research and Public Health

Article

Mentoring for Improving the Self-Esteem, Resilience, and Hope of Unaccompanied Migrant Youth in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area

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Abstract: In the last few years, the number of unaccompanied youths arriving in Europe has increased steadily. During their settlement in host countries they are exposed to a great variety of vulnerabilities, which have an impact on their mental health. This research examines the effects of participation in a mentoring programme on psychological and educational outcomes among unaccompanied migrant youths who live in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. Data in this mixed-methods study was obtained from 44 surveys with mentored (treatment group) and non-mentored (control group) male youths who recently turned 18, as well as through thirty semi-structured interviews with mentored youth, their adult mentors and non-mentored youth. Our findings indicated that participation in the mentoring programme improved the mentored youths' self-esteem, resilience and hope, as well as their desired or expected educational outcomes in the new context. We conclude that well-targeted and problem-specific mentoring programmes have positive and marked effects on unaccompanied migrant youths' mental health. The social and political implications of these outcomes are also discussed, providing information on how interventions can offer effective networks of support for the settlement and social inclusion of unaccompanied migrant youths.

Keywords: unaccompanied; migrant youth; mental health; mentoring; resilience; mixed methods

1. Introduction

1.1. Settlement and social inclusion of migrant youths in Spain

In recent years, data show that the official number of unaccompanied minors reaching Spain in small boats rose from 588 in 2016 to 7,026 in 2018 [1]. This trend is not only present in Spain but also in other countries around the world. Since 2010, the number of unaccompanied minors has increased fivefold in more than eighty countries [2]. In the case of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, the Catalan ombudsman reported the deficits in the current system for ensuring the settlement of unaccompanied immigrant minors and to positively favour a smooth transition to adulthood once they turned 18 [3]. One of the main challenges young immigrants face is getting their legal residence permits processed by the relevant administration intime in order not to become undocumented, bearing in mind that turning 18 involves being left outside the protective system that they benefit from as minors (which includes a temporary residence permit, staying in a residential centre and the socio-legal support of social workers and youth workers) [4]. This situation has severe consequences for their mental health and settlement process as they become invisible, homeless and excluded from participating in the formal economy [5,6]. For those who have their permits when they are 18, the government applies a strong selection process to be enrolled in the programme of transition to adulthood where housing and the assistance of youth workers (mentioned by the young people of this study) is provided until they turn 21. For those who arrive as minors, the protection system helps them reach adulthood with a residence permit that can be renewed if they have a report that positively values their integration, continue studying or have joined the labour market [7]. Therefore, an issue in the renewal or in the processing of their documentation while they are minors, as well as the fact of being declared of legal age by the appropriate Spanish authority upon arrival (based on forensic age estimation), makes them completely excluded from the resources that are available to the group.

Youth workers are present in the lives of young people from the moment they access the transition to adulthood programme (and the government-run flats provided) until they leave. The role of these professionals is to foster the youths' autonomy by helping them achieve their personal, educational and socio-labour insertion goals. Specifically, they are asked to carry out a work plan with the young person, so that he/she accomplishes the goals set and to carry out tutoring sessions in which the young person is monitored [8]. Their role is also to ensure peaceful co-existence in the flat where several of the young people live, and also with the neighbours. However, there seems to be no explicit mention of attending the emotional distress that their previous experiences and life in the new context might cause during settlement, a lack

of intervention with these young people that has already been highlighted in the Spanish context [9].

Settlement was traditionally understood as the final stage of a migration journey, regarded as a stable social and political environment to which migrants need to adapt [10]. However, it has been emphasised that the settlement process is actually in constant flux, becoming unpredictable for migrants and capable of affecting different areas of their lives in different ways (e. g. providing stability in terms of housing and instability in their legal status) [11]. As previous research has clearly shown, the settlement of migrants is conditioned by the inclusion policies and strategies of the host country, the causes of migration, the individual characteristics of the migrant (language skills, education, employment, among others), and also the presence or absence of social support networks [12]. In this study, we have focused on seeing how this latter element can influence the settlement of young migrants, understanding that the experiences of social inclusion lived during this process, such as feeling included in a broader social environment, positively reinforce the sense of feeling socially valued, as well as of belonging and being able to participate in and contribute to the society in which they are settling [13]. This social inclusion, therefore, will also be conditioned by the ability of the young people to build bridges that connect them with the host community, which will make it easier for them feel at home in this new country [14]. Assuming that mentoring can help in the social inclusion of unaccompanied young migrants, we focus throughout this study on assessing the capacity of this intervention methodology to produce short-term effects on the psychological well-being of the youths and on how having mentors can condition their educational aspirations and expectations.

Multiple studies have indicated that the risk of suffering from mental health problems may sharpen or decrease in the new context depending on the existing public health and social policies [13,15]. In this regard and following the principle of "in the best interest of the child", scholars have highlighted the need to promote political measures that ensure favourable reception and protection of unaccompanied minors and facilitate a safe transition to adulthood taking into consideration the youth's needs [16,17]. The present study aims to demonstrate how mentoring programmes can condition unaccompanied youths' well-being, future expectations, and generally their transition to adulthood in the receiving society.

1.2. Psychological wellbeing and educational futures

In this study we focus on self-esteem, resilience, hope and psychological distress in order to evaluate the psychological wellbeing of unaccompanied youth, since they are elements that can have a positive or negative impact on their mental health. Research has highlighted that a high level of wellbeing is a

valuable resource for negotiating the settlement challenges ahead [13]. In fact, it has been recommended to nurture mentoring relationships through a programme with potential mentors to improve the adaptability of children and young people in the face of adversity [18].

Rosenberg [19] reported that self-esteem is the positive or negative reflection people have of themselves. Therefore, it involves the self-perception that people have about their failures and successes as well as the emotional management of the negative feelings that arise. The self-esteem of young migrants has been studied because it has been shown that it correlates positively with mental health, since it buffers the negative effects of stress on depression [20,21] Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that social support and strong self-esteem are elements that can reduce the perception of discrimination [22]. In the case of young migrants, it has also been shown that the perceived support of peers from the same age or of responsible adults (such as a teacher or mentor in the case of our study) has a positive effect on self-esteem [23]. Also, it has been suggested that greater participation in a community promotes the development of self-esteem [24]. For these reasons, we consider that the participation of young migrants in a community project with responsible adults that provide them with social support will increase their self-esteem, which will have a positive effect on their settlement and social inclusion.

Resilience is defined as the capacity to access resources that nurture individual, relational and community assets, as well as the ability to interact with others to improve this capacity through meaningful resources [25]. Therefore, these resources (provided by friends, family, or mentors) make it possible to avoid potential threats in complex situations during development. Research has highlighted the need for actions that encourage young people to be more resilient when facing stressful events that they have to deal with at this stage of their lives (i.e. transition to adulthood) and help them establish positive relationships with responsible adults or prosocial organisations in the new environment [26-28]. Masten's resilience model [29] suggests that in order to foster resilience among migrant youths in the new context, they need to be exposed to significant risks and adapt successfully despite stressful life experiences. In this regard, some of the actions that can facilitate resilience are those that foster the quality of parent-child and mentor or teacher-child relationships in order to promote access to resources and social and human capital. However, unaccompanied migrant youths lack most of these supporting relationships once in Europe and tend to live greater stressful experiences than other migrant youths [30] because of the lower levels of individual resources, and family and social support they have. Studies that have focused on resilience have highlighted the importance of the environment in protecting against individual vulnerabilities and environmental adversity,

highlighting that fostering resilience facilitates better development and psychological wellbeing [31]. In addition, resilience in young people has been related to worse or better adaptability to adversity [32]. Assuming that mentoring can promote the acquisition of resources to face adversity, we have considered this variable in the study, bearing in mind that greater resilience would promote a better settlement and social inclusion.

Snyder et al. [33] defined hope as a cognitive set that involves the self-perceived capabilities for constructing viable paths to goals and beliefs about beginning and maintaining the route to these goals. It has been conceptualised as a positive emotional state derived from the interaction between agency aimed at achieving goals and the planning of pathways to attain them [34]. Hopeful people are seen as possessing positive thinking that reflects an optimistic and realistic perception [35], together with the belief that they can develop paths towards the desired goals [36]. Studies that have focused on hope have highlighted that it is positively correlated with life satisfaction, serving as a buffer against stressful and negative events [37]. Hopeful people perceive obstacles as a challenge to overcome and tend to show better athletic, academic, occupational and health outcomes [36]. Also, high levels of hope in unaccompanied young migrants are seen to favour greater civic engagement, which is an indicator of successful social inclusion, as well as strengthening school performance and having a feeling of greater stability in their lives [38]. This favours a swift inclusion in the new community, which entails less suffering for the young person. It is due to these elements and their capacity to protect against stressful life events that multiple youth intervention projects take into account the increase in youth hope as one of the components of their action [39]. In the same vein, we consider that if mentors are able to foster hope in young people, this will translate into a more favourable process of settlement and social inclusion.

Psychological distress is a common mental health problem defined as a state of emotional suffering typically characterised by symptoms of depression and anxiety [40]. Studies that have focused on psychological distress in migrants have highlighted that it can be determined by external stressors, such as traumatic life events or the resettlement process itself [41]. It has been shown that the availability of care and the quality of support in the resettlement country can reduce the psychological distress caused by adversity [42]. However, in the case of unaccompanied youths, post-traumatic stress symptoms have been identified as being associated with reaching the age of 18, due to the revision of their legal status, which makes them more aware of the uncertainty about their right to remain in the country they are resettling in [43]. The type of residence has also been highlighted as affecting the mental health of young migrants, who report more psychological distress when they move to more independent living arrangements [44]. Taking these elements into account, we

explore whether participation in the mentoring project can affect the psychological distress of these unaccompanied youths that are also in a moment of transition towards a more independent life.

Another element that is of interest to analyse the social inclusion of migrant youths is how they can be enrolled in education and develop educational trajectories as a process of their settlement. Previous studies approaching the incorporation of children of immigrants in Spain and in the United States have emphasised that educational aspirations and expectations are a key determinant for future achievements in the new context [45,46]. While educational ambitions of migrant children have been widely studied in many contexts, more research is needed in understanding the views of unaccompanied minors and youth. In this regard, we understand futures in education as "how young people see themselves in regard to the future and why futures are so valuable for them" [47]. Thus, how educational aspirations and expectations change over time and the view and vision of the young people is relevant for fostering paths for inclusion. Bearing in mind that mentoring can affect the academic achievements of young people at risk [48], we have studied whether this mentoring relationship can have any impact on the educational future of unaccompanied youths.

1.3. Mentoring programmes for unaccompanied youths

In order to address the needs of immigrant youth, the number of mentoring programmes targeting this group have increased, especially in Europe, in the last five years after the so-called "refugee crisis" [49]. Nevertheless, there is still scarce information about the effects that the programmes targeting specifically migrant adolescents and youth have [50,51]. The meta-analyses, mostly with evidence from US programmes for general youth populations, highlight that youth mentoring interventions have a modest but significant effect in improving diverse outcomes across behavioural, emotional, social and academic domains [52,53]. These studies have also shown that mentoring programmes are more effective among mentored youth who have significant levels of environmental risk and among samples with greater proportions of male youths [54]. Besides, in recent years, a growing number of scholars have highlighted that mentoring, as a specific approach, can be more effective when young people are provided with skills to recruit adults from their own networks instead of assigning participant youths to an unknown caring adult by the mentoring organisation [55-57]. This body of research has shown that some approaches to mentoring (such as the Youth-Initiated Mentoring, Network Engaged Mentoring or Intentional Mentoring) provide more enduring and emotionally supportive relationships than traditional approaches, because these programmes tend to empower the youths in deepening their existing ties and creating new ones [58]. However, as far as we know there is no research showing the effects of mentoring on the

mental health of unaccompanied migrant youths. What we know is that mentoring programmes can widen their social networks [59] and improve a sense of belonging and hope in the receiving society among migrant children living with their families in the new context [60].

2. Current Research

This study examined the effectiveness of the mentoring programme *Referents*, initiated by the *Punt de Referència* Association in 1998 [61]. The main goal of this programme is to support young people, mainly those leaving care, who, without family networks of support, start the transition to adulthood when they turn 18 after having been under the tutelage of the Generalitat de Catalunya (the Catalan government). From 2015 on, almost all participants of the programme are former unaccompanied minors who had been in the minor protection system before turning 18 and volunteer adult mentors.

The mentoring programme looks for adult volunteers who are established in Barcelona and have already completed their transition to adulthood (while also looking for young people interested in participating). After a selection process of adult volunteers and young people, training is carried out with the mentors, where the socio-legal situation of migrant youths leaving care is explained, as well as what their task as mentors involves. Each mentoring relationship (consisting of one adult and one youth) is instructed to meet once a week during a period of six months to carry out an activity. The mentoring programme practitioners suggest starting with leisure activities such as going to museums, activities in local public services or doing sport activities. The aim of the programme is to create a bond between the mentor and mentee that facilitates significant conversations for the young person (concerns about administrative procedures, emotional discomfort or doubts that affect their educational and occupational path); or, in other words, the provision of different types of social support.

However, despite monitoring the development of a strong and lasting bond between mentor and mentee, the Referents programme differs from models that provide non-specific care to their participants, in which the mentors are encouraged to provide friendship and support in general terms. These models that are less focused on solving specific problems of the young people consider that a close relationship with the mentor is, by itself, a corrective experience that leads to a wide range of improvements in the young person's development [62]. In the Referents programme, however, specific objectives for each relationship are established, thanks to an exhaustive training with the mentors on the obstacles the youths need to be accompanied in through their transition to adulthood, and a strong monitoring of the relationship (with regular meetings with the mentor, the mentee and on some occasions, with both). It is also characterised as a

well-targeted programme and focused on solving specific problems since the group to which it provides support is clearly defined and due to the constant coordination with the other agents that intervene in the young person's development in order to specify what the focus of the intervention is.

The specific problems that these young people try to deal with during mentoring are usually related to learning the language, getting to know new places in Barcelona and/or meeting new people. Here are a few of the responses of young people when we asked them why they signed up for the project:

My first idea was that I was going to meet with someone who would be older than me, and I thought that was a great idea for me. I was going to ask lots of things about Barcelona, things about Spain, to practise Spanish… This is what I was thinking (Amadou, mentee)

I like that they help me from many sides. Mirela (mentor) has helped me know many places in Barcelona. […] Besides that, I have practised Spanish with her many times, and I have improved. (Abás, mentee)

As I said before, I felt alone in the centre and didn't know anybody from here, from Barcelona or from Spain. I wanted to meet some kind of friend, I wanted to get to know places, practise Spanish more and everything went well. (Hassan, mentee)

3. Methods

This research followed a *sequential explanatory mixed method design* which is characterised by gathering quantitative data and analysis before carrying out the qualitative fieldwork [63]. Mixed methods designs tend to provide a more complete and holistic view of the impact an intervention has rather than solely quantitative or qualitative designs. In this sense, we assessed the effects of participation in the programme on the lives of unaccompanied migrant youths in providing them informal support in their coming of age and improving their psychological adjustment and expected or desired educational outcomes. More precisely, we were interested in how the unaccompanied youth see themselves (i.e. self-esteem), the psychological distress they experience, their future prospects (youth hope), the resilience skills they develop, how they perceive their educational near futures and the role that social support they received has on these outcomes. In the survey data, we assessed these psychological and educational outcomes before (Time 1) and after (Time 2) participation in the programme among mentored and non-mentored (control group) youth. After the analysis of the quantitative data, we elaborated the guidelines for the interviews and carried out the qualitative fieldwork with mentored and non-mentored youth, as well as mentors.

3.1. Quantitative data

3.1.1. Participants

Survey data were gathered from October 2018 to October 2019, coinciding with the start date of the mentoring matches of the *Referents programme*. In this period of time, the programme began three mentoring groups with each consisting of between 10 and 15 mentoring pairs (a mentor and mentee), since this is the number set by the programme itself to ensure correct follow-up by the mentoring expert that monitors the development of the group's relationships. Therefore, the initial objective was to survey the maximum number of young migrant mentees which, in this case, could have been 45. However, the programme did not reach the maximum number of recruits expected in each group and, in addition, not all were migrants (there were Spanish youths who had left government tutelage without a family support network). Therefore, we aimed to recruit all mentees (*N*=39); however, those surveyed in Time 1 were 32 youths (seven were discarded because mentoring matches had already started or because the youths refused to participate); and those in the control group (N=26) were interviewed within one to two weeks later. From all these cases, we ended up in Time 2 with 21 youths in the mentoring group and 23 in the control group, because we could not trace 12 pre-tested youths seven months later, and because the sample had a strong gender imbalance and thus two female participants were dropped from the analyses (initially, 91% of mentored and 92.3% of non-mentored youths were male). Our data confirms official statistics showing that 81.2% of unaccompanied minors in 2018 were from Morocco (see descriptive data below), and 97.7% were male [64]. The results, which include the two female participants, are presented in the Supplementary Online Material (Tables I-III) and were consistent with results obtained with the exclusively male sample (see Results).

Participants' age ranged from 17 to 23 years (*M* = 18.52, *SD* = 1.50) for the mentoring group and from 17 to 19 (*M* = 18.04, *SD* = 0.37) in the control group. This difference in the age ranges is because the young people in the control group were accessible since they were in the housing resource mentioned above, which limits the stay until the age of 21, while the mentoring programme does not set an age limit in order for young people transitioning to adulthood to access it. Most of the youths had been residing in Spain for two years at the time of the study (*M* = 2.10, *SD* = 1.00 and *M* = 2.52, *SD* = 2.19 in the mentoring and control groups, respectively). The majority came from Morocco (61.9% and 82.6% respectively), some others came from Algeria or Sub-Saharan countries and a few from Latin America. When asked about their arrival to Spain, 47.6% of the mentored youth and 43.5% of the control group crossed the Mediterranean in a small boat, and 28.7% and 30.3%, respectively, hidden in trucks. Most of the mentees live in Barcelona city and a few in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area in shelter flats (71.4%), flats shared with other young people (14.3%), and some in a residence or in a rented

shared apartment (14.3%). Most of participants in the mentoring (85.7%) and the control group (91.3%) had to move in the last year.

3.1.2. Procedure

One of the main challenges of the fieldwork was to adequately select and follow, for more than six months, former unaccompanied minors between 18 and 23 years old. With this aim in mind, we counted on the active support and collaboration of Punt de Referència and the Catalan Federation of Residence Care Organizations (FEPA). Their technical staff contacted the participants, informed them about the purpose of the study, and scheduled appointments for data collection. Informed consents were gathered from all youths. In a few cases- those who were 17 at the moment of pre-assessment (Time 1)- we also asked for consent from their legal tutors (Catalan Government Agency).

All the surveys and interviews were conducted in Spanish. Language was not a barrier with most of the interviewees because the majority had a good knowledge of this language. With regards to their Spanish speaking level, at the beginning of the programme, 48% indicated that it was good, 30% very good, and 14% that excellent (four participants mentioned that it was sufficient). Similarly, 41% reported that their understanding of Spanish was good, 32% very good, and 23% excellent (only two participants said it was sufficient). Participants also reported having overall good reading and writing skills: 34% and 27% reported good, 36% and 34% very good, and 21% and 14% excellent skills, respectively. Only three had sufficient reading skills, five had sufficient writing skills, and one participant mentioned that he had some difficulties in reading and writing in Spanish2.

3.1.3. Measures and Materials

We assessed diverse psychological outcomes, including psychological distress, self-esteem, resilience, and youth hope, at two time points. In addition, we evaluated the mentees' perceptions of their educational aspirations and expectations.

- **Self-esteem.** We implemented the Rosenberg scale [19] to measure self-esteem. Participants indicated their agreement on a 4-point (completely disagree, agree, disagree, completely agree) Likert-type scale with ten statements referring to their

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2 We have tested a regression model where participation in the programme (yes vs. no), language ability in Spanish (i.e. the average score with four aspects of language ability), and the interaction between the two variables were introduced as predictors and each outcome variable in T2 as a criterion variable in a separate model. We additionally controlled for T1 scores in each model. We did not observe statistically significant interactions and thus moderation by language ability.

self-image (e.g. ‘On the whole, I am satisfied with myself’; T1: $\alpha = .54$; T2: $\alpha = .59$).

- **Resilience.** We used a short 12-item version of the Children and Youth Resilience Measure [25]. Mentored youths were asked to respond to a series of questions about themselves, their community and their relationships with others. They indicated the frequency with regard to these questions (e.g. ‘Do you have people around you who show interest in you?’) on a 3-point scale (yes, no, sometimes). All items were dichotomised, with ‘yes’ and ‘sometimes’ coded as 1, and ‘no’ coded as 0. We created a composite score by adding up all positive answers (T1: $\alpha = .66$; T2: $\alpha = .61$).
- **Youth hope.** We adapted the Children and Youth Hope Scale [33] for migrant youths, who were asked to indicate on a 6-point scale (always, most of the time, frequently, sometimes, rarely, never) the frequency concerningsix statements regarding their lives (e.g. ‘When I have a problem, I can find many ways of solving it’). This measure demonstrated satisfactory reliability (T1: $\alpha = .57$; T2: $\alpha = .62$).
- **Psychological distress**. We adapted the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale [65] to our participants’ situation. Mentees indicated frequency with regard to ten questions about their psychological functioning (e.g. ‘Feel lonely’) on a 3-point scale (yes, no, sometimes). All items were dichotomised (‘yes’ and ‘sometimes’ were coded as 1, and ‘no’ coded as 0). We created a composite score for this scale by adding up the scores for the ten dichotomised items. Thus, the scale could range from 0 (when all responses were 0) to 10 (when all responses were 1, that is either ‘yes’ or ‘sometimes’). This scale showed good reliability (T1: $\alpha = .73$; T2: $\alpha = .72$).
- **Educational aspirations.** Participants were also asked about their educational aspirations (‘Which of the following levels of education would you like to achieve one day?’). They could choose one of eight categories, which were then dichotomised into low versus high educational aspirations3. Three options (i.e. ‘Finish an Insertion and Training Programme (PFI)’, ‘I don’t know’, and ‘Finish some adult training course (Catalan, Spanish, others)’) were categorised as low educational aspirations, while the remaining five options (‘Finish an Intermediate vocational training diploma ’, ‘Finish an Advanced vocational training diploma’, ‘Finish a university degree’, ‘Finish a Master's degree or a PhD’, and ‘Finish

3 The small sample size does not allow for creating more than two categories. In Time 1, across the two groups, there were only three participants who aspired to finish a Master’s degree or Ph.D., and only four who mentioned compulsory secondary education. In contrast, most participants (16) in Time 1 chose to finish an Insertion and Training Programme, which is a less formal type of education (similar to the category of other courses for adults). We thus considered it logical to compare aspirations to finish courses oriented at a quick job placement with more formal forms of education, from the secondary education (which still opens up the possibility of further education) to a university degree.

compulsory secondary education (ESO)'), were coded as high educational aspirations.4

- **Educational expectations.** Participants were also asked about the level of education they think they could achieve ('Realistically, what studies do you think you can finally achieve?'). As in the case of educational aspirations, they could choose one of eight categories, which were then dichotomised into low versus high educational expectations. Again, three options (i.e. 'Finish an Insertion and Training Programme (PFI)', 'I don't know', and 'Finish some adult training course (Catalan, Spanish, others)') were categorised as low educational expectations, and the remaining five options ('Finish an Intermediate vocational training diploma', 'Finish an Advanced vocational training diploma', 'Finish a university degree', 'Finish a Master's degree or a PhD', and 'Finish compulsory secondary education (ESO)'), as high educational expectations.

3.1.4. Analytical Strategy

Quantitative data from surveys were introduced using tablets and *Qualtrics* for importing the data of the online questionnaire to SPSS format. The quantitative analysis was carried out with SPSS Statistical Package. We used repeated measures factorial ANOVAs with participation in the programme (mentoring vs. control group) introduced as a between-subject factor, the measurement time (Time 1 vs. Time 2) introduced as a within-subject factor, and the interaction term between participation in the programme and the measurement time. A significant interaction effect would mean that the change over time is stronger/weaker in one group compared to the other, and thus that the significant change in the mentoring group is due to participation in the programme and not to other external factors (such as simply longer time of residence in the host country). We additionally ran paired *t* tests to examine the effectiveness of the programme in the mentoring group and the control group separately in increasing/reducing (i.e. from Time 1 to Time 2) participants' psychological distress, self-esteem, resilience and hope.

We also applied the McNemar test to examine changes in educational aspirations and expectations. The McNemar test is used to determine if a statistically significant change in proportions has occurred on a dichotomous variable at two time points in the same population. Thus, in the present study, this test allowed us to determine the proportion of participants who had low levels of educational aspirations/expectations (a binary variable) before participation in the programme (Time 1), and who changed them to high levels of educational

4 Please note that we have decided to include the "I don't know" option in the category of low educational aspirations in order not to lose participants who fell under this response. However, we also analysed the data excluding this category and obtained a similar result. Please see more details in the notes of Table 3 and Table 4 in the Results section.

aspirations/expectations after the mentoring intervention (Time 2), and whether this change was statistically significant. In parallel, we tested what proportion of participants in the control group who had low levels of educational aspirations/expectations in Time 1 changed them to high levels of educational aspirations/expectations in Time 2, expecting that there would be no statistically significant change in this group. We required $p < .05$ as a minimal level of statistical significance.

3.2. Qualitative Data

3.2.1. Participants

From all the surveyed youth, we selected 10 mentees, their 10 mentors and 10 non-mentored youths using a *typical case purposive sampling* [66], and carried out thirty semi-structured interviews right after completing the T2 surveys. For the selection, we took into account youth that were not outliers in the quantitative outcomes, their ability to express more adequately their feelings and thoughts in Spanish, and their level of engagement in mentoring experiences. In this sense, we avoided choosing those most and least engaged. For the non-mentored youth (control group), we selected those that expressed some ability to seek some assistance. We also considered similarities between the interviewees of the control group and the mentoring group, for example their country of origin, age, place of residence or year of arrival.

3.2.2. Interview guidelines

For the elaboration of the interview guidelines, we conducted a discussion group with four former unaccompanied minors who had participated in previous editions of the mentoring programme. They helped us to adjust the main topics of the interview to their needs and youth perspective. Mentors and mentees were interviewed individually in different times and spaces by the researchers to provide a space to freely talk about their experiences. The youths were asked about their migration journey, how they reached Barcelona, the types of support they received upon arrival and now, their stressful experiences, how they coped with them, what their aspirations and needs are and how their mentors or other types of support helped them in their coming-of-age process.

3.2.3. Analysis

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. We coded the materials using ATLAST.ti following a flexible coding strategy [67], paying attention inductively to the information provided by the interviewees but also taking into consideration the main categories used in the quantitative fieldwork, such as resilience, youth hope, self-esteem, and educational expectations and needs. The subthemes and codes used are presented in Table 1, as well as quote examples of every code. Other categories were also created

based on what young people mentioned, which is why in the results section we use some quotes that do not correspond directly with the variables used in the quantitative analysis. However, all of them are related to the study's subthemes (psychological wellbeing and educational futures). These categories were: *Perceived Support*, *Access to new resources, Loneliness/Isolation* and *Planning of pathways*.

Table 1. *Subthemes, codes, and quote examples*

Subthemes	***Codes***	***Quotes***
Psychological Wellbeing	*Self-Esteem*	I was angry for a few days because I didn't understand. There were some things that for me were difficult to understand and she said to me: "Let's see, you've been here for a year and you understand Spanish. If I went to Morocco and I stayed there 2 or 3 years, I wouldn't learn it like you", then I relax and I think I'm speaking well. (mentored)
	Resilience	I found some things difficult and I felt a bit embarrassed and a bit sad, but in the end I understand it a little and I have seen that I have to force myself to speak, because if I don't speak I won't learn anything. From that moment [to] now, I always have the courage to study things. Even Spanish and Catalan, but not only that, I want to study in my life until the end. Because life is a study class. (mentored)
	Youth Hope	Yes, sometimes it worries me. Because if they take away your NIE (tax identification number for foreign residents) you have no papers or anything. What are you going to do? Nothing, you'd be better going back to Morocco. […] I would feel a bit like I hadn't finished what I wanted to do. I would feel a bit like something is lacking. I won't have reached the future, that's what I mean. (non-mentored)
Educational Futures	*Expectations*	I want to get an Advanced vocational training diploma, the problem is that I don't have a work permit. […] I am in a foundation that pays for the rent and everything, but you can't be with a foundation for more than 4 years and it will take more than 4 years to get an Advanced vocational training diploma […] So, I only have 2 years left in this foundation. In 2 years I'll get the Intermediate vocational training diploma. (mentored)
	Aspirations	Well, continue, because I already have the PFI (Insertion and Training Programme) and I have the letter of recommendation from a shop. I also have the language and everything. I want to continue with these hotel and catering courses… (non-mentored)

4. Results

4.1. Findings from Quantitative Survey Data

All results, including descriptive statistics, are presented in Table 2.

- **Self-esteem.** GLM repeated measures did not show significant effects of intervention or time on self-esteem. The intervention x time interaction effect did not reach statistical significance, but the paired samples *t* tests showed that self-esteem significantly increased in the mentoring group. In contrast, there was no statistically significant effect in the control group.

- **Resilience**. We did not find significant effects of intervention on resilience, but there was a statistically significant overall increase in resilience from T1 to T2. The paired samples t tests showed that resilience increased significantly in the mentoring but not in the control group. Yet, again, the intervention x time interaction effect did not reach statistical significance, which suggests that we cannot conclude that the effect in the mentoring group was significantly stronger than in the control group.
- **Youth hope**. No significant effects of intervention on youth hope or change from T1 to T2 were detected. There was a statistically significant intervention x time interaction effect, which confirms that the change in youth hope was significantly stronger in the mentoring group compared to the control group (and can thus be interpreted as exclusively due to participation in the mentoring programme). In line with this interaction, the paired samples *t* tests revealed that mentees showed higher levels of youth hope after the programme, whereas that was not the case for the control group.
- **Psychological distress**. We did not find statistically significant intervention, time or interaction effects for psychological distress, and no statistically significant change in distress from T1 to T2 was detected across the two groups in the paired samples *t* tests. That is, participating in the mentoring programme did not affect the level of psychological distress of the participating youths.

Table 2. *Participation in Mentoring Program and Wellbeing Outcomes: Descriptive Statistics, Repeated Measures ANOVA with Between-subject (Group) Effect, and Paired t-tests per Group*

Variable	Group	Time 1 *M* (*SD*)		Time 2 *M* (*SD*)		*CI*		*t*	*p*	*d*	Comparison			
											Test[1]	$F_{(1, 42)}$	*p*	η²
Self-esteem	Mentoring	2.87	0.23	3.01	0.30	[-0.27;	-0.02]	-2.41	**.026**	**0.55**	1	1.03	.316	0.02
											2	3.16	*.083*	*0.07*
	Control	2.86	0.33	2.86	0.30	[-0.12;	0.12]	-0.08	.941	0	3	2.80	.102	0.06
Resilience	Mentoring	9.95	1.40	10.76	0.44	[-1.40;	-0.22]	-2.88	**.009**	**0.74**	1	1.24	.273	0.03
											2	4.94	**.032**	**0.11**
	Control	9.96	1.52	10.04	1.33	[-0.68;	0.51]	-0.30	.765	0.05	3	3.21	*.081*	*0.07*
Youth hope	Mentoring	5.10	0.73	5.52	0.60	[-0.81;	-0.04]	-2.33	**.031**	**0.58**	1	0.04	.846	0.001
											2	0.94	.339	0.02
	Control	5.45	0.83	5.25	0.82	[-0.10;	0.51]	1.39	.179	-0.22	3	7.33	**.010**	**0.15**

Psychological distress	Mentoring	4.95	2.64	4.76	2.84	[-0.61;	0.99]	0.50	.623	-0.09	1	0.08	.779	0.002
											2	0.01	.964	0
	Control	4.96	2.69	5.17	2.37	[-1.14;	0.70]	-0.49	.630	0.11	3	0.48	.494	0.01

Note. Mentoring group: *n* = 21, Control group: *n* = 23. *M* and *SD* represent means and standard deviations, respectively. [1] ANOVA contrasts in the following order: 1 = Group's effects; 2 = Time' effects; and 3 = Interaction effects (Group * Time). To calculate Cohen's *d* we used a procedure described in Morris and De Shon (2002, p.111) who suggest estimating the effect size for single-group pretest-posttest designs by taking the correlation between the pre- and post-test into account. Statistically significant effects in bold and marginally significant ones in italics.

- **Educational aspirations**. We were also interested in whether participation in the *Referents* programme changed the educational aims of the mentored youths. As can be seen in Table 3, the McNemar test revealed a statistically significant change in educational aims from Time 1 to Time 2 in the mentoring group. Specifically, whereas only 14.30% of the mentees maintained their lower educational aims across time, 47.60% of them changed their motivations from less (i.e. low) to more formal (i.e. high) educational outcomes, ranging from secondary to higher education degrees. Finally, 38.10% of the mentees started and maintained their formal educational outcomes, and none of the participants changed their educational aims from formal to informal. In the control group, the McNemar test was not statistically significant, indicating that educational ambitions did not change from T1 to T2. In this case, 60.8% of participants did not change their educational aspirations, and 13.00% actually lowered them. Only 26.1% improved their aspirations.
- **Educational expectations**. In parallel, we were interested in whether being part of the *Referents* mentoring programme changed expectations of the mentored youth with regard to the educational level they would realistically achieve in the future. As shown in Table 4, the McNemar test revealed a statistically significant effect in the mentoring group, indicating that perceived educational prospects of the mentees changed from pre-assessment (T1) to post-assessment (T2). Almost half of the mentees (47.60%) initially believed that it is only feasible for them to achieve a lower level of education, but they were more optimistic about their future education after participation. In contrast, 14.30% of the mentees maintained their lower and 38.10% their higher educational expectations. None of the *Referents* participants lowered their educational projections. No statistically significant change in educational expectations was detected in the control group, where 65.2% of participants maintained their educational expectations over time, and 13.00% anticipated lower educational outcome in T2 as compared to T1. Only 21.70% changed their expectations from low to high.

Table 3. *Participation in Mentoring Program and Educational Aspirations: The McNemar Test*

Variable	Group		Low educational aspirations (Time 2)		High educational aspirations (Time 2)		*p*
			f	%	*f*	%	
Educational aspirations	Mentoring	Low educational aspirations (Time 1)	3	14.30%	10	47.60%	.002
		High educational aspirations (Time 1)	0	0.00%	8	38.10%	
	Control	Low educational aspirations (Time 1)	7	30.4%	6	26.1%	.508
		High educational aspirations (Time 1)	3	13.00%	7	30.4%	

Note. We repeated these analyses excluding participants who responded "I don't know" to the question about educational aspirations. In this case, the McNemar test was also statistically significant in the mentoring group (p = .016), whereas it was non-significant in the control group (p = .453), with 18 participants in each group.

Table 4. *Participation in Mentoring Program and Educational Expectations: McNemar Test*

Variable	Group		Low educational expectations (Time 2)		High educational expectations (Time 2)		*p*
			f	%	*f*	%	
Educational expectations	Mentoring	Low educational expectations (Time 1)	3	14.30%	10	47.60%	.002
		High educational expectations (Time 1)	0	0.00%	8	38.10%	
	Control	Low educational expectations (Time 1)	11	47.80%	5	21.70%	.727
		High educational expectations (Time 1)	3	13.00%	4	17.40%	

Note. We repeated these analyses excluding participants who responded "I don't know" to the question about educational expectations. In this case, the McNemar test was also statistically significant in the mentoring group (p = .016), whereas it was non-significant in the control group (p = .453), with 18 participants in each group.

4.2. Findings from interview data

The qualitative results concerning the main topics of the research (psychological wellbeing and educational futures) are shown below. Through analysis of the interviews carried out, we highlight different types of social support that the youths perceived from their mentors (and that the mentors mention that they offered), which have had a certain impact in terms of wellbeing and on the decisions taken regarding what educational path to follow. In addition, we discuss the absence of certain types

of support in the control group, which enables us to understand the differences between groups (mentored and non-mentored).

In order to suggest how the mentoring programmes can promote the acquisition of an effective support network, we highlight in a final section of the results how the programme guides the task of the mentors. Specifically, we focus on how the support provided by the mentors is focused on the needs of the young people due to training and the programme's exhaustive monitoring of each relationship.

4.2.1 The role of mentoring in providing emotional and social support

Psychological and emotional wellbeing is a concept that refers to aspects of psychological and behavioural functioning that involve a person's interpersonal relationships and mental health [68]. Social support is seen as a central element of wellbeing in young people, being strongly associated with mental health [69] due to the perception of being cared for promote health in a person [70]. The young mentees of this study frequently mentioned having received support in general terms from mentors and, more specifically, emotional support, which in mentoring is usually related to the capacity of the mentor to empathise with and listen to the mentee [71]. The case of Nordin illustrates how young people can feel better emotionally thanks to the support of these mentors. This young man, born in Morocco, explains that when he has negative feelings he talks to his mentor, and that this mere act of talking to or meeting the mentor has a positive effect on his emotions.

If I don't feel good - I'm feeling bad one day, or I'm angry - I ask him if he can meet to talk and he says yes. If I have something important, he asks me if I want to stay, no problem. He's a really nice guy […] Because I always feel good when I am with him. He's a good person, he treats me well (Nordin, mentee).

As we will see, the conversations with the mentors about aspects that worry or generate some kind of distress in the young people were recurrent. However, the mentors, thanks to a greater ability to express themselves in Spanish, were able to explain in greater depth the nature of these conversations with the young people. Below is a quote related to the social support provided by Mar (one of the mentors), who talks about one of the conversations she had with her mentee about managing negative emotions generated by adversity:

We were talking about patience, about how difficult it is sometimes to get these things, to trust the people who are around helping him, that nobody wants him not to get them and that he knew there were a lot of people working on this, and that if he had any doubts or something was not being done properly or he wasn't being told about, that he should ask or speak to the director of the centre…. And well, I think that was important because he let it all out and I saw he was very affected by it. (Mar, Aliou's mentor).

Studies that have focused on young migrants have identified that perceived support, provided by adults, can improve a person's psychological wellbeing and, in particular, have emphasised the positive effects it has on the self-esteem of young migrants [23]. Perceived social support is evaluated from the recipient's perception of the availability of and satisfaction with the support provided [72]. The support from the mentors to deal with problems and overcome difficulties was mentioned as a very positive aspect of the mentoring relationship. The availability of social support by the mentors and the satisfaction of the mentees with this support were aspects that were identified in several interviews with the mentees. Below, Aliou and Dawda comment on the support they perceived from their mentors and their satisfaction with it. Dawda, furthermore, mentions that before his participation in the mentoring programme, such support was not available.

If I have problems, at any time I can call her and explain my problem and, if she can, she helps me. […] This helps me because I explained this about my papers and she gave me advice (Aliou, mentee)

You may have a problem and this person (the mentor) can help you fix the problem you have, and as I am not from here, the people from here know much more than I do about here, and they can tell me things that in the future can help me. […] Actually, I didn't have an older person who I could talk about my things with in Spain, by now I have the mentor and I talk about my things with her (Dawda, mentee).

4.2.2 Access to social capital

Another element that the academic literature has highlighted as favourable for the development and psychological wellbeing of young people is the increase of resilience [31]. Specifically, actions that favour the relationship with parents, teachers or mentors that can increase access to resources and social capital have been recommended to facilitate resilience [18,29]. Linking relationships that connect young people with social or economic resources and that can foster greater opportunities in education, training and work have been highlighted as important for promoting active participation in social and civic life [73,74]. These relationships result in the structures of the host society becoming more open and socially inclusive, so they are seen as key strategies to promote psychological wellbeing and a good settlement of the young migrants [13]. Access to new resources was mentioned by the participants in the mentoring programme. Hakim, for example, spoke to us about the different resources he accessed together with his mentor during his participation in the programme. This young mentee responded as follows when he was asked what the benefits of participating in the mentoring programme were.

Many things… for example to be patient and to know very many things… many places. For example, a design place in Glorias, the Sagrada Familia library, Barcelona Activa (a public employment service)

… To know more places, or courses, for example […] talk about things that worry me… she can also help me with these things (Hakim, mentee)

The mentors also talked about certain activities carried out with the mentees that can facilitate access to new resources. For example, Ariadna, Dawda's mentor, also told us how she helped her mentee find resources that could be important for him.

This civic centre also has a job bank, well, an employment centre where a couple of people help you find work or make a CV … And one day I passed by and we wanted to see what they had for young people. A girl attended us and immediately … "look, here there are people who can help you make a CV, we do concerts, activities, football and many things for young people". And yes, I took him to a place where they can really offer him the chance of broadening his social environment. (Ariadna, Dawda's mentor)

These resources can also help young people to plan better the pathways designed to achieve their goals in the new social environment. The creation of these connections with the mentors and with other resources of the environment can help create feelings of hope in young people [75-77]. It can make them feel they have the capacity and possibility to accomplish their future goals, since they have the agency and can create pathways to achieve them. The planning of alternative pathways that enable the creation of routes towards one's goals is a significant component of hope [34]. In this regard, not only can the knowledge of resources be favourable, but also the conversations with the mentors that enabled the young people to reflect on their pathways were important during the mentoring. Amadou explains that for him it is important to be in contact with other people because in that way he can share ideas related to his own career. Moreover, participating in these types of projects helps him to feel more relaxed, which can allow him to plan his future under less pressure. After being asked why he decided to participate in this mentoring programme, he responds as follows:

Because I like having relationships with a lot of people. Because a memory is a memory, but your memory and my memory, if we work together, there will be two ideas that are worked on. If it's only my idea, I can't do anything. […] Well, since I came here with many projects, collaborating with them, I began to forget my stuff, I began to relax with my stuff… (Amadou, mentee)

4.2.3 Promoting the mentee's interest in formal educational paths

The social support that mentoring can provide in terms of advice not only can have an effect of the level of hope and psychological wellbeing of the youths, but could also have an effect in terms of their educational futures. Previous studies with young migrants have highlighted that educational aspirations and expectations are fundamental for accomplishing futures goals in the new context [45,46]. Self-defined paths for young people are usually based on the need to find a job in order to be independent

in the new setting and not depend on the support of philanthropic or care organisations. In addition, the added pressure of wanting to help the family drives them to choose educational paths with quick access to the labour market. The case of Hassan illustrates that, if conditions are optimal to be able to continue studying, it is easier for the youths to make this decision, since in this way they can acquire a professional path that allows them to access better paid jobs.

It depends. I want to work and help my family a little and myself. If I am fine here, I would like to continue studying. […] I want to get an 8.7 to do vocational education and training [...]. Cooking, hairdressing … Then the higher education as well, if I can. And continue studying. (Hassan, mentee)

Once these conditions are met, the difficulty is in the choice of career path that fits their interests or understanding the differences between different educational levels, among others. This is where the mentor can provide assistance, promoting the young person's interest in educational paths that enable them to achieve higher levels of education. Hakim explains that, thanks to his mentor, he understood what path he could follow after completing the PFI, instead of entering the job market, as well as explaining the disorientation he felt regarding his educational future.

Because when I wanted to do the first course, I did a course in waitering and didn't know what courses there were... you know? I did a course for work as a waiter and as a cook because everybody does that […] She (the mentor) explained to me that, for example, if you don't have ESO, you can study a PFI to do an Intermediate vocational training diploma, and when you pass the Intermediate vocational training you can do the Advanced vocational training diploma and then, if you want, you can go to university. (Hakim, mentee)

We observed that the more informal conversations with mentors can help consolidate a more prolonged educational path within formal education. In this regard, Antonia (Hassan's mentor) and Elisabeth (Hakim's mentor), explains what these conversations were like:

Poor thing… I think he is very lost… and the fact that he told me "I want to work, I want to work" and that I told him to take advantage of the time now and study… it could be that saying to him "don't worry now about money, you could be some time without work…", but of course, I suppose that also behind this he feels the pressure of "I have to comply". (Antonia, Hassan's mentor)

Sure, he did the waitering course… the practical training… this and that, but then he was going to do a cooking course, but in the end he was going to do one in maintenance ... but he wants to do English ...he is very disoriented. […] We went to a place with technological stuff because he really likes everything related to computers and they give free courses on all things related to technology and you can sign up… (Elisabeth, Hakim's mentor)

4.2.4 Lack of social and emotional support in non-mentored youths

Previous studies that have focused on young people in care and leaving care have emphasised that the professionals that work alongside them are usually seen by the youths as representatives of a formal and instrumentalised world. Specifically, they see them as people who do their job, focusing on the solution of specific problems [78]. Furthermore, in the Spanish context it has been highlighted that there are few resources or services that accompany the young migrants in attending to the emotional distress that settlement may cause [9]. In this regard, the non-mentored youths in this study emphasised being able to talk about some of their emotional discomfort with the youth worker of their flat. However, these conversations were limited to formal spaces and specific tutoring sessions in which the youths are summoned at a specific time of the week to talk about various aspects of their work plan during their stay in the flat of the transition to adulthood programme. Arturo explained the following to us when we asked him about his concerns and whether he talks about them with somebody close to him:

I don't usually talk about my problems, but one person like that… is Neus (youth worker). I sometimes have tutoring and we talk about how we are and stuff, and some discomfort comes out and we talk about it. (Arturo, non-mentored youth).

This contrasts with the role that a mentor can play in the life of a young person, since the former takes time to be present in the life of the latter without being restricted to a specific time and space during the week, being seen as a result as someone from a more informal world [79]. The academic literature has highlighted that the informal nature of the mentoring relationships facilitates the appearance of emotional support or advice support because it allows them to arise in the context of a normal everyday conversation [71]. That is probably why it was difficult to identify the perceived social support of the non-mentored youths, who were explicit and even mentioned that sometimes it was difficult to find the support they needed.

Sometimes, if I have a serious problem, I don't know what to do. […] Well, I don't know, that nobody helps you here; well, difficult. (Mourad, non-mentored youth).

The availability and quality of the forms of support in the country in which a person is settling has been shown to have an impact on psychological distress [42]. Furthermore, support networks are important to reduce the feelings of isolation and loneliness in migrants who are settling in a new country [50,60]. Loneliness in unaccompanied young migrants appears in the absence of people who care about them and it has been demonstrated that new social contacts have a positive effect in combatting it [80]. However, in this study we have found that young migrants who did not participate in the mentoring programme lacked strong networks of support and new social

contacts. In fact, feelings of loneliness and the lack of forms of support were aspects that the non-mentored youths mentioned in the interviews. In this regard, Mustafá, perhaps because he was not able to connect with anyone who could help him to solve his problems, expresses the following.

Everything that you have to do, there is nobody that's going to help you. You always have to do things on your own, with the language or without the language. Nobody cares about your stuff; you have to do it alone. Before, in the centre, they always said "come on, I'll go with you to the doctor", "come on, we'll go with you to such and such…", "we'll go with you to look for courses." Always, everything that you're going to do, "we'll go with you." Here they don't go with you, they say: "Ok, go alone, you're an adult", but this is normal, it doesn't matter. […] When you are in Morocco, you always share things with your family, your parents… and now you live here alone. You'll always be alone. (Mustafá, non-mentored)

It has been identified that turning 18 generates a degree of psychological distress in unaccompanied youths [43]. In fact, this distress was identified in the two groups that were studied (mentored and non-mentored youths). However, independent life after leaving the residential centre they had stayed in as minors seems to affect the non-mentored youths more. Just as the mentored youths were able to identify people around them (mostly the mentors) who gave them support, the non-mentored youths highlighted this feeling of loneliness after moving to the flat of the transition to adulthood programme. This more independent life has been shown to generate greater psychological distress in their lives [46]. Rashid explicitly mentions this greater difficulty to find support after turning 18 and moving to the transition to adulthood flat.

Now since I am over 18, I have some difficulties. You have to get by on your own. You have to make a living by yourself. Nobody helps you. […] It's not like being a minor. When you are older you have to do everything alone, nobody helps you. If you want to do something, manage papers or go to an office, you have to learn to speak, learn how to do it. The difference when you are younger is that in the care centre they do everything for you. (Rashid, 19)

4.2.5 Absence of alternative educational pathways in non-mentored youths

The lack of social support also seems to have had an effect on the creation of pathways designed to continue studying at higher levels of formal education. As we mentioned, these young people have doubts about whether to continue studying in formal education or whether to seek courses that guarantee rapid access to labour market. Ahmed, another young man from the control group, also expresses many doubts about what to study. These doubts have made him do a training and insertion programme to be a sales assistant, a course in the hotel sector, as well as various adult training courses. As he comments, the youth worker told

him that he had to study before working and he promised to do so, in part, to be able to access the housing benefit. But his explanation lacks any positive mention of continuing studying at higher educational levels, like in the case of most of the young people in the control group:

"I live in a government-run flat, and when we had to enter it we had to sign some rules. These rules say that you have to study. Moreover, when we have to change the papers, we need studies, if not, they can take them away from us. So we are now studying and obtaining diplomas so that when we have the papers, they authorise us to work and we can work in many places. […] I have 4 or 5 professional diplomas: in sales, I am also studying in the hotel sector and I also want to have a diploma for hairdressing. Because if one day there is no work in sales, it won't matter, we can go to the hotel sector. If there is no work in the hotel sector, then we'll try hairdressing." (Ahmed, 18)

This strong wish to enter the labour market drives Ahmed to follow an educational path that is more focused on gaining quick labour insertion. Generally speaking, the possibility of studying higher education courses within formal education was not mentioned, nor did they mention having received messages that promoted doing higher educational studies or having had meaningful conversations with adults in their social environment that encouraged reflection on their future education. Other young people of the control group mentioned the possibility of continuing to study some courses in the afternoons, after finding a job. In this regard, another of the non-mentored youths, Youssef, makes a similar reflection to that of Ahmed with regards to the aim of gaining quick labour insertion. He explains why he prefers to continue with the training course that he is doing, instead of seeking a more prolonged path in formal education:

I am doing a PFI (training course) in cooking, waitering and catering in general, in which I work as a waiter and cook. [...] Next year, you choose only the thing you like most, I mean, if you want to be a waiter or a cook. I have considered it, but I don't know if I'm going to continue with one of cooking or waitering. Also, [the study centre] hires you if you do well. If you look for work, they help you get it, and they also hire you. So in this way I'm not going spend two years for nothing. (Youssef, 18)

Thus, taking these qualitative analysis findings into account, we suggest that in order for young people to develop this motivation to continue within formal education, it is important that they receive messages that help them reflect on this option of continuing to study at higher levels of formal education.

4.2.6 Targeted and problem-specific mentoring programs for unaccompanied youths

A programme is considered to have a targeted approach when mentoring is directed at a specifically young population and when it is designed specifically to address the challenges of this population [64]. Studies that have focused on examining the

different approaches to mentoring have highlighted that programmes that focus on the challenges of a specific population have a greater effect in terms of academic [81], psychological [82] and social [83] outcomes. One important element here is that mentors are trained so they can directly address the problems related to the group of young people they are trying to support [83]. The mentors of the Referents programme highlighted this training as very important in helping them feel equipped and able to better understand the difficulties of the young people. Here are some comments from the mentors during the interviews. They mainly highlight as positive elements of the training the possible difficult situations that may arise during mentoring and learning the legal context of the young people.

In the course, at the beginning, they told us (mentors) everything that might happen to them (mentees) […] It of course puts you in a difficult situation and I think that is very good because it's a way to make you understand that not everything is beautiful. Perhaps the boy comes to you one day and asks you something … and you don't know how to respond … (Mirela, mentor)

When you start training you don't quite understand why you have to do a training… But then you find yourself in so many situations …. And you think: "they told me that this would happen and that the other thing would happen too…" (Antonia, mentor)

They gave us the context of the current legal framework of the youths that arrive, whether they have asked for political asylum or with regards to unaccompanied minors…they tell you all about this (Inés, mentor)

The mentors also emphasised that the support of the mentoring programme was constant throughout the established mentoring period. Therefore, any doubts that arose regarding how to act were also addressed by the programme's supervising team. This made it easier for the mentors to know what to do and how to handle doubts practically the moment they arose.

I think the feedback of Helena (mentoring programme practitioner) was … We were able to speak on many occasions; I left her a lot of audios (via instant messaging), especially at the beginning about how the session (the meeting with the young person) had gone… The answers help you a little to resolve concerns and doubts that the sessions brought up and other more specific things (Miquel, mentor)

Epecially on the issue of persevering more or less with their education. For me, education is the way out of marginality, to the extent that this is possible for each person … Anything that is education is the best that a person can do … And someone of this age (talking about the mentored youths) I am very sure about this: education, education, education. The thing is that for them a work permit is important. So, of course, I asked him (the mentoring programme practitioner) if I should insist […] How far should I press here… things like that… A few guidelines to avoid putting my foot in it. (Ariadna, mentor)

5. Discussion

This research aimed to identify whether the absence or presence of adult mentors providing social support can condition unaccompanied youths' well-being and their future prospects in the new context, especially taking into account implications for their transition to adulthood. The findings of this study show the existing connections between the social support unaccompanied youth have in the receiving society, their mental health and the possibilities to construct new educational futures. Those who have less caring relationships (such as those from the control group) counted on the support of youth workers who helped them to comply with the formalities in their transition to adulthood, but most of them felt left emotionally on their own. Thus, coming of age for these young people becomes an odyssey that alters their mental health and wellbeing due to the pressure they feel when coping with housing and legal status once they turn 18 and leave the minor protection system. However, we have observed that those youths who have broader social support because of their participation in a mentoring programme improved their psychological wellbeing outcomes (such as self-esteem, resilience and youth hope), and that such support provided them with emotional stability to seek a higher educational path and achieve a safer transition to adulthood.

These results obtained with unaccompanied migrant youth corroborate prior research showing significant effects of mentoring programmes in various youth outcomes, such as resilience, self-esteem or youth hope, for youths either in care or transitioning out of the foster care system [84,85]. While some meta-analyses have shown that these effects may be modest for youth mentoring programmes in general (for example Hedges' g = 0.21; both in Raposa et al., [52] and DuBois et al., [54]), effect sizes of programmes which have a clear targeted population and are more problem-specific (such as the one we studied) tend to be higher and double those of programmes with non-specific approaches [62,86]. The evidence from this study supports this argument because effect sizes for the values studies are well above 0.50.

More specifically, with unaccompanied migrant minors, other inquiries have stressed that mentoring encourages young migrants' hope and feeling of belonging [60], as well as perceptions of social support they have in the host culture [59]. This study further contributes to this field by shedding some light on the effects on unaccompanied youth once they turn 18, considering that our quantitative discoveries show large effect sizes ('d' around 0.8) for the mentoring group on resilience (0.7), educational aspirations (0.86) and educational expectations (0.86), or medium effect sizes ('d' around 0.5) for self-esteem (0.54) and youth hope (0.45). However, we could not identify significant differences in psychological distress, probably because this variable needs a more professionalised intervention to show significant changes.

Our qualitative findings show that the mentor's availability to be present in complex situations in which youths are involved during the transition to adulthood and becoming settled explains the differences in the quantitative results between the treatment and control groups. The mentoring relationship makes it easier for the young people to share feelings that undermine their self-esteem, which can help them to create a more positive impression of themselves thanks to the conversations with mentors.

Furthermore, mentoring relationships help youths to assess their needs by becoming an important ecological resource for their resilience and strength [87]. Mentoring is an opportunity to share ideas about their own trajectory with people who guide them making decisions or even improve individual and relational resources to deal with stressful and complex events. In the same way, mentors promote a more positive vision in young people about their plans, since the messages of being patient and encouragement help the mentees to be more hopeful about their future. Therefore, all this social support also promotes higher educational expectations and aspirations, since this psychological well-being makes it easier to have a positive impression about what they can achieve in their lives. Further, mentors establish conversations about how to continue with their educational path, being guided by a person who knows how the formal educational system works and who can help to specify their self-defined educational plans.

We can therefore see how mentors are able to provide a wide range of types of support, thanks to an appropriate orientation by the programme in the goals to be addressed with the young person. The mentoring practitioners that monitor each relationship knew how to work individually with the young person and with the mentor the goals that were proposed in the relationship, which bore fruit in the different realities of each one. Those young people who needed to be introduced into new environments or to solve certain procedures, were provided with instrumental support, such as concrete or companionship support. The young people that needed certain recommendations to continue on their educational path or who needed to hear suggestions from somebody with more experience than them received advice support. Also, those who needed someone to understand or value them in difficult moments, were provided with emotional or esteem support. In addition, it is important to emphasise that this emotional support was fairly common in all the mentoring relationships.

We also highlight how the mentoring programme supervises the mentors while the mentoring relationship lasts. An important element for the mentors was the training and the issues addressed there. They emphasised that it was useful for their work as mentors to receive information about the socio-legal situation of the youths, as well as the ability of the programme to make them aware of the difficulties they may encounter during the

relationship. They also highlighted as very positive the accessibility they had to the mentoring programme practitioners throughout the relationship, since they could resolve doubts and concerns in a very direct and simple way. This made it easier for the mentors to better assess the type of support they were giving the mentees and to better understand where this support should be focused. We believe that this is a relevant finding for determining how and why mentoring interventions with unaccompanied youths can be effective in providing new support networks. We therefore suggest that the results in terms of psychological wellbeing and educational futures need to be contextualised within these elements highlighted by the programme mentors (a well-established training and a supervision or monitoring that guides the mentors with their doubts).

In contrast, the interviews with the non-mentored youths showed an absence of adults responding to their emotional needs. Youth workers are present to provide types of support that are very focused on specific problems, but they are not present in some circumstances in which youths need emotional support. This is something that we can observe in the quotes of the young people of the control group when they explain that they have to deal with many of their problems alone because they do not have anybody to count on, or when they explain that they sometimes do not know very well who to talk to about their problems. This does not mean that the youth workers can solve some of the young people's difficulties, but they are mostly focused on specific needs related to their residence or work permits and to the search for courses that guarantee them a quick job placement. This lack of support promotes feelings of isolation and loneliness that were evident during the interviews, which makes it difficult for youths to develop positive self-esteem for use in their daily lives, to be more resilient with complex situations or to have hope in a promising future. Moreover, they also show the existing and absent dialogues unaccompanied youth have with their caregivers, and how the existing social categorisation and expectations of them may be challenged with a more holistic assessment connected to their hopes and perspective.

6. Limitations and future research

This research is not devoid of limitations. It is relevant to highlight that those who participated in the fieldwork are youth enrolled in the Catalan residential programme for former youth in care. They do not represent all unaccompanied youth because a relatively high number of unaccompanied youths are not enrolled in that programme due to the few available places. Unfortunately, a significant number of them also become irregular when they turn 18, because their residence permits were either not applied for or not renewed by the relevant entity. Nor could we access as many female participants as we would have liked because of the

lack of girls in the *Catalan Federation of Residence Care Organisations*. Furthermore, there are fewer unaccompanied girls that migrate, and those that accomplished their migration journey suffer other aggregated vulnerabilities that complicate access to them. For these reasons, we cannot have an accurate vision of youth needs and difficulties disaggregated by gender.

Another limitation of this longitudinal research is the number of study participants and the difficulty in carrying out a follow-up of such a vulnerable population. The small size of our sample also limited the power of quantitative statistical analyses. Sample size may have limited the possibility of reaching significance in some of the findings obtained in this study, especially with repeated measures ANOVAs. Specifically, although we observed a statistically significant increase in self-esteem and resilience in the mentoring group and no such change in the control group, we did not find significant interaction effects with these variables. This suggests that this change could be still due to some external factors such as length of residence and housing. The legal situation of the young people can be very varied. There are young people who quickly receive a job offer and process a work permit, others can spend months waiting for the resolution of their residence permit, others have received the residency permit shortly before entering the transition to adulthood programme, and there are those whose permit has expired and have to renew it. All these situations probably have a different impact on the psychological wellbeing of the youths and it is very difficult to control them. Similarly, the length of time spent in the flats of the transition to adulthood programme can be an external factor that is difficult to control. There can be young people that are starting their stay in the flat, others who are ending it, and also within this latter group there will be differences between those who have found another housing resource for when they turn 21, those that have obtained a job offer and will now be able to live independently, and those faced with the possibility of being left without housing and cannot afford to rent a room for themselves.

Nevertheless, one needs to consider the reality of mentoring programmes for unaccompanied migrant youths: they usually involve a smaller number of youths and thus it is difficult to count on more robust samples. It is also important to highlight that we did observe statistically significant effects even with a limited sample with simpler statistical procedures (paired samples t tests) in all except for one outcome (psychological distress), and thus it is reasonable to assume that these effects would have held with a larger sample. Our study should also be replicated with more reliable measures. Several instruments in our study showed a relatively low reliability, which might have been due to language difficulties among some participants. Thus, future research should ensure participants the possibility to respond to measures in their native language. Finally, our aim was not to provide outcomes to

generalise over other contexts. Rather, we aimed to show how social mentoring interventions have relevant implications for the social inclusion and wellbeing of unaccompanied migrant youths.

Finally, we would like to highlight some recommendations for future research aiming to improve the wellbeing and health of unaccompanied youths in their coming of age. First, longitudinal studies with follow-up measurements need to be conducted in order to test the long-term effects of these mentoring programmes. In this work, we have identified significant effects of involvement in the programme on these young men's mental health and educational outcomes. However, future research is needed to determine whether these effects would continue, increase or decrease over time, and whether mentoring relationships can last beyond the time stipulated by the programme. Secondly, future studies should aim to replicate the results obtained in this research in a larger sample of unaccompanied migrant youth, and to further disentangle the complexities of their support networks and the implications they have for well-being and the construction of these young individuals' life trajectories. Finally, given that gender differences could not be explored in this research due to the absence of a necessary number of unaccompanied girls among the participants, there is also a pressing need to delve into the possible differential effects of social mentoring programmes among boys and girls.

We also consider that the findings from this research have relevant political and social implications for the social inclusion of unaccompanied youths. Our results speak to the lives of thousands of migrant youths who face the challenge of migrating to Europe on their own and lacking social support in the new context. Our findings suggest the benefits of mentoring programmes for their settlement, resilience and wellbeing, and there is a pressing need to invest more public funding in fostering their social inclusion and a safer transition to adulthood. It is worth noticing that new approaches to youth mentoring (such as Youth-Initiated Mentoring mentioned earlier) are difficult to implement with unaccompanied youths due to the lack of pre-existing networks of support, family ties or informal mentors in the new context. Thus, this research stresses that some approaches to mentoring, like the one analysed, which also aims to increase the availability of caring adults for migrant youth, is critical and favours factors that promote wellbeing among unaccompanied migrant youths.

Moreover, it is also important to highlight that mentoring interventions also need to go hand in hand with structural changes on immigration policy in order to favour access to citizenship and avoid transitions to "illegality" when the youths officially become adults [5]. Further, interventions need to go beyond the provision of basic assistance and protection. It is necessary, as Chase [88] suggests, to offer these young people supportive relationships so that they can build their most

immediate future based on fulfilling their capabilities and wellbeing.

Funding: This research was funded by the RECERCAIXA research fund (Recercaixa 2018-2021 UdG)

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee of the University of Girona) under the code: CEBRU0001-2018 (6th of April 2018).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consents were gathered from all youths. In a few cases, those who were 17 at the moment of pre-assessment (Time 1), we also asked for consent from their legal tutors (Catalan Government Agency).

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are openly available in Harvard Dataserve repository at **https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/WJFK4O**.

Acknowledgments: This study is part of the Project RECERCAIXA2017UdG, Applying Mentoring: Social and technological innovations for the social inclusion of immigrants and refugees, funded by the RecerCaixa programme, a collaboration of "La Caixa" Welfare Projects and the Catalan Association of Public Universities.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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5.1.2 Transnational family ties and networks of support for unaccompanied immigrant youths in Spain: The role of youth mentoring in Barcelona

Children and Youth
Services Review 128
(2021) 106140

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

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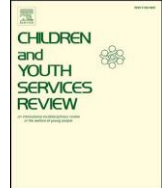

Transnational family ties and networks of support for unaccompanied immigrant youths in Spain: The role of youth mentoring in Barcelona

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A R T I C L E I N F O

Keywords:
Unaccompanied
Immigrant Youth

Family
Mentoring
Social support

A B S T R A C T

The growing number of unaccompanied immigrant youths arriving through Mediterranean routes from North and West African countries to Spain is challenging established political and social interventions. Their transition to adulthood and resettlement is made more difficult by the physical and geographical distance with their parents and the availability of networks of support in the host country. This qualitative study examines the transnational family support that unaccompanied youths receive, and the complementary support received from formal mentors in the new context. A focus group was conducted to explore the needs at this stage of life and to construct the interview guidelines. Our findings from twenty semi-structured interviews with mentored and non- mentored youth in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area during 2019 shows how the formal support provided by institutional agents is insufficient to fulfil their emotional needs. We conclude that the virtual presence of family caregivers and the different kinds of support received by adult mentors encourages them in overcoming chal- lenges regarding their well-being.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the increasing migration of unaccompanied minors through Mediterranean routes has been one of the focuses of interest of the media, non-profit organisations and various governmental agencies. In fact, according to UNICEF (2020), a quarter of the 120,560 people who arrived to Europe in 2019 following these routes were minors. Job insecurity, political instability and the violation of fundamental rights in Mediterranean and West African countries are some of the reasons that drive these young people to search for a better future in Europe (Save the Children, 2020). In the Spanish state, Catalonia is one of the regions that hosts a larger number of unaccompanied minors, housing up to 3,742 foreign minors without

family references in the protection system in 2018, a figure five times higher than in 2016 (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2020).

These minors can be detained, deported or excluded from various

forms of assistance and access to legal protection, depending on the efforts of the destination country (Menjívar and Perreira, 2017). In addition, when they become adults they continue to face a number of adversities, which are mainly related to their legal status and to the difficulty of integrating into the labour market (Allsopp and Chase, 2017; Salmerón-Manzano and Manzano-Agugliaro, 2018). These socio-legal adversities occur at a liminal stage of their lives and cause them to be immersed in a permanent temporality, in terms of achieving full integration within the destination country (Gonzales, 2016). During this period, the young people have to cope with a series of frustrations arising from the different bureaucratic and political-administrative obstacles they face, which can make it difficult for them to feel safe and develop a sense of belonging to the new environment and even affect their psychological well-being (Chase, 2019).

In recent years, a wide range of research has been carried out on unaccompanied minors, which has focused on existing legal protection, collective policies and mechanisms for determining age. However, very little research has been conducted on their special needs in terms of social support in the transition to adult life (Salmerón-Manzano and Manzano-Agugliaro, 2018). The need for future research to consider mentoring programmes with unaccompanied youths as a differential inclusion mechanism that can generate knowledge on how to develop social protection beyond the iron cage of welfare that we already know has been pointed out (Raithehuber, 2019). For this reason, we believe it is important to understand how these young people build support net- works in the new environment, how they perceive them and how they combine with the support they receive from their relatives.

In this regard, we know that family support is affected not only by

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2021.106140

Received 29 January 2021; Received in revised form 11 May 2021; Accepted 30 June 2021

Available online 3 July 2021

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physical and geographical distance, but also by the lack of knowledge their families have of the new (legal and cultural) context and by the social expectations placed in these young people to achieve the Euro- pean dream, a project that involves the whole family. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore and understand how the unaccompanied youth experience and make sense of these changes in their family and social support networks in this moment in their lives. Specifically, it explores how participation in a mentoring programme conditions the availability of support networks, complementing the social support received from relatives and professionals.

This study has focused on analysing what forms of support exist in their lives and highlighting which social agents they come from. In this article we have drawn on the forms of social support described by Cutrona (2000) and Brady, Dolan and Canavan (2015) in their analysis of "forms of social support in youth mentoring relationships". From these studies we have considered the following four forms of support: emotional support, described by these authors as the act of expressing empathy, caring and concern for others; esteem support, defined as those motivating messages that enables a person to feel that somebody believes in their ability to overcome obstacles; concrete (or tangible) support, related to providing practical assistance; and advice (or infor- mational) support, which consists of providing useful information or recommendations to somebody so that they can manage a specific situation.

2. Background

2.1. *Social support of family*

Parental support in childhood and adolescence has been extensively researched and has focused mainly on the role of the family in adoles- cent transitions (Cornwell, Eggebeen and Meschke, 1996). Although increasingly, research has also focused on the role of parents in providing ongoing support for their children in the transition to adult life (Aquilino, 2006; Fingerman, Miller, Birditt and Zarit, 2009; Schoeni and Ross, 2005), given that, at present, for many families active parenting extends beyond adolescence, with the independence of young people being a common goal (Scabini, Marta and Lanz, 2006).

The social support that parents can provide include financial and practical support, counselling, information, guidance, emotional sup- port and companionship support (Antonucci, 2001; Vaux, 1988; Wills and Shinar, 2000). Although when focusing on young adults, most studies have highlighted the importance of financial and practical sup- port, since material or instrumental support is considerable in the first stages of adulthood (Schoeni and Ross, 2005; Grundy and Henretta, 2006). However, how parents can provide other intangible forms of support, such as advice and emotional support in complex situations, has also been studied. For example, Fingerman (2000) highlights how young people in early adulthood felt supported when their mothers simply listened to them talk about their day-to-day lives. Furthermore, these intangible forms of support can also be provided in spite of geographical distance or of limited economic resources, which makes it easier for

family support to be present despite the difficulties inherent in trans- national relations (Fingerman, et al., 2009).

In this regard, Baldassar, Kilkey, Merla and Wilding (2014) point out how support practices can also be realized in transnational circum- stances, despite being affected and occurring to different degrees given a wide range of factors such as gender, class, ethnicity, cultural histories, and the structures of welfare regimes in which these individuals are immersed. Researchers have highlighted how migration does not pre- vent the exchange of support within the family, but it does affect the intensity with which each form of support is given, with emotional support being the most common form since it can be provided through letters, phone calls and internet-based communications (Baldassar, Baldock and Wilding, 2007). Therefore, this family support that unac- companied youths receive is based on a virtual co-presence, which supplements the absence of physical co-presence.

The findings of the academic literature related to maintaining family ties abroad have been focused more on unaccompanied refugee minors than on unaccompanied immigrant youths, but we believe that they may be useful for this article despite the different legal status of the two groups. In this regard, researchers have highlighted that those refugee minors that remain in touch with their families abroad perceive a greater family support that, despite the geographical barriers, has some impact on reducing symptoms of depression caused by discrimination and stressful events (Oppedal and Idsoe 2015). In the same vein, Sierau, Schneider, Nesterko and Glaesmer (2018) recognize the importance of family support for young refugees, ranking as the most important source of social support, even above the support received from friends and significant adults in the new environment.

Other articles have highlighted how difficult it is for young people tomaintain these family ties while at the same time developing a life project focused on their own interests in the new environment (Eide, Lidén, Haugland, Fladstad and Hauge, 2018; Meloni, 2019), given that the permanent attachment to these family ties can foster feelings of isolation and loneliness and be detrimental to the young person's resettlement, as well as being an obstacle to achieving full independence (Omland and Andenas, 2017). In the same vein, these studies have highlighted the importance of young people being able to establish new close social relationships that allow them to create a sense of home in the new context, similar to the one they had when they lived with their families in their country of origin (Hertz and Lalander, 2017; Wernesjö, 2014).

2.2. The role of mentoring in providing support for unaccompanied youth

Formal mentoring relationships, meaning those consisting of volunteer mentors who enter the young people's lives through com- munity programmes, have been extensively studied in recent decades (see Dubois, Portillo, Rhodes, Silverthorn and Valentine, 2011; Ehrich, Hansford and Tennent, 2004; Prieto-Flores and Feu, 2017). This is due, in part, to the rapid emergence of mentoring programmes in western countries since the turn of the century, which have focused mainly on adolescents and young people at risk of social exclusion and, in

the last few years in Europe, on the inclusion of migrants or refugees in the host countries (Preston, Prieto-Flores and Rhodes, 2019). These studies have focused on highlighting how mentoring programmes can facilitate social, cultural and linguistic cohesion of foreigners, since the mentors act as translators and interpreters in the new environment (Oberoi, 2016). They also highlight how the mentors can influence the improvement of skills related to the educational itineraries of young migrants, as well as promote a sense of belonging to the host society and encourage greater hope for their future (Feu, 2014; Pryce, Kelly and Lawinger, 2019).

Barrera and Bonds (2005) made an extensive analysis of the relationship between mentoring and social support, highlighting the different forms of social support that can be given in the natural men- toring relationship, which are primarily emotional support, cognitive guidance, positive feedback and tangible assistance. Natural mentoring relationships are those that occur within the usual relationships between young people (with relatives, friends, neighbours or professionals) and, although in this article we focus on formal mentoring relationships, it has been suggested that these need to resemble natural relationships in terms of the closeness and trust that is generated in them, in order that the impact of the relationship

be deeper (Brady, Dolan and Canavan, 2015; DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2005; Spencer, 2006).

In this regard, one might think that the youth workers of the flats in which they live would be able to develop this role of natural mentors, but several studies have highlighted the difficulty they have to generate close and trusting relationships because the young people usually see them as people who are doing their job, rather than people who are emotionally involved in their lives (Kauhanen and Kauko, 2020; Wernesjö, 2014). In fact, studies of young people in care and leaving care, argue that social care professionals are usually seen as represen- tatives of a more formal an instrumentalised world or, in other words, more focused on solving specific problems (Brady, Dolan and McGregor, 2020). This, in the Spanish context, has already been pointed out as causing a lack of adult role models, since there is also a shortage of re- sources that fully address the emotional needs of the minors, while the proliferation of reception and retention programmes (due to the large number of arrivals of minors in the last few years) has led to very negative assessment in which the young people stress a feeling of boredom and feelings of hopelessness (Bravo and Santos, 2017).

On the other hand, the mentors are part of a more informal world, so they can take time to get to know their mentees in depth, becoming adult role models for them and thus help them to cope with their situations without focusing directly on the specific problems (Brady and Dolan, 2020). This enables the young people to be able to thrive in ways that are meaningful to them and identify forms of mentor support such as: concrete and companionship support, by

being introduced to new ac- tivities; emotional support, as a source of support in their daily lives or to manage negative emotions; esteem support, due to the pride shown by mentors for the mentees' achievements; and advice support, in naturally established conversations with the young person (Brady, Dolan and Canavan 2015). It is therefore considered important to delve into the social support provided by adult mentors in the new environment and how this is combined with the support received from relatives and youth workers.

3. Methods

This article is part of the research project "Applying mentoring: So- cial and Technological Innovations for the Inclusion of Immigrant and Refugee Populations" that aims to evaluate the impact of social men- toring on different population groups of foreign origin: migrant chil- dren, young foreigners and refugee adults.

Specifically, this article was developed within the framework of the mentoring programme *Referents*, developed by the social entity *Punt de Referència* (Point of Reference) since 1998, which works for the emancipation of young people in situations of vulnerability in Barcelona. Through this programme they develop a six-month educational accompaniment with adult volunteers that establish a one-to-one men- toring relationship with young people previously in the government guardianship system. For some years now, most of the young people who take part in mentoring and in general in the different resources of the entity, are unaccompanied foreigners, essentially unaccompanied mi- nors who are part of the child protection system. They therefore lived in residences until the age of 18, when they were obliged to accept a forced emancipation that led them to a strong selection process in order to access a flat for ex-government wards, a screening process that leaves some young people completely unprotected and without any kind of social coverage at the moment of reaching adulthood. However, this study only involved young people who had their housing needs covered, mainly due to having been able to access flats for over 18-years-olds that were managed by the regional government.

The study was conducted between January and December 2019 with young people aged between 17 and 23 (M 18.80, SD 1.24) residing in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area or adjacent municipalities and mostly from Northwest African countries (mainly Morocco). Thirty in- terviews were held, ten of which were with young people that did not participate in the mentoring programme, ten with young mentees, and ten with mentors, which we will not delve into in this article. Some elements that explain the reality of the group of young people we were in contact with can be seen in Tables 1 and 2 below, which we will discuss later. Out of all of them, the presence of two young people that arrived in Spanish territory by plane with dependents stands out, who later separated from the minors in order to continue their migratory journey or return to their country of origin.

The selection of the young people was based, first of all, on finding participants in the mentoring programme that were able to answer the questions more fully (due to having the linguistic and communicative capacity to do so)

and that, above all, were motivated to speak about their daily lives and the difficulties they faced. The group of non- mentored participants was then chosen following the same criteria, and an attempt was made to find common characteristics between the groups. Table 2 shows the final distribution of the youths organized by country of origin, city of residence and year of arrival.

Access to the non-mentored group of young people was made possible by the Federation of Entities with Assisted Projects and Flats (FEPA, according to its Spanish initials), which facilitated direct contact with the participants and with the entities that accompany them. The fact that the group of participants was a hard-to-reach group was also taken into account, which pushed the study to focus on the young people's perspective of their own needs and difficulties, in such a way that they co-constructed and gave their own meaning to their experi- ences (Chase, Otto, Belloni, Lems and Wernesjö, 2019). Thus, we began this process thanks to the collaboration of four unaccompanied young migrants who contributed their perspective in a focus group. Two main issues were identified in what they said. First, the difficulties with their legal status, which are related to delays in the processing of a temporary residence permit before reaching the age of 18 and, subsequently, with the processing of a work permit. Second, they stressed the vital need to acquire an educational trajectory during the first years of resettlement that enables them to later access the labour market.

Both issues are related to the goal of achieving full independence, an aspiration that, being truncated or hindered repeatedly, ends up leading to constant emotional distress, something that the focus group high- lighted. However, they mentioned the existence of several social agents in their lives that helped them to overcome some obstacles, such as youth workers in the flats and professionals from other social entities. Following these conclusions, the script of the interviews focused on the issues mentioned by the focus group and was divided into six core sec- tions: educational/work expectations and aspirations, social support, legal status, mood, resettlement and mentoring (this last one applied only to the mentored youths).

Mentees were interviewed individually at different times and spaces by the researchers to provide an opportunity to talk freely about their experiences. The interviews were held in the flats where the young people live or, if this was not possible, in the facilities of the entities that support them, in a place where there was enough privacy for the young people to express themselves freely. We chose this procedure because we wished the interviewees to feel comfortable in expressing their opinions, since they knew the place where the interview was held, and it meant that they did not have to move to some place they did not know where they might feel inhibited. They were also able to choose the most appropriate time for them, which meant that it was the interviewer who had to adapt to the daily routines of each young person. Thus, one difficulty was related to being able to fit all the interviews in a way that matched the best times for the young people, as well as taking into account the available space.

The interviews lasted about one hour and were conducted in Spanish. This was problematic, since it meant that we were unable to interview young people who had just arrived here and lacked any knowledge of the language. We had to focus on young people that had already lived in Spain for some time and that had had the opportunity to improve their Spanish. Once the interviews and discussion groups had been conducted, the audio files that were collected were transcribed and manually coded and anonymised for further analysis.

The questions were designed to explore and understand their support networks in the new region, in order to identify whether there were differences between the different agents present in their lives, and to find out whether they had any impact on the difficulties they faced. We coded the materials using ATLAST.ti following a flexible coding strategy (Deterding and Waters, 2021), paying attention inductively to the in- formation provided. After a first coding, which was reviewed by another member of the research group, it was determined that family support had an implication in the young people's lives that we had not expected to find. As a result, we carried out a more deductive coding that enabled us to delve more deeply into transnational family support and the dif- ferences and similarities with other agents that gave them support in the new country.

For this reason, we decided to codify the content according to the

forms of social support that predominated, placing special interest in signs of care and concern (emotional support), motivating messages and recognition (esteem support), acts of assistance to address specific needs (concrete support), and also advice and recommendations that enabled them to address problems and needs related to their life trajectories (advice support). Furthermore, five categories of agents that provided different forms of support were distinguished: Family abroad, mentors, youth workers of the flats, friends/peers and mentoring programme practitioners. However, in this study we focus on the findings of the first three groups because, among other reasons, they were the most mentioned categories.

4. Findings

The findings of this study allowed us to first identify whether the supportive family ties of the unaccompanied youth were maintained, and to understand in what ways social support was maintained. They also enabled us to understand how these forms of support interrelated with those obtained from the support networks that are built in the new environment (focusing on the mentors and youth workers of the flats), observing what shortcomings or absences there are with regard to the social support they receive.

We highlight first that types of support are present transnationally in the relationship between families and young people (emotional and esteem support). We then highlight why young people sometimes need the support of new adult role models who are not their relatives. Finally, we explain the support provided by youth workers, more focused on instrumental support, and also the support of mentors, which is related to a wide variety of types of support.

4.1. Family Support: Emotional and esteem support

The family ties of the unaccompanied youth that participated in the study were maintained during the period of resettlement and transition to adult life in which they find themselves. Mainly, different examples of emotional and esteem support relative to the nuclear family were identified, given the willingness of fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and the young people themselves to remain connected virtually. This virtual co-presence was maintained practically daily, or at least weekly through internet-based communications (mostly by instant messaging). The trust that sustains these family ties is paramount, so much so that certain elements of their lives are only shared with relatives they have a very close relationship with. This is something that Mamadou, a young Senegalese boy, sums up when we discuss the people with whom he usually speaks to in his family:

> *Well, with my family, I mostly talk to my mother or my father, my siblings…or my uncles, also. We now use internet a lot, WhatsApp and stuff. […]It's that people…. It depends on the trust you have in talking about your things. My secrets, my whatever, I talk a lot about with my mother. […] I talk to my mother about everything that happens to me, about what I don't like. She also understands me and tells me it's normal.* (Mamadou, non-mentored youth)

This emotional support of concern and empathy received from rel- atives is a common element in the observations of both the young people that participated in the mentoring programmes and those that did not. We also identified comments that lean more towards a perception of esteem support. Below Rashid mentions the appreciation and recogni- tion received from his parents when we asked him specifically about what his relatives say when he explains his problems to them:

> *If I have a problem, the first one [to find out] is my brother or my father. The first out of everyone. Before anyone else. […] They tell me to have patience, that I can get there, that I can do it…* (Rashid, non-mentored youth)

Therefore, we can interpret that parents send hopeful messages to their children, encouraging the emergence of positive emotions in the face of difficulties that arise. Below we add an example in which the young person is even motivated to have positive relationships with the adults that accompany him, which could foster a more fruitful rela- tionship with his youth workers or mentors. Aliou explains the conver- sations he has with his mother and the kind of advice she gives him:

> *My mother always gives me advice. She tells me to be calm, to not do bad things to people… […] She tells me that the people who are with me… that you should always listen to these people, that you should work with these people. […] For example, where I live now… [she says] "if they give you advice or have told you something, don't say no, you have to be positive".* (Aliou, mentored youth)

On the other hand, there is an absence of exchange of information with relatives, which is caused by two main reasons. First, several youths mentioned that they do not wish to share certain negative emotions that might upset the family. Said, for example, allows us to understand that he sometimes prefers not to verbalize negative emotions despite feeling some distress:

> *Of course, they (the family) are sometimes worried about me and ask me how I am doing, how things are going here, and I tell them I am fine, well, so they stop worrying about me.* (Said, mentored youth)

Second, another impediment to the exchange of forms of support between the young people and their families abroad is the difficulty for the latter to understand the socio-political context in which their chil- dren are immersed. This is manifested mainly in the perception of the parents being unable to understand the administrative procedures the young people are involved in and the obstacles that arise from

them. Ahmed gives us an example of a situation in which his parents cannot help him:

What do papers mean, it doesn't authorize work… So many things they won't understand… […] when I tell them that I don't have work and I do have papers, but I don't have work, they don't understand it, they say "it's a lie". Because they say "you are there, you don't want to work, what do you have papers for? If you don't have papers, tell us…". This is the difference. (Ahmed, non-mentored youth)

These elements that hinder some of the parents' social support are present in several arguments around social support and the trans- national family ties that young people maintain. This is partly why the young people seek to build new networks of support in which significant adults can help them in aspects that their parents are unable to.

4.2. Social support provided by mentors and the absence of youth workers

The group of young people who participated in the mentoring pro- gramme identified multiple forms of support that complemented the absence of the parents in certain aspects of their lives. In the young people's statements, the mentors appear as a source of social support which can be identified in different forms, primarily: concrete support, advice support, emotional support and esteem support. Nordin gives a clear first example of this support, saying that he prefers to talk about certain things with his mentor rather than with his parents for the rea- sons we have mentioned. He also adds some examples of how Miquel, his mentor, is present in several tangible needs of his day to day, such as improving his use of the language and knowing new environments. Nordin responds as follows when asked about what things his parents can help him in from a distance and what things his mentors can, and whether there is any difference between them:

They are there and I am here in Spain. And here, Miquel, he's like myfather, you know? Because he teaches me things my parents don't know. […] Speaking, he teaches me a bit to study, to practise the language, Catalan and Spanish, he shows me the city, Barcelona, we are in different places… […] When I have problems, I don't want to tell them to my parents. I don't want to upset them and make them sad. I tell them to my friends and other people, likeMiquel. (Nordin, mentored youth)

It should be noted that not all forms of support appear in all relations, but several can be identified in each. The presence of concrete support in Nordin's case has already been identified. Below is an example of advice support provided by the mentor, which consists of important informa- tion for the mentee if he wants to continue studying in formal education. Furthermore, Hakim, the young mentee, explains that he did not receive this guidance from his youth workers, as he expected.

Because when I wanted to do the first course, I did a course in waitering and didn't know what courses there were… you know? I did a course for work as a waiter and as a cook because everybody does that. [The youth workers] don't tell you what there is …that you can do a PFI[1] *and then there's the middle grade… then the upper grade… […] She (the mentor) explained to me that, for example, if you don't have ESO*[2]*, you can study a PFI to do a middle grade and when you pass the middle grade you can do the upper grade and then, if you want, you can go to the university.* (Hakim, mentoredyouth)

This is not the only case in which we identify an absence of support from youth workers. In fact, in terms of narratives more related to emotional and esteem support, we detected how mentees seek this support from programme mentors rather than youth workers. We can see an example of this in the interview with Amadou when we ask him about the support he received from his family, and then we ask him if there is anybody in Barcleona with whom he can speak about such issues:

P: Well, the truth is that if I have a problem in which my heart cries a lot, most [of the time], I'll tell my mother, because she's one of the only people Itrust.

I: Ok, and wouldn't you talk about the things you talk to your mother about with other people from here?

P: Well, some, not all. I explain a lot of things to my volunteer, in fact. Because sometimes if he sees me…Because I always, if I meet with him, I am

very happy and if one day he sees me a little down, he asks "What's up?", he tells me this will blow over, even though my head hurts a little... He says "calm down", this and that. (Amadou, mentored youth)

Following this line, if we examine the interviews of the non- mentored young people more deeply, we find that it is relatively common for them not to be in situations where they can express their negative emotions or in which to feel motivated to continue their life trajectory. Mustafá, after explaining that when he has a problem he calls his parents or siblings, makes clear the lack of support from youth workers or other adults that may be involved in his life in the new environment.

P: There are problems I can solve on my own, but there are other problems I have to talk to a friend about. […] I can talk about financial problems with friends. I solve personal problems on my own.

I: Don't you usually talk to other people about them?

P: No. No need. […] Because they can't fix it for you. How are they going to solve your personal problems? It's difficult, right? What are they going to do for you? They can't do anything for you. Well, that's how it is… (Mustafá, non-mentored youth)

This response may be motivated by feelings of isolation, common among young migrants in their resettlement process, but these feelings come in part from the lack of support networks in their surroundings. Similarly, when we spoke to Ibrahim about what he does when he has a problem, we observed that nobody around him is mentioned, and yet his family remains the main source of support.

I don't know. Well, I call my family, mainly my mother and I tell her everything. So that I feel more relaxed and everything. And sometimes nothing, I just sit there doing nothing, waiting for it to pass. Patience… (Ibrahim, non-mentored youth)

We also asked all these young people how their flat youth workers could help them. Several youths made it clear that the practitioners are more focused on specific aspects of their day to day and not so much when it comes to expressing negative emotions or feeling valued. Youssef explains the following when we ask him about the support his flat youth worker gives him.

I don't know at the moment. In work issues, I think. In how to mainatin a flat. […] Keep it clean… He likes to pester, "This has to be clean, this has to be this way"… Well, he teaches you how to have a house. (Youssef, non-mentored youth)

Thus, we highlight that the support of youth workers is totally instrumentalised, focusing on very basic aspects of emancipation and the transition to adult life, a task that the young people also see as necessary. Finally, it should be noted that various mentees mentioned that they wanted to participate in the mentoring programme because they felt alone, and because they needed to cover certain needs that were not covered. Hassan, one of the mentees, responded as follows when we asked him about his reasons for participating in the programme:

As I said before, I felt alone in the centre and didn't know anyone from here, from Barcelona or from Spain. I wanted to meet some kind of friend, I wanted to know places, practise Spanish more… […] She was like a sister, I swear to you. Like I had a sister here. I trusted her, and still [trust her] to explain everything that happens to me. I can explain things to Antonia (his mentor) that I can't explain to my family. (Hassan, mentored youth)

5. Discussion

In this article we focused first on highlighting the social support provided by the family abroad and then on the social support provided by the social agents present in the new context. However, the academic literature that has examined the resettlement of unaccompanied youths has focused more on highlighting the networks of support that are built in the destination country. This is why we consider the findings of this article relevant, since they allow us to have a more holistic vision of the whole network of support that exists around them.

The family, essentially the fathers and mothers, are a source of emotional and esteem support that clearly predominates in this period of transition to adult life, having an impact on the resettlement process as well. We can see how the family gives motivating messages in the face of existing obstacles, acknowledges the young person's efforts to overcome daily difficulties, and constantly worries about their well-being. In fact, the close relationship and trust between parents and children is so unique that certain problems are only discussed with them. However, as we have already highlighted, there are certain issues for which the young people prefer to seek support from other adults. This drives the young people to have to build a support network in the new environ- ment, which facilitates their social, cultural and linguistic integration, and also helps them to find spaces in which to converse and reflect upon their own migratory process, independently of their families' expecta- tions. Therefore, relationships are established with mentors that end up also being very significant for them, thus avoiding a permanent attachment to their parents, which could be detrimental to their tran- sition to adult life and their integration in the new country (Omland and Andenas, 2017). This is something that can happen to the non-mentored youths in this study that have no mentors that counteract this lack of social support to count on.

Mentored young people build a network of support in which the different agents are involved in their lives providing complementary forms of support, all of which pursue a common final objective: the full independence of the young person. We would first highlight the pres- ence of the family, but this is followed closely by the mentors and youth workers. Maintaining family ties not only has a positive impact on the emotional management of the young people but can also strengthen the bonds that are built with new significant adults in the new country, since the messages of the parents can promote this connection. The mentors become a source of social support that can acquire both tangible and intangible forms. On the one hand, the mentees speak with their mentors about their emotional distress and receive messages of calm and un- derstanding; and on the other hand, there are also spaces of more instrumental assistance, such as the fact of practising Spanish or receiving advice about how to continue their educational path, providing a more informal support that complements the formal support of the youth workers and professionals of the entities that accompany them.

The youth workers establish themselves as adult role models when it comes to looking for courses and job opportunities or renewing the work permit, as well as fostering basic skills for emancipation. Their ability to support young people is therefore limited to more instrumentalised forms of support as previous research has indicated (Brady et al., 2020). This finding does not negate the fact that some youth workers can provide emotional and esteem support, but it does show that, on several occasions, this support of the youth workers is insufficient for the young person, which coincides with the evaluation of Bravo and Santos- González (2017) regarding the lack of resources to address the emotional needs of unaccompanied youth in Spain.

This research thus sheds some light on the need for these young people to build new close social relationships that enable them to feel at home in the new country (Hertz and Lalander, 2017; Wernesjö, 2014). Since even in the narratives of these young people there are evaluations that compare the role of the mentors with family roles; even the words that they use to define these relationships resemble those used to define the uniqueness of those that exist with parents. There is especially talk of close and trusting relationships, something which several studies focused on mentoring relationships have highlighted as essential aspects for the impact to be deeper (see Brady, Dolan and Canavan, 2015; DuBois et al., 2011; Rhodes, 2005; Spencer, 2006). Furthermore, seeing that formal mentors can play a similar role to that of natural mentors by providing emotional and esteem support indicates that the mentoring programmes with unaccompanied youth can provide differential social inclusion for this group, which goes beyond the provision of practical assistance or the covering of basic needs (Raithehuber, 2019).

In addition, we suggest that one element that may be fundamental to situate the findings of this study is the support mentors receive from the organisation's mentoring professionals, who provide training based on the needs of the young people, and also monitor the relationship on a weekly basis in order to guide the mentor. Training in mentoring pro- jects is essential to address the problems faced by a specific population, since in this way the mentor can address the needs of the mentee with greater knowledge, instead of providing support in general terms (Christensen, Hagler, Stams, Raposa, Burton and Rhodes, 2020). Moreover, this training helps mentors feel better guided in building a solid relationship with their mentees, which is important considering that an approach that is too rigid and focused only on solving specific problems can threaten the duration of the relationship (Cavell and Elledge, 2015). Therefore, we suggest that for mentoring with unaccompanied youths to be truly effective, there needs to be a well-established training focused on the building of a solid relationship with the mentee and on the specific needs of the groups.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this is an exploratory and descriptive study of support networks of unaccompanied youths in a specific setting, so that the topics discussed may lack in-depth analysis. However, writing this article has given us the ability to make some recommendations on how research on transnational family support for unaccompanied youths could be developed in the future. Although this study has been able to examine family social support taking into account support provided by people from outside the family – something that the literature on transnational family support has already highlighted as necessary to go beyond the nuclear family (Mazzucato and Schans, 2011) – another methodological approach could have provided a deeper understanding of existing support networks.

In this regard, Bernardi (2011) argues that a mixed methods approach can offer several advantages in the area of well-being of children and young people in transnational families. She argues that while qualitative analysis can address family strategies to

maintain a geographically distant relationship, quantitative analysis has the ability to reconstruct the potential and actual relational support that is avail- able in a context where interactions can be hampered by periods of separation. Further, in terms of data analysis, the documentary method could be a more suitable tool for carrying out a deep narrative analysis. This method would offer access to the pre-reflexive or tacit knowledge of the young migrants, which in this study we have disregarded (Bohnsack, Pfaff, & Weller, 2010).

Furthermore, studies on transnational families have emphasised that most research is only carried out in a single nation or state, so it only focuses on one of the two contexts involved in this transnational rela- tionship (Mazzucato, 2008). This leaves part of the family out of focus and provides a partial vision of the factors that impact such a relation-ship. This, furthermore, would be of special interest for research on mentoring young migrants. Studies on mentoring have highlighted the importance of families maintaining an active role when their children take part in a mentoring project, because the success of the relationships increases when parents are informed about what happens during the process and approve of the relationship with the mentor (Taylor and Porcellini, 2013). In this regard, it would be interesting to explore whether these elements also have some effect on the success of the mentoring relationships when there is a transnational family.

Furthermore, we must point out the limitation of this study in providing information on the social integration of unaccompanied young girls, since the sample of our qualitative study is entirely made up of men. In addition, except for one participant, they all had significant transnational family ties, which makes it difficult for us to draw con-clusions regarding the impact that the absence of family support abroad can have on the mentoring relationship. We also consider that these two issues remain under researched, so we encourage qualitative studies that enable us to delve more deeply into whether the impact of mentoring on boys is the same as on girls or whether there are significant differences. We also encourage further research into the consequences that the absence of transnational family ties has on the construction of mentoring relationships with adults in the new environment.

Ethical approval

The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Decla- ration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee of the University of Girona) under the code: CEBRU0001-2018 (6th of April 2018).

Funding

This work was supported by the RECERCAIXA research fund (Recercaixa 2018–2021 UdG)

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Acknowledgments

This study is part of the Project RECERCAIXA2017UdG, Applying Mentoring: Social and technological innovations for the social inclusion of immigrants and refugees, funded by the RecerCaixa programme, a collaboration of "La Caixa" Welfare Projects and the Catalan Association of Public Universities.

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5.2 Mentoring for young asylum seekers

In our study about young people seeking asylum, we only used qualitative methods (interviews and discussion groups). The number of people interviewed was modest (eight mentees and ten mentors). All of the publishable findings were used in the third article presented in this thesis, but in this section, we will provide further details about the characteristics of the youths who participated in the study. Five of them were women and the remaining three were men. All participants were from Latin American countries (Venezuela, Nicaragua and Honduras) except for two that were from Ukraine. They all arrived in Spanish territory between the end of 2017 and the beginning of 2019 which means they had already been living in Spain for approximately one to two years when our study took place. None of them arrived directly to the region where the fieldwork was done. Instead, they entered Spanish territory through one of the main airports in the country and were later relocated to the rural area of study by the Spanish authorities and the refugee welcoming organizations. All of them were asylum seekers at the time we interviewed them, that is, they had not yet been granted with refugee status. Some of them were married or had legally formalized their relationship status (stable partner or similar), some brought their children with them or may even have had a brother or a cousin residing in Spain, while the remaining youths had arrived alone and did not have any family support networks in the country.

The PCR programme was new and it had only run a limited number of times by the time we did our fieldwork. As a result, we found that various actors had diverging opinions and criticisms about the programme. This was something that became evident in the conversations between mentors that took place in the discussion groups. In general, the initial training was valued highly, as well as the meetings that took place between mentors to resolve doubts, including with mentors from previous editions. Although the content of the various trainings was more or less the same, the groups of volunteers highlighted that there were differences between these. Some remarked that different trainers put emphasis on different areas or sections of the trainings, while others pointed to the fact that they had not received any feedback, knowledge or tips from mentors from previous editions. In general, the programme was criticized for having too many parties and actors who were intervening in the entire mentoring process. Other mentors however were very satisfied with the training of the mentoring practitioners and felt that they were being supported.

The diverging opinions of mentors about training and monitoring may mean that it is necessary to evaluate the quality of all training sessions in order to have a clear and homogeneous discourse for all volunteers that will to participate in CPR. Managers of youth mentoring programs are required to balance multiple tasks in order to ensure that their programmes run effectively and efficiently (Weinberger, 2014). Training mentors is critically important to obtain positive outcomes from mentees and to prevent the potential harm that can result from unsuccessful mentoring relationships (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014).

It is considered that diverse discourses from mentors and too many actors intervening with different points of view can affect the success of mentoring relationships in various ways. For example, it could be detrimental for mentor self-perceptions of efficacy, which is suggested an important topic for mentee's outcomes (DuBois & Neville, 1997; Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly, & Povinelli, 2002), because some mentors can sense less attention to the development of their work, therefore feeling less prepared to support mentees. Mentors also have personal expectations about what the mentoring relationship will entail (Keller, 2005), and mentoring training has to be efficient on directing these expectations. Otherwise, mentors' expectations can be diverse because of the different imaginaries of being a mentor. Mentors' unfulfilled expectations often contribute to the demise of mentoring relationships (Spencer, 2007).

To conclude this topic, many mentors manage to seamlessly connect with mentees despite having had very little training or supervision. But mentoring does not come easily to everyone, and difficulties sometimes arise that overtax even the most skilled individuals (Kupersmidt & Rhodes, 2014), which can be detrimental for mentees' social inclusion.

Using an exploratory and descriptive approach, this study has illustrated the impact that the PCR programme for mentoring youths has had in a rural area. We consider our findings provide a useful understanding of the possibilities that mentoring can have for young asylum seekers. For a deeper understanding of this study, the interview guidelines used with mentors and mentees are attached in the Annexes section.

5.2.1 Inclusive settlement of young asylum seekers in a rural region: The role of informal support and mentoring

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Article

Inclusive Settlement of Young Asylum Seekers in a RuralRegion: The Role of Informal Support and Mentoring

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Abstract: In the last ten years, the settlement and integration of refugee families and asylum seekers have represented some of the main challenges faced by European territories. People in need of international protection can face challenges in being settled and integrated into rural areas where it is often difficult to find co-ethnic support networks. This case study provides relevant data on how the settlement of young asylum seekers is carried out in the main town of a rural area in Catalunya.It explores the impact of a mentoring programme which consists of providing informal support to newcomers in language acquisition (Catalan), as well as inclusion in the job market and social capital. We interviewed almost all participants of that programme in this rural area, gathering in-depth interviews with mentees (with eight young asylum seekers) and two discussion groups with their mentors (living in the main town of the region). Our findings showed that whereas the main objectives of the programme are providing linguistic support, social capital and inclusion to the job market, mentoring is more focused on providing emotional support and cultivating a sense of belonging. Various outcomes will be discussed which consider the types of support that were present in mentoring relationships and how bonding and bridging social capital were fostered, namely the elements that can promote a more inclusive and welcoming rural community.

Keywords: rural community; asylum seekers; settlement; social capital; social support; mentoring

Citation: Alarcón, X.; Casademont,X.; Lendzhova, V.; Erdoğan, E. Inclusive Settlement of Young Asylum Seekers in a Rural Region: The Role of Informal Support and Mentoring. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 5132. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13095132

Academic Editor: Slaven Gasparovic

Received: 23 March 2021
Accepted: 30 April 2021
Published: 4 May 2021

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1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of asylum seekers in various European countries, as well as in other parts of the world [1]. In fact, in the last decade, there have been 16.2 million asylum applications worldwide. This is primarily due to the outbreak of wars and internal conflicts in Middle Eastern countries and the departure of Venezuelans to other American countries, amongst many other reasons [2]. This situation has led supra-state, state, regional and local governments to look for new measures to meet the challenges posed by these migratory flows. The multilevel governance of migration [3] is also suitable in the asylum seekers' process of integration, and it also generates new actors from within civil society who engage in and complement the role of public authorities in this matter.

The European Union has urged its member states to develop innovative solutions in rural environments. This is due to the positive effects that several initiatives havehad in various countries, leading to the rehabilitation of rural areas, more investment in services and connections with urban areas, the improvement of infrastructures and the development of environmentally or territorially sustainable projects [4]. In other countries (such as Australia or Canada), governments and civil society have developed different

strategies to transform rural areas into safe spaces for the settlement of refugees and asylum seekers [5,6].

Asylum-seekers are individuals who are seeking international protection, specifically someone who despite having submitted a claim of asylum, he or she has not been yet recognised as a refugee. By contrast, a refugee is someone who has been recognised as a person who requires international protection, because his or her situation was evaluated and meets the criteria for being recognised with this status [7].

In legal terms, there is a considerable difference when it comes to residence and workpermits. In Spain, people who access the state reception programme (because they are asylum seekers) go through three different phases (of 6 months each) managed by non- profit organisations [8]. Firstly, they enter a phase called "temporary reception", in which they can access vocational training courses and have access to accommodation and financial support. At this stage, they do not have a work permit, but they do have a residence permit. Secondly, they enter the phase called "integration", in which they must find a place to live. This stage is characterised as such because they have a work permit for the first time,however, if they get a job they stop receiving financial support. Finally, the third phase (autonomy), in which despite continuing to enjoy the residence and work permits, they lack financial support and only have the assistance of non-profit organisations in terms of finding training courses and work. It is necessary to mention that the Spanish state establishes a limit of 6 months to respond to requests for international protection, but in reality, the response to the request may take one or even two years [9]. If international protection is denied, they lose their residence and work permits, thus becoming irregularmigrants, unless the organisations that support them find an alternative way to renew their permits [8]. Those to whom international protection is recognised, which in Spain in 2020 were only 5% of the total applications (In the same year, 60% of total applicants (114.919) became irregular because their applications were denied. The remainder, 35% of applicants, had a negative resolution, but received a temporal residence permit owing to humanitarian reasons) [10], can continue with the extension of both their residence and work permits.

In Spain, from 2015 onwards, the centralised structure of the state asylum system has been complemented by regional and local administrations initiatives which cover existing shortcomings, as well as a greater presence of social organisations in the management of the asylum process [9]. As a result of this greater decentralisation, the Catalan Government, with the collaboration of various social entities with refugee expertise, promoted the Catalan Refugee Programme (CRP) in 2017. This initiative, in addition to facilitating the access of people seeking international protection to housing resources and benefits, provides a mentoring programme through groups of civil society volunteers, who meet weekly with an asylum seeker or refugee person (or family) for a period of 8 months (extendable to 1 year) and who assist them in achieving full social and labour autonomy [11]. Since 2017, more than five hundred asylum seekers or refugee people and almost one thousand mentors have participated in the mentoring programme [12].

The aim of this article is to analyse what challenges young adult asylum seekers face in their settlement in a rural area in Catalonia and how this mentoring programme can help to alleviate the difficulties they are facing in their host society. The article aims to provide the international community with evidence that could encourage the emergence of similar social integration strategies in other territories and where it could thus be replicated. In this sense, asylum seekers positively valued having been relocated to a rural area, as they expressed positive feelings for the social proximity and tranquillity that exists in such environments, despite mentioning several challenges. The presence of mentors providing social support to alleviate the various existing obstacles is highlighted.

2. Literature Review

This section is based on asylum seekers and research studies concerning refugee integration. We considered both groups since, even though there are substantial differences between the statuses (the durability of residence and work permits, the support received from social entities, etc.), both are forcibly displaced people that have commonalities in terms of the

challenges they face during their settlement in a new community. Concretely, we refer to them getting their basic needs covered, environmental difficulties (related to culture and language), and the impact of displacement and settlement factors on their wellbeing [13]. Furthermore, the mentoring programme does not differentiate between groups in order to restrict access. In fact, considering the waiting times that exist to receive a resolution on international protection in Spain, it is very likely that part of the mentees who access as asylum seekers will receive a response regarding their refugee status while they are participating in mentoring. Therefore, a person can access the programme as an asylum seeker and end their participation by being recognised as a refugee.

Existing studies that have focused on the comparison between refugees or asylum seekers and the host population have been essential for advancing and understanding the integration process. This is especially true for those who settled in rural areas [14,15]. Asylum seekers and their host societies have a different past: the differences therein may pre-determine their personal and social resources, perception of environmental stressors, coping styles and thus affect the emotional elements of well-being [16]. There are numerous studies identifying community, family, and friends as important factors of social support of refugees in the host country. Government programs are designed to provide refugee youth and families support in their integration [17]. Prior to developing orientation programs for refugee youths, it is important to identify what young asylum seekers need in order to support their resettlement.

In the literature review, one of the main focuses is on two key psychosocial needs: developing a sense of wellbeing, including belonging; and, the ability to adapt to their new environment (e.g., pursuit of higher education, using public transportation, understanding social-cultural etiquettes, finding a job). Psychosocial needs were broadly defined as including social, security, cultural, and educational needs [17]. The rising number of asylum seekers in the world has attracted the attention of policymakers to the wellbeing of these newcomers. Wellbeing is accepted as a subjective evaluation of the psychological and emotional situation of the subject, but it also has an objective dimension that is determined by the material conditions in which they live. This multi-dimensionality pushed us to question both the subjective evaluations and objective conditions of the asylum seekers. The well-being of an individual is dependent upon several factors operating at different levels. Psychological individual resources, social ecology and culture/values are listed as three core domains of the wellbeing of refugees [18]. Psychological resources are individuals' coping strategies, whereas social ecology refers to the support received by the asylum seekers from their families and communities. The compatibility of the culture and values with the host community also contributes to the wellbeing of them. Most importantly, the relationship between the asylum seekers and the community has a direct effect on their well-being.

The second group of effects that impact the settlement of asylum seekers in different ways (via the mentoring relationship) is social capital. There are a number of definitions for social capital, however, they all have in common that the term refers to "social networks, the norms of reciprocity that arises from them, and the value of this to achieve (mutual) goals" [19]. Some authors define it within the context of individualism, whilst others define it as a group or community milieu [20] asserting that social capital is not an individual feature, but rather is "a group-level phenomenon". They have posited that individuals cannot create social capital by themselves since it is more than the summing of individuals' social capital. Social capital involves mutual trust, reciprocity, groups, collective identity, working together, and a sense of shared future. Putnam [21] defined social capital as "fea- tures of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit".

There are two fundamental aspects of social capital: bonding and bridging. According to Emery, Fey and Flora [22], bonding social capital refers to close and repeated ties which operate to develop a community. Flora and Flora [20] indicated that these ties may be emotionally charged and based on class, ethnicity, and gender, or like characteristics. Members of a group with high bonding capital tend to be familiar with one another through different community settings or roles. Emery et al. [22] indicated that bridging social capital involves ample ties that link organisations and communities together. This enables community groups to connect with one another in addition to outside groups. Bridging social capital brings people together for

singular purposes. When bridging and bonding social capital are high, communities are prepared for action and hence outcomes can be realised [20]. Simpson [23] stated that those who enjoy a high level of social capital are usually those who feel a strong sense of belonging, a willingness to participate in community activities, and a commitment to work toward the future well-being of the community. In these communities, social inclusion and participation by diverse community members are valued, and increased potential opportunities are an outcome of interactionand participation in networks rather than merely functioning as a process.

In addition to the many difficulties of being an asylum seeker, youths also encounteradditional challenges in their new homes. As the transition into early adulthood is already dominated by physical, mental and emotional development [24], it makes the integration process inherently more complex and problematic. Many of them do not possess sufficientlanguage skills, as they have no opportunity to learn the language of the host country before leaving their own country. The language skills possessed by youths have important consequences beyond academic success/failure: it also affects their employability in the labour market and the establishment of healthy communication with others within their environment. This incompatibility may lead to discrimination by the host community in the social domain [25,26].

The process of discrimination and prejudice is a base component of Allport's contact theory which has analysed the effect of direct contact and mass-mediated contact on attitudes towards refugees. The role of intergroup contact can be modified by contact with individuals from other (ethnic) groups under certain conditions [27]. This hypothesis, also known as the intergroup contact theory, was proposed by Allport [28] and it has emerged as "a widely used framework in the study of intergroup relations and intergroup prejudice" [29]. It postulates that intergroup contact reduces prejudice between membersof traditionally opposed racial groups [30,31]. Consequently, individuals who have (direct) contact with immigrants or refugees (which is the case in current study), should have more positive attitudes towards them than individuals who lack contact with these groups [32]. On the other hand, there are also many difficulties in being a migrant in rural areas.

The forms, frequency and types of contact can be a key prerequisite that contributes to the integration of immigrants to the host community. This occurs by fostering positive inter-group relations and the reduction of negative stereotypes and prejudice [28,33]. According to Hynie, the contact between asylum seekers (refugees) and host communities has a very unique function in the rural areas. Many different studies showed that the quality of the contact is more important than its quantity. Feelings of intimacy and equality between group members, having common goals and motivation to cooperate as well as institutional norms, are listed as the preconditions of a qualified contact which expected to have a positive impact [33]. Some scholars have highlighted the importance of the context of the settlement of asylum seekers [34]. Weidinger and Kordel [35] note the recent tendency of the increasing number of asylum seekers distributed in rural areas and have highlighted two main reasons for this. Firstly, a wide distribution of asylum seekers not only to big cities but also to rural areas, and secondly, the need to redistribute the cost of integration through different tiers of government. Proietti and Veneri [1] claim that the percentage of asylum seekers in rural areas has increased since 2011 in many European countries.

The resettlement of asylum seekers or refugees to rural areas has both advantages and disadvantages. Firstly, since the number of residents of rural areas is relatively small, newcomers may have more opportunities to make contact with locals and it may create a positive environment for social cohesion. Hence, it is known that many countries prefer the resettlement of immigrants into small communities. Moreover, the settlement of asylum seekers is often perceived to reduce demographic and economic decline, as well as function- ing as a way to increase the funding from the central to local governments [36]. However, some studies show that refugee settlements in rural areas have created an adverse effect: resettled refugees have sometimes failed to develop social networks, faced discrimination and become isolated, mostly as a result of the lack of a co-ethnic community [33]. For instance, "the location of social housing in rural areas, when leave to remain is granted, may further instill feelings of isolation. Additionally, the lack of receptiveness of local people may exacerbate

feelings of exclusion, which can lead to further deterioration of asylum seekers' mental health" [37]. Others claim that in rural areas, refugee inflows tend to increase support for anti-immigrant policies [38]. On the other hand, metropolitancentres seem to be more advantageous for the resettlement of migrants as their multi-ethnic composition may facilitate the process of integration [39].

3. Materials and Methods

This article is a case study that seeks to analyse the integration of asylum seekers who were involved in the CRP in rural areas. It is primarily based on in-depth interviews and focus groups with eight asylum seekers and ten volunteers. As mentioned in the introduc- tion, the aim of this program, which is implemented by the Catalan government with thecollaboration of local authorities and social movements, is to facilitate the settlement of asylum seekers with the collaboration of a mentoring program.

The study was carried out in a small rural area in the province of Girona. This region has hosted economic immigration over the last 20 years, and has a long tradition of implementing immigrant integration policies. It is difficult to know how many asylumseekers there are in this area because the Spanish Home Department publishes the data by provinces or autonomous communities, but not by municipalities. We know that in the entire Girona province in 2019, 756 applications for international protection were made, which means 0.6% of the total applications for that year. Therefore, this region has a smallshare of asylum seekers' demands in comparison with other Spanish regions. For example, in the same year, the provinces wherein there were the most applications were: Madrid (47%); Barcelona (10%); and Valencia (4.7%). Each of these three territories has very denseurban areas [40].

This area was chosen because it was the rural territory where there were more mentor- ing relationships. The interviews and discussion groups were conducted at the facilities ofthe social entity which supports asylum seekers since it is a space known to mentors and mentees. There were no major problems when it came to the language because they were made in Spanish or Catalan according to the knowledge of each person. They were mostlydone in Catalan with the mentors and in Spanish with the mentees. The approximate duration of the interviews was one hour and one and a half or two hours in the case of focus groups.

We conducted the interviews and focus groups whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the data and the anonymization of the results. The anonymization was carefully per- formed with the aim of keeping the balance of showing as much information as possible but, at the same time, anonymizing the personal stories, data and context. This was done in order to avoid the identification of participants, especially the most vulnerable, and who have been victims of war and/or social and political persecution. In this sense, the data of the fieldwork where this information appears is kept in a single computer and in a repository of secure files on the servers of the University of Girona following the indications contained in the guide of ethical recommendations of the European Commission regarding the research with refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. The Ethics and Biosafety Committee of the University of Girona approved the research protocols and deontological criteria to be followed vis-à-vis informed consent.

During the selection process of the people to be interviewed, priority was given to people who had recently closed the relationship, as their memories and lived experiencesare still fresh and thus less susceptible to misrepresentation (i.e., what neuroscience refers to as "the phone game") [41]. On the other hand, groups that were at an advanced stage ofthe relationship and were still formally participating in the CRP mentoring programme were also selected. Finally, those participants who had been meeting for a few weeks were discarded because the information they could provide was limited and the impacts ofthe programme could have little visibility. In total, information was collected from five mentoring relationships which are still active and three which have recently closed.

Regarding the mentees, a total of eight asylum seekers participating in five mentoring relationships in the programme were interviewed. Each of these participants was from the middle city and a nearby town. Most of them live as a couple, some with their children and some with their parents remaining in their home country. They had been living in the areafor more

than a year when they were interviewed, but no more than five. None of them chose to live in the municipality where they resided, rather they were resettled to the areaafter having lived in big cities for a few months. All of them have a similar administrativestatus: they are asylum seekers (they have the "red card", a personal identity document of asylum seekers in Spain) and have similar ages (between their early twenties and early thirties). However, the educational, socioeconomic and countries origin are diverse. Many spoke Spanish as their mother tongue (those that came from Latin American countries) whilst the others were from Ukraine and had little knowledge of Spanish and Catalan.
The mentors participated in two focus groups and a semi-open interview representinga total of ten volunteers who integrated six mentoring relationships. In terms of gender composition, the focus groups also reflect the majority presence of women amongst the program's volunteers. Nine out of ten were women. In the case of mentors, the age profile varies considerably from the age of twenty to seventy, including young people involved in the associative movement all the way to retired people. All were aware of the existing social inequalities and the need to engage actively in the reception of immigrants and, more specifically, of asylum seekers and refugees.
Once the interviews and discussion groups were conducted, the audio and audio- visual files that were collected were transcribed and manually coded and anonymized for further analysis. All but one of the interviews and groups could be recorded with a mentored person at their request. In this case, notes were taken, and the content was quickly transcribed to maintain, as far as possible, the literalness of his words.
We coded the materials using ATLAST.ti following a flexible coding strategy [42], paying attention inductively to the information provided. Categories were created taking into consideration what mentees and mentors said during interviews and focus groups. These categories were: Initial mentoring expectations; Future mentoring perspectives; Emotional wellbeing; Catalan language; Social capital; Labour sphere; and, Impact on mentors' environment.
The quotations included in the Results section were anonymised with common Span-ish names in order to protect the identity of mentees and mentors. Female and male Spanish names were used for differentiating interviewees by sex.

4. Results

4.1 Prior Perceptions of Mentees and Mentors of the Mentoring Programm

This section presents the results in relation to the previous perceptions of mentors and mentees regarding the mentoring process. This analysis is relevant since it allows us to identify the challenges asylum seekers faced, as well as identifying similarities and differences in expectations between mentors and mentees. Previous perceptions have allowed us to identify interests, priorities of mentoring relationships and previous perceptions regarding otherness: this has allowed us to better understand mentoring relationships and therefore the impact of the programme on the rural community asa whole.
In the case of the mentees, their interest in the relationship with the volunteers was related to the facilities they could obtain for their integration within the new environment. Concretely, they highlighted the possibility of improving the use of the language, getting to know the socio-cultural environment in which they are immersed better, and expanding their social network.

It was a programme that (. . .) where we could meet people who (. . .) the environ-ment (. . .), people who live here and who master the language, know the customs and traditions, have a network of friends (Felipe, mentee).

However, some mentees expressed some distrust at first about volunteer participation. One of the participants even explained that he did not understand why there were people in the country of settlement who wanted to help him voluntarily. Finally, these uncertainties and doubts disappeared once they got to know each other, and some trust was generatedwith the mentors when the potential of the relationship was perceived.

Here, and everywhere, there are good people and bad people, but one cannot be with that

anxiety or that fear that they are going to hurt you. I thought so. So, I didn't want to know anything, why I said (. . .) and well, it is essential to know people like that because they help you to integrate into society, both socially and professionally, as well as in traditional matters, to know all this. And we were very interested. We were interested in being aware of everything, practicing the language a bit with them too . . . (Antonia, mentee).

Furthermore, they commented that, at the beginning of their relationship, they as- sumed that it would be a very institutionalised and formal one, a perspective that changed over time and once the relationship was guaranteed. This confirms that formal mentoringrelationships, despite being produced through the intermediation of a community social in- tervention program, can become similar to a natural mentoring relationship, namely thosethat occur in a usual way with people from one's own environment (i.e., friends, family, teachers . . .). Different authors have pointed out that formal mentoring relationships must resemble natural relationships to be truly effective, something that mostly occurred in thementoring relationships that are considered in this study [43,44].

At first, I thought it was very formal. In other words, that it could be something more institutional, a few hours . . . And no, no, totally flexible everything . . . Firstly they tell you that it is something you can give up when you want. You do not feel obligated. I do not feel compelled to meet with them, (if) it arises, we always have time (Ana, mentee).

Regarding the expectations of the mentors, most of them had some concerns and expectations before becoming part of the program. Logically, these perceptions are con- ditioned by the profile of the mentors, who already stood out for having an important sensitivity in issues related to migration, cultural diversity, North–South relations, etc. Likewise, most of these people defined themselves as politicised, not because of their mem- bership in political parties or for having a position at the institutional level, but because of their engagement in social and cultural organisations. Amongst the main motivations thatencouraged them to participate in the programme are a desire to help other people, as well as to be able to take practical action. Beyond having empathetic and supportive attitudes towards the situation of refugees and asylum seekers, what motivated the volunteers most was the possibility of being able to take concrete actions that would serve to improve theirsituation. Other more personal interests were also mentioned, such as being able to knowfirst-hand the situation of the international conflicts that led to the flight of asylum seekers,such as the conflict in Syria, as well as others.

Take some time to see what's going on, to see why people are moving. I was also partly selfish about it, about being sociologically interested in what's going on with these people who are moving . . . right? Different situations. All of us (referring to the teammates in the volunteer group) we were more or less looking for the same (Natalia, mentor).

In some cases, volunteers explicitly emphasised that their initial expectations did not revolve around making close friendships with mentees. In this sense, the chances of establishing an emotional bond with them were rather low.
It was not my expectation. If it took up perfect, but I was not going to make friends. Iknew my job was another (Inés, mentor).

In addition to the motivations and expectations, volunteers had doubts about how the mentoring programme would be developed. Some of these questions were due to a certain lack of information regarding the program, and others were with how the mentoring activity would be concretised. Most mentors believed that their participation was related to the following activities: knowledge and discovering of the new environment; attendanceat social and cultural activities in the new municipality; and, having meals and exchangingor hanging out with other people, etc. Given this, most of the previous ideas were orientedtowards activities that promote knowledge and familiarisation with the host city, as well as fostering meetings, participation and interaction with other people, specifically through various social and cultural activities.
Moreover, some mentors had previous concerns about their role towards mentees. In general terms, they were aware that their role was to accompany and provide support, and those paternalistic attitudes should be avoided since these greatly hinder one of the implicit

objectives of the program, namely the promotion of autonomy of mentors.

4.2 *Impact of Mentoring on Mentees*

Mentoring relationships impacted the settlement and integration of asylum seekers in different ways. However, they all have in common the ability that mentoring had in providing greater psychological and emotional well-being, due to feeling more supported by the presence of people in their lives who are fully available to them. Additionally, we look at the implications of this mentoring relationship in building a community with broader social capital that benefits both mentors and mentees.
Firstly, we highlight the ability of mentoring to provide companionship and social support to those people who were experiencing their rooting process alone. Lack of social support and separation from family members were aspects that, as different authors have highlighted [45], generate discomfort in the mental health of refugees and asylum seekers, mainly because of feelings of isolation and discriminatory or exclusionary experiences in the new environment. The young asylum seekers in this study highlight how the presence of mentors in their lives generated a sense of "family" or, at least, meant a safe space in which to share an activity that allowed them to put aside concerns related to the migratory process they were experiencing and thus reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

For example, in my case, alone in the sense that I do not have the family and feeling alone is something that we cannot avoid. Many familiar things are needed. But the foundation has supported us a lot, the mentors have given us their support in what they have been able to do, that is, we could say that we are not alone either. Feeling is one thing, but reality is another. With mentors yes, good, there are these hours of conversation, coffee and sharing. They make you busy and think less (Ana, mentee).

Furthermore, the accompaniment of mentors to asylum seekers was also perceived as useful because they could ask questions and receive advice, recommendations, and practical information. The mentees explained that this social support through advice could help them address the different obstacles that they encountered in the new environment. As such, they had more information on how to access the various existing services.

Recently we've turned to them a lot. It is not for solve our lives through them, but if in the case they know something, they can notice us. As a point of reference (Felipe, mentee).

It should be noted that one of the most significant impacts of mentoring relationships was the improvement of the emotional well-being of asylum seekers. Mentees reflected in the interviews how all this social support received had an impact on feeling more supported in aspects that affected them emotionally. In fact, the presence of forms of social support such as emotional support when they have felt alone (as we will see below) or advice and support, without perceiving it as an intrusion into their lives, suggests that in general these relationships were naturally, well established and close [43].

On the emotional side they have helped me a lot. When I felt more alone, they supported me (Sara, mentee).

In addition, we see how these mentoring relationships not only helped to strengthen ties within the rural community, but also led mentees to have more resources to access services, as well as feel they are more connected to the day-to-day life of the community, its traditions and the people who make it up. Therefore, mentors achieved the role of translators and guides in the new environment, with a special presence in the practice of the Catalan language in different relationships as a significant resource to better understand the functioning of the society in which asylum seekers are settled. The mentees expressed this as being relevant in accessing the labour market as well as public and/or private services.

Because at the beginning of the programme it was very, very good. It is good chance to practice language and they have been told many things from here like the festivities (local or national), the life here . . . (Manuel, mentee).

It is important for the job. To go to the doctor, to the supermarket, to the hairdresser. Language (Catalan) is very important here. The important fact for me is to understand it. Even if you cannot write it, understanding it is important (Sara, mentee).

These quotes, therefore, illustrate how these mentoring relationships fostered the creation of links between the host society and newcomers, which may have strong impli-cations for the social capital of the rural community as a whole. In fact, we consider that the mentoring relationships helped in the construction of bonding social capital since both groups highlighted wanting to continue with this relationship after participating in the program. As we have been arguing, mentoring relationships had an emotional support function characteristic of close emotional relationships. In fact, mentors and mentees initially thought that the mentoring relationship was not going to generate close ties of friendship, but in the end, they reflected that a friendship had been achieved between them.

In the end, a very friendly relationship was developed. We do not feel that they are the mentors and that they are there to . . . no . . . It is very natural. They were two people we met, who gave us their support as far as they can . . . we know that we can ask them for help at certain (times) and we know that they are open to give it to us (. . .). We have never thought that they are people who are going to leave at a certain point . . . At first yes, (it was) to help us with the language, but . . . it exceeds the expectations (Ana, mentee).

With the passage of time mentors also saw the capacity that this relationship could have in terms of strengthening ties (and not only having a tangible utility) for the mentors. Some mentors highlighted this change in perspective, understanding that the relationship had changed over time and had been established in a more horizontal and natural way.

Our task has been to give a space in which people can be people, where they are contemplated from an equal perspective (Gina, mentor).

In the end, we have greatly exceeded the limits that we had set ourselves, but because it comes naturally to you and you feel calmer that way (Natalia, mentor).

Friendship relationships that are close and have emotional implications for people are often understood as bonding social capital [46]. In fact, we considered bonding social capital to be the main characteristic of mentoring relationships in terms of social capital. However, these types of close relationships can also have a bridging social capital func- tion [46]. That is, it can provide access to information and to other groups or individuals not previously known to others [47]. These bridging relationships in which mentors act as bridging social agents were effective in accessing public service centres where they did not know, at the time, exactly how the system worked. As an example, one of the asylum seekers pointed out that on one occasion her mentors supported her by accompanying her to the health centre in order to assist her understanding of how it worked.

We didn't understand about the CAP (CAP stands for Community health center) and yes, one of the mentors accompanied us, because she is super close to us, and she knew how it worked (Carmen, mentee).

In the same vein, the bridging social capital was evident for providing substantial information for access to resources and also feeling more secure or protected against possible difficulties that could arise when reaching a public or private service. Additionally, thanks to the mentors' social network, the mentees could also benefit indirectly. This can be identified in terms of a more material nature, but also in terms of connections with other people that were relevant to the mentees. For example, mentors used their networks of contacts to help asylum seekers when they moved into their own home since they knew that several people in the community leave their furniture and other household items in a warehouse.

There was an initiative based on a lack (of the reception system) to store and collect furniture and sheets . . . all that is necessary for the house because it is something that is not covered. The removal theme is not contemplated. Some people from our group went to look for

furniture, beds . . . whatever they need. It is kept in a warehouse and all this work is done by volunteers (Irene, mentor).

They helped me find it because I had nothing. I was on the floor. They helped me find beds, tables, plates, chairs, furniture, blankets . . . well, everything from a house. They helped me. They helped me to go up to it. They brought a van and helped me (Antonia, mentee).

This more indirect benefit of mentoring relationships involving the mentor's social network could be seen in other relationships. For example, a mentee described that her mentors had helped her get clothes for her baby because the mentors' friends gave them baby clothes knowing that they could be of use to the mentee. In addition, as we had mentioned, bridging social capital could also be identified in terms of connecting the mentee with other people who could help him in a specific aspect. As an example, a mentee explained to us that on one occasion, a friend of the mentor was able to take her toa medical visit (in a city near the town). The lack of public transportation services meant that she needed someone to drive her. Mentors gave other examples of how their networkof friends could help the mentees in their social inclusion. In this case, we give an exampleof some mentors who, thanks to a friend, were able to send a job offer to their mentee.

We also introduced her to a friend of ours, of whom we are very close friends and who could offer her a job . . . and he offered it to her (Maria, mentor).

In conclusion, we wish to highlight the ability of mentoring in helping to build thesebridges between asylum seekers and the rural community. In turn, this helps to build a more cohesive society wherein asylum seekers feel more integrated and where they also are empowered with greater agency to overcome obstacles.

The simple fact of meeting them and that they are from here already meets our expectations of meeting people from here . . . (Mentors) are our only relationship with people in the environment, and those that they can present to us in the time of these meetings (Ana, mentee).

It is essential to meet people like this because they help you to integrate into society, both socially and professionally. (Felipe, mentee)

4.3 Impact of Mentoring on Mentors

The impacts of mentoring amongst mentors can be divided into the personal sphereand their immediate environment. At the personal level, the mentors positively value the experience since participation in the programme has allowed them to know first-hand the situation of asylum seekers. It is unlikely they would have had the opportunity to know this if they had not participated. This experience has enriched them personally, andin particular allowed them to work on values related to empathy, solidarity, respect and active listening.

Finding two worlds that would not have met otherwise, or that would have been much more difficult for us to have established a relationship without the program. And then the positive part of the fact that it's like that, that even though it's not as natural as arelationship you make, you also go slowly, trying to listen to the other . . . (Natalia, mentor).

The experience, let's say, enriches because you have the opportunity to meet different people, and see your reaction to that . . . (Roger, mentor).

They have also been able to learn about aspects related to other cultures. Cultural exchange, whether based on languages, history, traditions, gastronomy, music, or literature, is one of the most important aspects. It not only serves to learn new things, but to question one's own cultural traditions, and fight against prejudice, stereotypes and ethnocentric attitudes [30,31].
Beyond the individual impact of participating in the mentoring program, it has also had an impact on family and friends. As mentioned, when talking about the profile of mentors, most have pointed out that their family and friendship circle is already made upmostly of people who are sensitive to the reality of asylum seekers and this complicates the detection of

substantial changes in discriminatory or racist attitudes. However, the fact of having first-hand knowledge of the reality of asylum seekers, as well as having the opportunity to know the vicissitudes faced by asylum seekers when settling into the new society, have allowed them to be more aware of what the process of reception and integration involves. Interaction, face-to-face relationships, and first-person testimonies are considered key to contrasting information that often circulates in a vague way, and which presents asylum seekers and refugees as privileged people, or who receive a favourable treatment by the administrations. This is one of the most prominent elements for mentors: it shows that beyond the personal dimension, mentoring relationships allow the base to bebroadened vis-à-vis attitudes and thus the defence of equality and non-discrimination in relation to origins.

When they say nonsense things about what they charge or that they (government) give help to outsiders but not to people from here. These things, when you know the whole bureaucratic issue . . . you can say "no because the red card . . ." (laughs) (Irene, mentor).

Well, at least those stupid things that people say about where the money comes from (for help them), or this theory that only outsiders are helped . . . this is something that is said here (anonymized), I think maybe that can have an effect (Cristina, mentor).

However, one of the issues that the mentors have also considered useful in their participation in the programme was the possibility of "standing in front of the mirror". In other words, to be aware of the privileged position that some people have in society, especially in the case of white, middle-class people who do not suffer the multiple discriminations that affect diverse minorities. Mentoring relationships involve becoming aware of the multiple situations of inequality that affect Western societies today, as well as questioning the origins of the unequal relations that affect the planet as a whole. This includes relations between countries from the North and the South.

5 Discussion and Conclusions

This study shed light on the integration of young asylum seekers in rural areas, focusing on how a social mentoring programme can impact upon overcoming obstacles and difficulties in this new environment. Some previous studies have shown that refugees or asylum seekers in rural areas can face episodes of discrimination, have difficulties in creating networks of support and encounter a lack of receptiveness by local people. In turn, this can exacerbate feelings of exclusion and loneliness [33,37]. However, this paper shows that a well-established mentoring programme can foster bonding between the host com- munity and asylum seekers. This makes it easier to avoid the development of feelings of isolation and, therefore, build greater psychological well-being. A very important finding in this study is the fact that establishing contact with the asylum seekers would reduce negative attitudes, negative stereotypes and prejudice towards them. Intergroup contact can encourage the development of integrated, and less stigmatised, newcomer identities, and also foster positive intergroup relationships. The positive impact of intergroup interactions between asylum seekers and locals, as described above can become a prerequisite of social support. These can include feelings of intimacy and equality between the group members, having shared goals and cooperation to achieve them, and institutional norms which support positive intergroup relationships.

It was seen how mentors were present in the lives of mentees by delivering different types of social support. They were providers of instrumental support which complemented the support provided by social organisations. It is highlighted how the mentees were supported and accompanied to the accessing of public services, as they still did not accurately understand how they worked or, to supply the absence of services giving them support. Furthermore, the advice and information they received was helpful for mentees when they had doubts, due to a lack of knowledge of the environment, something which can have implications both in social life as well as in the labour market. Although something characteristic of relationships is that, in spite of there not being an initial approach of the programme about providing the mentees with emotional support and that mentors also did not expect to create a relationship of such closeness, the mentors were nonetheless a very significant source of emotional support. These

expressions of support were more related to empathising, understanding and listening to the other. In conjunction with the other types of social support that were identified, these were the key to maintaining the young people's psychological and emotional well-being [43,48].

The mentees mentioned having the expectation of being able to improve the use of the language, better understanding the sociocultural environment in which they were settling and expanding their networks. These concerns had a special impact on this groupof asylum seekers since they influence their settlement and integration. Moreover, they are also elements that can condition different significant events of their early adulthood, such as entering the labour market [49,50]. In the Catalan context, the knowledge of the Catalan language is highly important amongst the set of integration policies for immigrants promoted by the Catalan Government and is determinant for access to the job market, or to develop a fully independent life in the environment given that the population of Catalonian rural areas makes greater use of Catalan in their day-to-day life than the population of urban areas [51,52]. The development of language skills (or practicing Catalan more frequently thanks to mentors) has an effect in the work and personal sphere, also helping to reduce the risks of suffering episodes of discrimination in asylum seekers' social lives [25,26].

The knowledge of the host society was produced thanks to the desire of mentors to become translators and guides in the new environment. They explained the characteristics of the host society to asylum seekers and gave them resources to help them become autonomous. In this sense, it has been highlighted how mentors can exercise this role as institutional agents, facilitating access to certain resources that, in the absence of such a relationship, would not have been obtained [53,54]. The ability of the mentors to detect the necessary resources and transmit them (or to provide important information to the refugees) was perceived by the mentees as a great source of support. The practice of the local language, Catalan, knowing how decisive it is to understand the functioning of the environment is an example, but we also saw it when the mentees asked for information and advice, since the mentors were "a point of reference", as one of the mentees said.

Mentees perceived the mentoring relationship as a great advance vis-à-vis integrating into some social circle that would allow them to have greater access to resources. This is observed in the ability of the mentors to move resources and make them available to the mentees, for example, when they were looking for a flat and had difficulties with transfersand furniture. The mentors mobilised their own resources to fill this gap that they saw in institutional support. They organised themselves to have a warehouse to collect what other people in the community were no longer using and they also organised support of the transfers. Therefore, we see how the mentoring served to channel a series of resourcesthat were present in the social capital of the host community, and that without the bonding with asylum seekers, this bridging social capital would unlikely have occurred.

Furthermore, it was observed how these relationships, which were initially perceived as something that could be highly institutionalised (and which generated distrust in the mentees due to previous discriminatory experiences), finally became very close relation- ships. Therefore, mentoring can promote the existing bonds of social capital in a community, since the ties between these young asylum seekers and the established people of the area were strengthened, which in turn facilitated the establishment of bridges that allowed the transmission of significant resources [22]. Considered together, all this suggests that mentoring has the ability to make two groups that coexist (and with low bridging and social capital bonding between them) nonetheless get to know each other and cooperate for the future of the community. In the process, they will expand their social capital thanks to the mutual trust established and being able to work together for a mutual benefit [21].

The mentors were a group in the community that had a strong interest in participating in community activities and in working for the future of the community. This indicates they already were a group that had high social capital [23]. Moreover, being involved in a mentoring programme was the channel that allowed the transmission of meaningful resources to the asylum seekers. However, it is noteworthy that they also acquire benefits from this relationship, because understanding better the reality of asylum seekers, they are better prepared to combat discriminatory discourses that circulate within their community. This promotes a more

welcoming rural community with more resources to face its own future with a more inclusive perspective.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, V.L. and E.E.; methodology, X.C.; formal analysis, X.A. and X.C.; data curation, X.A. and X.C.; writing—original draft preparation, X.A., X.C, V.L. and E.E.;writing—review and editing, X.A.; visualisation, X.A.; supervision, X.A. All authors have read andagreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research was funded by the RECERCAIXA research fund (Recercaixa 2018–2021 UdG). This publication is based upon work from COST Action CA18213 Rural NEET Youth Network, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology); www.cost.eu.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee of the University of Girona) under the code: CEBRU0001-2018 (6 April 2018).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consents were gathered from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to ethical reasons.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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6 Conclusions

6.1 Contributions

The published articles show us that mentoring can play a fundamental role in the settlement of migrants in the host country. Mentoring has an impact on the expansion of social support networks, psychological well-being, educational futures, and access to social capital. Both, in the study with unaccompanied youths from the Referents programme and in the study with youths seeking asylum from the PCR, a wide variety of types of support from mentors can be identified. The impact of these different types of support are similar despite the difference in contexts. The methodological differences between the studies mean it is not possible to determine whether one programme is more or less impactful than the other. However, we can establish that the areas in which mentoring had an effect were very similar across both studies, which shows us that mentoring can be effective in facilitating the social integration of young foreigners.

The study with unaccompanied youths shows the connections that exist between the social support that the youths have in the receiving society, their mental health, and the possibilities for constructing new educational futures. The quantitative findings with unaccompanied migrant youths corroborate prior research showing the significant effects of mentoring programmes on various youth outcomes, such as resilience, self-esteem or hope for both youths who are in care or who are transitioning out of the foster care system (Spencer et al., 2010; Dolan et al. 2011). The size of the effect for the values studied are well above 0.50, which supports the findings of meta-analytic studies that pointed out a weaker overall effect for programmes aimed at general youth population compared to those that have a clearly targeted population (Raposa et al., 2019).

Qualitative findings from the first article show that mentors are figures who can be present and available in complex situations that the youths are involved in during the transition to adulthood and in the process of becoming settled. The mentoring relationship makes it easier for the young people to share their feelings and issues with self-esteem. This can in turn help them develop a more positive sense of self. Furthermore, mentoring relationships present an important ecological source for youths' resilience and strength (Berger Cardoso, et al., 2017). Also, it reinforces the ability for mentees to become more patient while providing an encouraging relationship that leads

to young people to have more positive and hopeful visions for their own future. As a result, mentees' psychological wellbeing improves leading to higher educational expectations and aspirations.

Mentoring relationships promote access to new resources embedded in the host society, as public services for occupational inclusion or courses that could promote the educational pathways of youths. Mentors can promote the construction of bridges to new supporting networks or meaningful resources for immigrants' social inclusion through cognitive guidance or informational support, as previous researchers on social support functions of mentoring have highlighted (Barrera & Bonds, 2005; Brady et al. 2015). Mentoring is one option for the foment the capability of unaccompanied youths to construct these bridges (with mentors' support) that connect them with the host community, making them easier to feel at home and social included. Mentoring programmes have to aim to promote these linking connections where the mentor is established as a bridging agent between the mentee and the host society in order to facilitate the social inclusion of foreigners (Prieto-Flores et al., 2020).

The study with unaccompanied youths also shows us the different roles that the various agents involved in their lives play. Thanks to the qualitative findings of the second published article we can understand the different types of support networks that assist the participating youths. These are comprised of youth workers from the assisted shelter flats where they live, family abroad (first degree relatives) and mentors (in the case of those that participated in mentoring). These agents all provide different types of support that are both complementary and have a common goal: the promote independence and ensure the successful settling of the unaccompanied youths in the new country.

The support provided by youth workers is highly focused on specific problems (looking for courses and job opportunities, renewing the work permit or fostering basic skills for emancipation). But youth workers are often not present in some circumstances in which youths need emotional support. Their ability to support young people is therefore limited to more instrumentalised forms of support as previous research has indicated (Brady et al., 2020). This finding does not negate the fact that youth workers can provide emotional and self-esteem support, but it does show that, on several occasions, the support provided by youth workers is itself insufficient for the unaccompanied

youths. This aligns with the evaluation of Bravo and Santos-González (2017) regarding the lack of resources to address the emotional needs of unaccompanied youths in Spain.

Family ties have a positive impact on the emotional well-being of youths. Parents in particular, are an important source of emotional and self-esteem support. Parental support clearly predominates in this period of transition to adult life and it plays an important role in the resettlement process as well. Mothers and fathers provide encouragement in the face of obstacles, they acknowledge the young person's efforts to overcome daily challenges, and constantly worry about their well-being. However, there are certain issues for which youths prefer to seek support from other adults. Finding other adult support networks to complement family support can help mentored youths to find spaces in which to converse and reflect upon their own migratory experience, separate from their families' expectations.

The mentors become a source of social support that can have various aims. In some instances mentors veer towards providing practical advice to help their mentees, while in other situations their support simply fulfils the function of establishing a nurturing relationship. Mentees can talk with their mentors about their emotional distress and receive messages of reassurance and understanding. Another common form of mentoring takes the form of skills-based support or practical assistance, such as when mentors practice Spanish or when they guide mentees through questions about their educational path. This results in more informal types of support that complement the formal support provided by the youth workers and professionals of the entities that accompany them.

All these findings must be understood within the context of how the Referents programme supports mentors in their relationships, since research studies focused on mentoring have indicated that supporting mentors is a crucial element in enhancing mentoring programme effectiveness (Herrera et al., 2013). In other words, the degree to which training is based on the needs of the young people and the degree to which the mentoring relationship is monitored in order to guide the mentor, both of which the Referents programme successfully achieves. Training in mentoring programmes is essential to address the problems faced by a specific population, since in this way the mentor can address the needs of the mentee with greater knowledge, instead of providing support in general terms (Christensen et al., 2020). We believe that this is a relevant finding for determining how and why mentoring interventions with

unaccompanied youths can be effective in providing new support networks. Therefore, we suggest that for mentoring with unaccompanied youths to be truly effective there needs to be a well-established training component. The training should aim to establish a solid relationship between the mentor and the mentee, it should revolve around the specific needs of the mentees' group and it should also include the monitoring of the mentoring relationship as it develops.

Finally, our study with youths seeking asylum shows the impact of a relatively new mentoring programme based in a rural area which provides asylum seekers with new support networks. Our study highlights the various ways the mentees were supported in accessing public services, since they did not yet understand how them work. The advice and information provided in this programme were helpful for mentees when they had doubts about how their new environment functioned, a disadvantage that can have implications both in their social life as well as in the labour market. The mentors also represented an important source of emotional support through their ability to emphasize, show understanding and by listening to the mentees. The various forms of social support that we have outlined proved to be key in maintaining the young people's psychological and emotional well-being (Brady, Dolan & Canavan, 2017; Bal, Crombez, Van Oost & Debourdeaudhuij, 2003).

Mentees perceived the mentoring relationship as a great advantage vis-à-vis integrating into some social circle that would allow them to have greater access to resources. This is observed in the ability of the mentors to mobilise resources and make them available to the mentees. Therefore, we see how the mentoring relationship served to channel a series of resources that were present in the social capital of the host community. Without the mentoring relationship that bonded mentors with asylum seekers, this bridging of social capital would most likely not have taken place, depriving the youths from essential resources. Therefore, mentoring can serve as a bridge between the existing social capital in a community and the new arrivals, as well as a conduit for other types of resources (Emery, Fey & Flora, 2006). Mentors also gain from this relationship. By becoming better acquainted with the reality of asylum seekers, mentors are better prepared to combat discriminatory discourses that circulate within their community. This promotes a more welcoming rural community that has more resources and a more inclusive perspective.

Thanks to this study with young migrants and asylum seekers, we can observe how mentoring can have effects in urban and rural contexts. In two of our articles, we have studied a programme that works with young people of foreign origin in an urban area (Barcelona), and which has more than 20 years of experience in serving a very vulnerable immigrant population group. This programme prioritizes the needs of these young people when they leave the child protection system and is remarkably successful with regards to the psychological well-being of the young people and on their desired educational futures. The other programme we have studied is significantly younger (it is less than 5 years old) and it operates by enabling the participation of multiple social entities. Thanks to the participation of the mentors in our research study, we have learnt that the programme has been updated and improved with every new round or edition it has organised. This programme also presents very interesting results that indicate how rural societies could be safe environments for the integration of foreigners.

We do not mean to imply that mentoring programmes will always have positive effects, but we have found that mentoring can be a safe bet for the integration of migrant groups, even if it is deployed as part of a programme with little prior experience. For this reason, we encourage public administrations and social entities without experience in this field to consider mentoring as a complementary initiative to their current interventions with migrant groups. We also believe this thesis adds value and is of special interest for the Spanish context, where we can observe that mentoring programmes led by public administrations and social entities are growing with the goal of integrating young migrants.

6.2 Directions for future research

Finally, we would like to suggest some recommendations for future research exploring the effects of mentoring with foreign youths. First, longitudinal studies with follow-up measurements need to be conducted in order to test the long-term effects of these mentoring programmes. In the first published article, we identified that involvement in the studied programme had significant effects on young men’s mental health and educational outcomes. However, future research is needed to determine whether these effects would continue, increase or decrease over time, and whether mentoring relationships can last beyond the time stipulated by the programme.

Secondly, future studies should aim to replicate the results obtained in this research in a larger sample of unaccompanied migrant youths and young asylum seekers. Future studies should also try to further disentangle the complexities of their support networks and the implications they have for well-being, social capital and the construction of these young individuals' life trajectories. Having a larger sample would also allow to create subgroups within the treatment and control groups in order to delve deeper into what environment or individual characteristics determine mentoring effectiveness. For example, we could know whether the loss of legal status or the different housing sources lead to different effects of mentoring. This would help mentoring practitioners to reformulate their monitoring with these relationships. This would also help to confirm that mentoring is a complementary initiative in terms of the social integration of migrant groups and that mentoring interventions also need to go hand in hand with structural changes to immigration policy.

Third, in this study with unaccompanied immigrant youths, gender differences could not be explored due to the absence of a necessary number of unaccompanied girls among the participants. The small sample in the article with asylum seekers made it difficult to explore the possible differences of mentoring in rural settings. There is a pressing need to delve into the possible differential effects of social mentoring programmes between boys and girls. Gender conditions the vulnerabilities to which an individual is exposed during their migration. Higher levels of posttraumatic symptoms have been associated with female unaccompanied asylum seekers (Bean et al., 2007). This can condition the effects of mentoring with foreign girls and the implications for their mental health.

Previous research has reported gender differences in the ability to cope with stress, emphasizing that girls seek out emotional support in times of need more often than boys, but that there are no differences in the levels of seeking instrumental support (Greenberger & McLaughlin, 1998). Adolescent girls also place a high value on intimacy and connection which suggests that even though girls take a longer time to form trusting bonds, mentoring could benefit girls more (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak & Anton 2005. Therefore, mentoring programmes as Referents, more focused on the psychological and social needs of mentees, may be particularly effective for girls (Liang, Bogat & Duffy, 2014). However, it must be caveated that the hypothesis that girls may benefit from mentoring more than boys is also related to the quality level of mentoring programmes.

All this suggests that, if we could have included more girls in both studies (unaccompanied youths and asylum seekers), we may have found differences in the emotional support perceived by each gender. A possible hypothesis would be that girls would have sought greater emotional support from mentors, which could have resulted in having greater perceptions of social support related to feeling understood, cared for, and valued, for example. Also, it could be that precisely because girls seek more emotional support, they could have obtained it in other spaces (teachers or professionals from other social programmes), or even that they could have sought it in youth workers rather than in mentors, due to longer time it takes girls to establish trusting relationships. These evaluations are left for future research, hoping that they can find conclusive results regarding the differences that the gender of mentees may have in mentoring.

Studies on transnational families have emphasised that most research is only carried out in a single nation or state so it only focuses on one of the two contexts involved in this transnational relationship (Mazzucato, 2008). This leaves part of the family out of focus and provides a partial vision of the factors that impact such a relationship. This would be of special interest for research on mentoring young migrants. Studies on mentoring have highlighted the importance of families maintaining an active role when their children take part in a mentoring project, because the success of the relationships increases when parents are informed about what happens during the process and approve of the relationship with the mentor (Taylor and Porcellini, 2013). For this reason, it would be interesting to explore whether these relational variables also have an effect on the success of the mentoring relationships when there is a transnational family.

In addition, almost all participants had significant transnational family ties which makes it difficult for us to draw conclusions regarding the impact that the absence of family support abroad can have on the mentoring relationship. We also consider that these issues remain under-researched, so we encourage future studies to delve more deeply into the effects that the absence of transnational family ties has on the construction of mentoring relationships with adults in the new environment.

Finally, it is necessary to carry out mix-method studies that involve several mentoring programmes with young people of foreign origin or meta-analyses that contemplate different studies carried out. Meta-analyses that have focused on mentoring have been able to demonstrate significant effects when it comes to improving diverse outcomes

across the behavioural, emotional, social, and academic domains (Raposa et al., 2019; Dubois, et al., 2002). Meta-analyses have also successfully pointed to the large effects that programmes with a specific target or that focused on specific problems of young people have had (Christensen et al., 2020; Cavell and Elledge, 2014). If we delved into this, we could probably make a reliable comparison of the differences in the effects that different mentoring programmes have with young asylum seekers and unaccompanied migrants (e.g., programmes with more or less experience in mentoring, rural versus urban environments, different models of mentoring, different profiles of mentors, etc.).

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8. Annexes

8.1 Annex 1: “Referents” quantitative fieldwork

8.1.1 Sociodemographic data

Table 1

City of Residence	T1				T2			
	Barcelona	**Other from AMB**	**Adjacent to AMB**	**Total**	**Barcelona**	**Other from AMB**	**Adjacent to AMB**	**Total**
Mentored	20	7	5	32	19	3	1	23
Non mentored	17	6	3	26	17	3	3	23
Total	37	13	8	58	36	6	4	46

Note. Those living in Barcelona City represented 63.8% in T1 and 78.2% in T2.

Table 2

Country of Origin	T1				T2			
	Morocco	**Alger and Western Africa**	**Others**	**Total**	**Morocco**	**Alger and Western Africa**	**Others**	**Total**
Mentored	20	9	3	32	14	7	2	23
Non mentored	20	3	3	26	19	3	1	23
Total	40	12	6	58	33	10	3	46

Note. Those from Morocco represented 68.97% in T1 and 71.74% in T2.

Table 3

Arrival by	T1					T2				
	Small Boat	**Hidden in a truck/bus**	**Airplane**	**Others**	**Total**	**Small Boat**	**Hidden in a truck/bus**	**Airplane**	**Others**	**Total**
Mentored	16	7	3	6	32	12	6	2	3	23
Non mentored	10	9	4	3	26	9	9	3	2	23
Total	26	16	7	9	58	21	15	5	5	46

Note. Those who arrived by small boat represented 44.83% in T1 and 45.56% in T2. Those who arrived by hiding in truck or bus represented 27.59% in T1 and 32.61% in T2.

Table 4

Arrival with	T1				T2			
	Alone	**Friends**	**Family members**	**Total**	**Alone**	**Friends**	**Family members**	**Total**
Mentored	22	9	1	32	13	9	1	23
Non mentored	14	7	5	26	11	10	2	23
Total	36	16	6	58	23	19	3	46

Note. Those who were accompanied by friends represented 27.59% in T1 and 41.3% in T2. Those who came alone represented 62.07% in T1 and 50% in T2.

Table 5

Place of residence	T1				T2				
	Shelter Flats	**Shelter**	**Rented Rooms**	**Total**	**Shelter Flats**	**Shelter**	**Rented Rooms**	**Others (family, comunity services)**	**Total**
Mentored	20	8	4	32	13	4	4	2	23
Non mentored	26	0	0	26	22	0	0	1	23
Total	36	8	4	58	35	4	4	3	46

Note. Those residing in shelter flats (assisted flats for youths transitioning to adulthood) represented 62.07 in T1 and 76.09 in T2.

Table 6

Family in Spain	**T1**					**T2**				
	Both or one parent	**One or more siblings**	**Other family members**	**Nobody**	**Total**	**Both or one parent**	**One or more siblings**	**Other family members**	**Nobody**	**Total**
Mentored	1	11	7	13	32	0	8	8	7	23
Non mentored	3	5	6	12	26	2	4	9	8	23
Total	4	16	13	25	58	2	12	17	15	46

Note. Those who had a family member (not parents) residing somewhere in Spain represented 50% in T1 and 63.04% in T2.

Table 7

In touch with parents	**T1**				**T2**			
	Both	**One of them**	**None**	**Total**	**Both**	**One of them**	**None**	**Total**
Mentored	21	8	3	32	14	6	3	23
Non mentored	20	4	2	26	18	4	1	23
Total	41	12	5	58	32	10	4	46

Note. Those that mantained contact with both parents or one of them represented 91.38% in T1 and 91.30% in T2.

Table 8

In touch with siblings	**T1**				**T2**			
	All of them	**One of them**	**None**	**Total**	**All of them**	**One of them**	**None**	**Total**
Mentored	25	5	2	32	18	4	1	23
Non mentored	17	6	3	26	19	2	2	23
Total	42	11	5	58	37	6	3	46

Note. Those that mantained contact with all siblings or one of them represented 91.38 in T1 and 93.48% in T2.

Table 9

Legal Status	**T1**					**T2**				
	Residence Permit	**Residence and Work Permit**	**Irregul ar**	**Asylum Seeker or Refugee**	**Tot al**	**Residence Permit**	**Residence and Work Permit**	**Irregular**	**Asylum Seeker or Refugee**	**Tot al**
Mentored	11	1	8	3	23	13	1	6	3	23
Non mentored	19	1	3	0	23	21	2	0	0	23
Total	30	1	11	3	46	34	3	6	3	46

Note. Those possessing a residence permit represented 65.28% in T1 and 73.91% in T2. Those in a stage of irregularity represented 32.91% in T1 and 13.04% in T2.

Table 10

Father Studies	**T1**						**T2**					
	Without Studies	**Primary Studies**	**Secondary Studies**	**University Studies**	**Not known**	**Total**	**Without Studies**	**Primary Studies**	**Secondary Studies**	**University Studies**	**Not known**	**Total**
Mentored	21	9	1	1	0	32	18	2	1	1	1	23
Non mentored	10	8	5	2	1	26	8	4	5	2	4	23
Total	31	17	6	3	1	58	26	6	6	3	5	46

Note. Those who stated that had fathers without studies represented 53.45% in T1 and 56.52% in T2.

Table 11

Mother Studies	**T1**						**T2**					
	Without Studies	**Primary Studies**	**Secondary Studies**	**University Studies**	**Not known**	**To tal**	**Without Studies**	**Primary Studies**	**Secondary Studies**	**University Studies**	**Not known**	**To tal**
Mentored	28	1	1	1	1	32	20	0	0	1	2	23
Non mentored	14	5	2	2	3	26	11	7	1	2	2	23
Total	42	6	3	3	4	58	31	7	1	3	4	46

Note. Those who stated that had mothers without studies represented 72.41 in T1 and 67.39 in T2.

8.1.2 Educational and Ocupational data

Table 12

Finished studies	**T1**							**T2**					
	Nothing	**P. Studies**	**PFI**	**S. Studies**	**Middle VT**	**High VT or Bachelor**	**Total**	**P. Studies**	**PFI**	**S. Studies**	**Middle VT**	**High VT or Bachelor**	**Total**
Mentored	7	20	2	1	2	0	32	12	8	1	1	1	23
Non mentored	4	12	2	5	0	3	26	9	11	2	0	1	23
Total	11	32	4	6	2	3	58	21	19	3	1	2	46

Note. Those who had completed primary studies represented 55.17% in T1 and 45.65% in T2.

Table 13

Currently Studying	**T1**							**T2**					
	Nothing	**O. Training**	**PFI**	**S. Studies**	**Middle VT**	**High VT or Bachelor**	**Total**	**Nothing**	**O. Training**	**PFI**	**S. Studies**	**Middle VT**	**Total**
Mentored	3	20	4	3	0	2	32	3	10	7	1	2	23
Non mentored	0	11	9	5	1	0	26	6	11	3	1	2	23
Total	3	31	13	8	1	2	58	9	21	10	2	4	46

Note. Those studying occupational or PFI courses represented 75.86% in T1 and 67.39% in T2.

Table 14

Currently Working	**T1**			**T2**		
	Yes	**No**	**Total**	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Mentored	1	31	32	2	21	23
Non mentored	1	25	26	3	20	23
Total	2	56	58	5	41	46

Note. Those who did not work represented 96.56% in T1 and 89.13% in T2.

Table 15

How did they get the job	**T1**					**T2**				
	Someone that I met	**Mentor**	**Other**	**Not having job**	**Total**	**Someone that I met**	**Mentor**	**Other**	**Not having job**	**Total**
Mentored	0	0	1	31	32	1	1	0	21	23
Non mentored	1	0	0	25	26	2	0	1	20	23
Total	1	0	1	56	58	3	1	1	41	46

Table 16

Type of Contract	**T1**				**T2**			
	Full working day	**Part-time**	**Not having job**	**Total**	**Full working day**	**Part-time**	**Not having job**	**Total**
Mentored	1	0	31	32	2	0	21	23
Non mentored	0	1	25	26	2	1	20	23
Total	1	1	56	58	4	1	41	46

Table 17

Salary	T1					T2				
	Less than 500€	**Between 500€ and 1000€**	**Between 1000€ and 1500€**	**Not having job**	**Total**	**Less than 500€**	**Between 500€ and 1000€**	**Between 1000€ and 1500€**	**Not having job**	**Total**
Mentored	0	0	1	31	32	0	1	1	21	23
Non mentored	1	0	0	25	26	1	2	0	20	23
Total	1	0	1	56	58	1	3	1	41	46

Table 18

Administration Allowance	T1			T2		
	Yes	**No**	**Total**	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Mentored	18	14	32	14	9	23
Non mentored	22	4	26	14	9	23
Total	40	18	58	28	18	46

Note. Those who had administration allowance represented 68.97% in T1 and 60.87% in T2.

8.1.3 Discrimination and Identity

Table 19

Identity	**Time 1**			**Time 2**		
	Mentored	**Non mentored**	**Total**	**Mentored**	**Non mentored**	**Total**
Native (African, Moroccan, Amazigh, others)	22	19	41	18	18	36
Mixed Identification (Spanish and Moroccan, Catalan and Saharan, others)	9	5	14	5	4	9
Don’t' know	1	2	3	0	1	1
Total	32	26	58	23	23	46

Note. Those who identified as feeling from their country of origin or ethnic group represented 70.69% in T1 and 78.26% in T2.

Table 20

Relevance of Identity	**Time 1**			**Time 2**		
	Mentored	**Non mentored**	**Total**	**Mentored**	**Non mentored**	**Total**
Nothing Important	4	5	9	1	3	4
Something Important	7	8	15	5	7	12
Very Important	19	9	28	16	10	26
Don't Know	2	4	6	1	3	4
Total	32	26	58	23	23	46

Note. Those who stated that their national or ethnic identity was very relevant represented 48,27% in T1 and 54,17% in T2.

Table 21

Discrimination	Time 1			Time 2		
(Have you felt discriminated?)	**Mentored**	**Non mentored**	**Total**	**Mentored**	**Non mentored**	**Total**
Yes	15	12	17	11	13	24
No	16	23	39	10	10	20
Don't Know	1	1	3	2	0	2
Total	32	26	58	23	23	46

Note. Those who felt discriminated against represented 29.31% in T1 and 52.17% in T2.

Table 22

Discrimination	Time 1			Time 2		
(Who discriminated against you?)	**Mentored**	**Non mentored**	**Total**	**Mentored**	**Non mentored**	**Total**
Care professionals from shelter	1	1	2	1	0	1
Other youths from the shelter	7	1	8	2	2	4
Students/classmates	2	1	3	3	3	6
People in general (in the street)	6	7	13	6	9	15
Police	5	5	10	4	5	9
Others (teachers, people from other nationalities, Professionals of public services)	0	1	1	4	2	6
Total	21	16	37	20	21	41

Note. Those who felt discriminated against people in general (in the street) represented 35.13% in T1 and 36.59% in T2.

8.1.4 Results: Effect sizes and social support outcomes

Table 23: Effect sizes of psychological wellbeing, language, self-efficacy for enlisting support, belonging, prospects in the city, cultural mistrust, and gender

	Mentoring					**Mentoring without female participants**					**Control**				
	M	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**	**d**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**	**d**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**Sig.**	**d**
Self-Esteem	1,391	2,589	2,577	0,017	0,537	1,429	2,712	20414	0,026	0,527	0,043	2,771	0,075	0,941	0,016
Youth Hope	2,261	5,011	2,164	0,042	0,451	2,429	4,925	2,26	0,035	0,493	-1,304	4,084	-1,532	0,14	-0,319
Youth Environment Stressors	0,652	1,301	2,405	0,025	0,501	0,524	1,25	1,921	0,069	0,41	0,783	1,757	2,136	0,044	0,446
Resilience	1,826	2,605	3,362	0,003	0,7	1,857	2,689	3,165	0,005	0,69	-0,391	2,743	-0,684	0,501	-0,142
Symptoms of Psychological Distress	-0,043	1,796	-0,116	0,909	0,023	-0,19	1,75	-0,499	0,623	-0,109	0,217	2,131	0,489	0,63	0,102
Language (Spanish)	1,217	2,131	2,74	0,012	0,571	1,048	2,061	2,329	0,03	0,508	0,261	2,598	0,482	0,635	0,1
Language (Catalan)	-0,043	1,965	-0,106	0,916	-0,021	-0,19	1,662	-0,525	0,605	-0,11	-1,13	2,51	-2,16	0,042	-0,45
Self-Efficacy for enlisting support	0,13	2,117	0,295	0,77	0,061	-0,048	1,91	-0,114	0,91	-0,025	-0,087	3,161	-0,132	0,896	-0,028
Sense of Belonging	0,696	5,278	0,632	0,534	0,132	0	4,604	0	1	0	-0,348	6,242	-0,267	0,792	-0,056
Future prospects in the city	0,13	0,344	1,817	0,083	0,377	0,143	0,359	1,826	0,083	0,398	0,087	0,596	0,699	0,492	0,146
Cultural Mistrust	-0,077	2,216	-0,125	0,902	-0,035	-0,077	2,216	-0,125	0,902	-0,035	-1,375	2,187	-2,515	0,024	-0,629
Attitudes Toward Language	0,087	2,214	0,188	0,852	0,039	0,19	2,089	0,418	0,68	0,091	0,591	2,856	0,97	0,343	0,207
Gender	-0,4	5,316	-0,291	0,775	-0,075	-0,786	5,294	-0,555	0,588	0,148	-0,25	5,479	-0,158	0,877	-0,046

Note. Mentoring group: n = 23, Mentoring without female participants: n= 21, Control group: n = 23. Except in Cultural Mistrust (Mentoring group: n = 13, Mentoring without female participants: n= 13, Control group: n = 16) and Gender (Mentoring group: n = 15, Mentoring without female participants: n= 14, Control group: n = 12). M and SD represent means and standard deviations, respectively. To calculate Cohen's d we used a procedure described in Morris and De Shon (2002, p.111) who suggest estimating the effect size for single-group pretest-posttest designs by taking the correlation between the pre- and post-test into account.

Table 24: Effect sizes of educational and occupational outcomes

	Mentoring					Mentoring without female participants					Control				
	M	SD	t	Sig.	d	M	SD	t	Sig.	d	M	SD	t	Sig.	d
Educational Aspirations	0,348	0,487	3,425	0,002	0,715	0,381	0,498	3,508	0,002	0,765	0,261	0,619	2,021	0,056	0,422
Educational Expectations	0,391	0,499	3,761	0,001	0,784	0,429	0,507	3,873	0,001	0,846	0,13	0,626	1	0,328	0,21
Occupational Aspirations	-0,43	0,367	-0,569	0,575	-0,117	0	0,316	0	1	0	-0,043	0,475	-0,439	0,665	-0,09
Occupational Expectations	0,174	0,576	1,447	0,162	0,302	0,19	0,602	1,451	0,162	0,316	0,043	0,475	0,439	0,665	0,09

Note. Mentoring group: n = 23, Mentoring without female participants: n= 21, Control group: n = 23. M and SD represent means and standard deviations, respectively. To calculate Cohen's d we used a procedure described in Morris and De Shon (2002, p.111) who suggest estimating the effect size for single-group pretest-posttest designs by taking the correlation between the pre- and post-test into account.

Table 25: Social Support Outcomes: Descriptive Statistics and Repeated Measures ANOVA with Between-subject (Group) Effect

											Comparison			
	Group	Time 1 *M* (*SD*)		Time 2 *M* (*SD*)		*CI*		*t*	*p*	*d*	Test[1]	$F_{(1, 42)}$	*p*	η^2
Social support from adults of reference	Mentoring	1.71	1.22	2.57	0.93	[-1.56;	-0.16]	-2.56	.019	0.65	1	0.004	.950	0
											2	9.135	.004	0.179
	Control	1.85	1.63	2.48	1.43	[-1.37;	0.11]	-1.76	.092	0.34	3	0.212	.647	0.005
Social support from friends and family	Mentoring	3.50	1.25	3.43	0.97	[-0.69;	0.84]	0.20	.848	-0.04	1	0.425	.518	0.010
											2	0.057	.813	0.001
	Control	3.20	1.22	3.39	1.40	[-0.96;	0.57]	-0.53	.601	0.10	3	0.262	.611	0.006

*Note. Mentoring group (without female participants): n = 21, Control group: n = 23. M and SD represent means and standard deviations, respectively. [1] ANOVA contrasts in the following order: 1 = Group's effects; 2 = Time' effects; and 3 = Interaction effects (Group * Time). To calculate Cohen's d we used a procedure described in Morris and De Shon (2002, p.111) who suggest estimating the effect size for single-group pretest-posttest designs by taking the correlation between the pre- and post-test into account.*

8.2 Annex 2: “Referents” qualitative fieldwork

8.2.1 Youths discussion group guidelines

Brief introduction about the study.

- What would you ask to unaccompanied youths in Barcelona? What do you think is important for them/you to explain?
- What do you think is important for unaccompanied youth lives?
- What problems have you faced since you arrived here, since you arrived in Spain?
- Where have you gone to seek some help when you have need something? What have you done when you had doubts?
- What is the most important thing for each of you?
- Are there people from Barcelona who are important to you?
- What is your ideal future? Which is the future you want to reach?
- What do you think is important to ask a boy or girl who is between 17 and 20 years old and who has come from another country?

8.2.2 Mentoring practitioners interview guidelines

Brief introduction about why we do this interview (obtain more information about the programme scheme and design)

- What are the methodological aspects or characteristics that you think best define the Referents project? What do they consist of?
- What is the goal of the project and what do you think are the limitations?
- What are the various phases of the project and what do they consist of?
- How is the support for young people in the Referents project developed?
- How is the support for mentors developed?
- Which is the difference between the support provided by the mentoring practitioner and the mentor?
- Which are the limits in the mentoring relationship and what are they for?
- How do mentors develop a mentoring relationship with young people acquiring an empowering role?
- Which are the results you observe in young people when they finish their participation in the programme?
- What aspects do you think are important in a mentoring relationship in order to satisfy young person?
- When can it be said that a mentoring relationship has been successful?

8.2.3 Youths interview guidelines

Initial information

This interview aims to delve into all aspects that affect young migrants who are in the transition to adulthood and how they deal with the difficulties they are facing.

Contextual

- Start by talking about yourself and explaining who you are (tell me what you think, feel free to explain what you want)

Educational and occupational expectations and aspirations

- What are your purposes or interests in terms of studies and occupation and what difficulties do you think you may encounter (what would you like to continue doing in your life, studying, working…)?
- Why do you have these purposes in your life and how do you think they are achievable? Does the fact of reaching or having reached the age of majority in this sense affect you or has affected you? How?

Social support

- When you have a problem, who are the people who care about you? Which is your relationship with these people? How do they make you feel?
- In the last year, have you met people who have taught you something new (aspects of everyday life, tools to be more autonomous, useful information, new and useful environments for you…)? What is your relationship with these people? How did you meet them?
- How is your relationship with people who have been or are important in your hometown (family, friends, or other people in the community)?

Legal status

- What kind of difficulties and concerns have you had or do you have regarding your legal status (thinking about the past, the present and especially the future)? How does reaching or having reached the age of majority affect you or has affected you in this sense?

Mood

- May be some difficult things have happened to you in the last few months, it is not necessary that you explain them to me, but I would like to know how you have dealt with them?
- What are the challenges or difficulties you encounter every day (when you go to study or work, in relation to learning a new language, in your day to day…) and how do you face them? How does the fact of reaching or having reached the age of majority affect you or has affected you in this sense?

Settlement

- How do you feel living in this city and living with the people of this city? Do you think you will definitely settle in this city?
- What kind of difficulties have you encountered in settling in the city where you currently live? How does the fact of reaching or having reached the age of majority affect you or has affected you in this sense?

Mentoring (just for mentees)

- Why did you decide to participate in the Referents project? How did you think it would be to participate in the Referents project and how was it finally? What have you learned from your Referent?
- How has the relationship been during these months (how was it at the beginning and how is it now)?
- How do you think this relationship will be in the future?

8.2.4 Mentors interview guidelines

Brief introduction about the study.

Mentoring relationship

- Explain in general how the mentoring relationship has gone (taking into account all the progress and the moments of motivation or demotivation you have had).
- What kind of activities did you do at the meetings and what do you think motivated the young person the most? Why?
- What kind of conversations did you have during the mentoring and what do you think were most significant for the young person? Which topics have been most comfortable and which ones most uncomfortable?
- Do you see it possible to maintain this relationship naturally in the future? How would you do it?
- What do you think the mentoring relationship has brought to the young person?
- What tools have you lacked to be able to better accompany the young person? What kind of support would have helped you to accompany the young person?

The youth

- What attitude or mood did the young person show during the meetings? Has it varied over the time? How?
- What are his or her educational and employment expectations and what difficulties have you encountered in this regard? How did you give support in this issue?
- Which are the social support networks (supporting people around, entities to which he or she is linked ...) of the young person and how is his or her relationship with them? How did you accompany him in this regard (were you able to help him get into other environments ...)?
- Which are the difficulties you have encountered in relation to his or her legal status? How did you give support in this issue?

- Which difficulties does he or she have in reaching the coming of age? Did you talk about it (giving advice or suggestions)?
- How does he or she feel in this city? How did you accompany him in this regard?

8.3 Annex 3: “PCR” qualitative fieldwork

8.3.1 Mentees interview guidelines

Brief introduction of the study.

Basic information

- When did you come here?
- Where did you born?
- Why did you decide to come?
- How did you arrive?
- Once you arrived here, what people helped you?
- How did you access to the PCR and to the mentoring programme?
- When did you begin the mentoring relationship?
- How it was when they explained the programme to you?
- Did you keep in contact with the relatives that are in your country?

Mentoring group of questions

- How would you describe the mentors?
- How is the relationship with them?
- Which is the frequency of your meetings?
- Do you think that it (mentoring) helps you on have more social networks or on being more linked with [city where he/she live]?
- In general, what has represented the programme for you?
- Without the participation in mentoring programme, do you think that your relationship with the environment would be worst?

Personal issues group of questions

Health

- In relation to health, I wanted to ask you, if you are satisfied with your health.
- Have you had any difficulty accessing health services?
- In these health spaces, have you felt comfortable and well cared for?
- Do you think that the mentoring relationship has made it easier for you to access health services or better understand some aspects?
- When you went to the health services, did you need to be accompanied?

Housing

- How would you describe the apartment where you live?
- Do you live alone or did you share it with someone else?
- How did you get the apartment?
- Did you have difficulties in accessing housing?

Studies and Language

- Did you complete your studies in your country?
- Do you know if your degree can be recognized? Had you tried?
- Are you currently doing a course?
- Have you participated in a course previously?
- Did you take any other course in this training period?
- Which languages do you speak?
- Have the mentors helped you to practice Catalan?
- Do you think you will be able to speak Catalan soon?
- What level of education would you like to get here?
- Have the mentors helped you to access any kind of studies or courses?

Occupation

- What did you work for in your country?
- Are you currently working?
- How long have you been working?
- Are you full time?
- How did you get the job?
- Does the money you earn sufficient for the expenses?
- In the future, what would you like to work on?
- In relation to mentoring, do you think it has helped you in any work factor?
- Could mentoring help you to get other jobs in the future?

Cultural and Intercultural situation

- What cultural group do you consider yourself?
- Have you had any situation that has made you feel rejected because you are a foreigner or because of your condition?
- Do you consider your identity important to you?
- What elements of your culture are important to you?

- Have you been able to share it with the mentors?
- During the time you have been here, how have you felt? Do you think you fit in here?
- In the process, have you ever felt lonely?
- Do you think you have people around you who are concerned about you?

Mentoring programme group of questions

- In general, do you think that mentoring has helped you in any other way that we haven't talked about?
- Would you like that mentoring programme would be or have anything different?
- Do you think mentoring could be done differently to make it better? How?

8.3.2 Mentors interview guidelines

Relationship beginning

- How do you know the mentoring programme exists?
- Why were you interested?
- Do you had a good accompaniment to be able to decide whether to access it or not?
- Were you able to resolve any doubts you might have?
- How do you value the training and the elements that were raised in the beginning?
- What were your expectations at the beginning? Were they fulfilled?
- How was the first time you met the mentees?

Relationship process

- Are there elements that have made your relationship difficult?
- How did you deal with the mentoring practitioners and the administration?
- What did you need during the process? What would you change?

Formal relationship ending, prospects and evaluation

- How do you imagine the future of the relationship?
- Do you consider that the goals the programme set at the beginning match with the final outcomes?
- Do you think the results of the programme are positive?
- How would you define the support you have been able to offer?
- Do you think that mentoring programme affects you? Has anything changed you?
- Do you think that your environment has also been influenced by what you were doing?

Suggestions for improvement

- I don't know if there would be anything else, or proposal, that you can imagine for improve the programme. And even, which ones would you prioritize?