The vast majority of international migrants from developing countries are of working age. And yet, their integration in the formal local labor market of their host countries continues to be a challenge. This paper reviews the scope of mentoring programs as a more systematic policy instrument to facilitate the integration of migrants into the labor market. It synthesizes the multidisciplinary academic research on mentoring. The review highlights the diversity of outcomes indicators and the relevance of context in the choice of mentoring program design. Determinants of success include the personal characteristics of the mentee and of the mentor and the efforts to match them but also the efforts made to account for the human, institutional, financial, and political context in the overall design of programs. Despite the significant progress achieved in understanding the determinants of mentoring effectiveness, the survey shows that there are still many sources of uncertainty on the optimal design of mentoring programs. This justifies a research agenda in a field with growing and significant political and social prominence of direct relevance to both developed and developing countries.

JEL Codes: D9, F22, J15, J16, J4, J61
Keywords: labor market integration, mentoring, migrants.

Introduction

According the United Nations, in 2019, there were nearly 272 million international migrants worldwide, almost 100 million more than in 2000, including around 11 percent of refugees (UNDESA 2019). About 65 percent moved to high-income countries and the rest mostly to middle-income countries. In any of the host countries, one of the main challenges continues to be the absorption of this new
population by the labor markets, since 75 percent of international migrants are of working age (20 to 64) and are keen to work and be financially autonomous.

The policy failures, and in particular the failures of national labor-market integration policies, have long been emphasized by international organizations as an issue underestimated in national policy debates. Some of the organizations have explicitly included the need to address integration in their commitments to assist countries. Since the early 2000s, their efforts, and a growing volume of academic research, have produced a multitude of specific policy suggestions to smooth integration. These include broad changes in social welfare systems or employment entitlement rules but also many much more focused suggestions such as fine-tuning visa status decision processes or access to training programs.

Mentoring programs have been added, in recent years, to the quiver of policy options for easing the labor market integration of migrants. Mentoring refers to the relationship between an experienced mentor and a mentee who needs guidance, information, or advice to acquire specific skills or achieve other defined objectives. It has been used in schools, businesses, and for social integration (for example, for migrants). The relationship evolves over a certain period of time through regular meetings. There exist many different mentoring programs that differ in their internal organization. Common features include that the mentoring programs recruit mentors, who are trained volunteers or professional caseworkers, match them with mentees, and monitor the relationships. The activities supported by these programs are as diverse as preparing resumes, filling in application forms, coaching for interviews, helping with the follow-up to interviews, providing psychological and administrative support, producing job search databases, and organizing targeted language and professional training sessions.

This form of job-search assistance has been widely supported by international organizations. For instance, in 2016, the European Parliament published a study on the strategies and good practices of labor market integration of refugees. Mentoring was described as widely recommended to overcome the obstacles that arise from the reliance of the job-matching process on informal networks that put migrants at an important disadvantage (Konle-Seidl and Bolits 2016). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) adds that mentoring is highly cost-effective, including through the role allowed to civil society to complement official public administration intervention (OECD 2017a). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has already included mentoring as a way to ensure the successful integration of refugees (UNHCR 2013). There is however quite limited evidence on the effectiveness of mentoring for migrants’ labor market integration.

The importance of mentoring for migrants is not limited to host countries. The relevance of mentoring to home countries, or developing countries in general, can be developed around three main reasons. First, mentoring does not have to be restricted to migrants and it could be as important in developing countries. Even though evidence on active labor market policies (ALMPs) in developing countries suggests that
they are not always as effective as assumed by policy-makers (McKenzie 2017), there exist several counter-examples. For instance, a recent meta-analysis of youth unemployment programs by Kluve et al. (2019) suggests that differences in contexts explain why these programs are more effective in developing than in developed countries. Moreover, mentoring can provide more personalized support and information, that more generalized vocational training cannot. This has been made clear by a recent study by Brooks, Donovan, and Johnson (2018) that analyzes the impact of microenterprise training in Kenya through a randomized control trial. Two different interventions were implemented and the results suggest that providing microenterprise owners with mentorship from an experienced entrepreneur in the same community increases profits by 20 percent on average, with initially large effects that fade away as the relationship ends. The other intervention, formal business classes, has however no effect on profits even though it changes business practice. This is in line with other results on formal business training summarized by McKenzie and Woodruff (2014).

Second, as mentoring can help to integrate migrants into host countries’ labor markets, this in turn can have international impacts on home countries (McKenzie and Yang 2015). Indeed, temporary as well as permanent migration impacts the development of home countries, through raised income and reduced poverty, that come notably through remittances (Cantore and Calì 2015; Gnimassoun and Anyanwu 2019).

Finally, mentoring can also be used to help migrants that have returned to their home countries. In Portugal, for instance, a project promoted at the national level targets both immigrants (including refugees) and Portuguese emigrants wanting to return (it is called the Mentoring Program for Immigrants, organized by the High Commission for Migrations) (European Commission 2016).

Although relatively new in the context of migrants’ integration efforts, mentoring has a long record in education (e.g., Wheeler, Keller, and DuBois 2010; Whybra et al. 2018) and in workplace management (e.g., Beattie et al. 2014). This is why mentoring has been analyzed across multiple disciplines, including organizational behavior, management, educational sciences, social psychology, and to a far lesser extent, economics. So far there has been relatively little effort to synthesize these various sources of insights to develop a more encompassing view on the scope and limits of mentoring as a policy instrument.

To address this gap, this paper reviews the various academic perspectives on the effectiveness of mentoring for the labor market integration of migrants across sectors as dissimilar as economics, education, social psychology, and workforce management. Given the interdisciplinary nature of our review, the methodology as well as the methodological standards may vary between papers from different disciplines. For the sake of comparability, we rely when possible on meta-analytic reviews. We discuss the methods when they are relevant or raise uncertainty regarding the robustness of some of the results. The focus is always on the policy insights of the literature.
This review starts with an effort to establish simple definitions intended to reconcile often vastly different perspectives. We then summarize the main types of mentoring used in practice. The following section takes stock of the evidence of outcomes and success factors identified by the various research fields. It highlights the importance of the complementarity of the many insights produced by the various academic approaches and their ability to jointly lead to specific policy recommendations. To provide guidance on future assessments, the paper concludes with specific suggestions for a follow-up multidisciplinary, policy-oriented research agenda on the design of mentoring programs, focused on the integration of migrants and refugees into the labor market.

On the Challenges of Coordinating Multiple Perspectives

The overview of the various mentoring approaches leads to a long list of details and contextual dimensions that reflect the differences of interests across academic fields. These dimensions include the need to account for the human, technical, and institutional constraints that drive the need for specific types of mentoring and their effectiveness. For example, some of this research shows that mentoring is far more efficient when targeting a vulnerable population (DuBois et al. 2011). Other contributions point to the limited scope of exporting some mentoring programs (Preston, Prieto-Flores, and Rhodes 2019)—youth mentoring programs imported from the United States, for example, proved largely ineffective in the United Kingdom (Green et al. 2014). It is because the one-size-fits-all mentoring approaches are unlikely to deliver value for money to authorities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) aiming to help migrants and refugees, that it is essential to identify the contextual determinants of policy effectiveness.

Different groups will have different responses to the same type of labor market policies. Some of them are more effective for youth than for more mature individuals (Card, Kluve, and Weber 2010; Caliendo and Schmidl 2016). Similarly, some approaches can be more effective for low-skilled workers than for the overall population (Escudero 2018). In general, active labor market policies seem to be more effective for vulnerable populations (Card, Kluve, and Weber 2018). Moreover, outcomes appear to be sensitive to details spelled out in management and implementation decisions, such as program supervision or access to administrative resources (Escudero 2018). These diverse insights from disparate contexts and outcomes are the very elements this survey aims to synthesize.

One of the characteristics that stands out when reviewing the research produced by these very heterogeneous perspectives on mentoring is the diversity of implicit or explicit definitions used by the various authors. Eby, Rhodes, and Allen (2007) offered a first useful synthetic vision of the relevant dimensions of mentoring from the
educational, psychological, and management literature. This survey asserts that mentoring:

1. reflects a unique relationship between individuals;
2. involves the acquisition of knowledge;
3. is defined by the types of support provided by the mentor to the protégé and is outcome-oriented;
4. is reciprocal, yet asymmetrical; and
5. involves a dynamic relationship, that is, that evolves over time.

From the stricter perspective of labor policy, Bozeman and Feeney (2007) referred helpfully to organizational behavior research and defined mentoring as “a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience (the mentor) and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé).” In this survey, we use the term mentee for the term protégé often found in the social and management literature.

To focus the discussion, this synthesis rests on a definition of mentoring that is broad enough to account for all perspectives and can be used to anchor the heterogeneous set of concerns. We try to account for most of these insights while keeping the analysis focused on the labor market and migrants. We therefore propose to adopt a definition that highlights mentoring characteristics over which policy has leverage—leverage in this instance to achieve specific integration goals. More specifically, we define mentoring as “an interpersonal relationship of support, exchange, and learning, in which one person (a mentor) invests their experience to help another person (the mentee) acquire skills and achieve professional goals, through regular meetings over a certain period of time.”

In practice, there exist many mentoring programs, all with their specific internal organization, their specific target population, and their specific objectives. These can range from publicly organized programs, to private initiatives, or to programs led by the civil society, such as nonprofit organizations, foundations, or charities. The programs recruit and train mentors, usually volunteers, and they match them with mentees based on certain criteria linked to the objectives of the program. For example, in Belgium, DUO for a JOB is a mentoring program that organizes intercultural and intergenerational mentoring to promote the labor market integration of youth with migration backgrounds while promoting the experience of older mentors. The program recruits and trains mentors, who are volunteers, and supervises the mentorships, which consist of meetings, two hours per week, over six months. It is funded mainly through foundations and private donations, but public funds accounted for one-third of the total budget in 2019 (DUO for a JOB 2019).
Examples of mentoring programs that are non-directly linked to the integration on the labor market are numerous, and they have been existing for a long period of time. For instance, one of the largest networks is the *Big Brother Big Sister* nonprofit and nongovernmental organization, that was launched in 1904 in the United States. It matches adult volunteers with children and youth across the country. The specifics of the program depend on the state affiliates but for example, in New York City, adult volunteers are matched with children between the ages of 7–17. The pairs commit for a minimum of one year and then meet for twice a month on Saturdays or Sundays, while being continuously supervised and supported. In 1998, *Big Brothers Big Sisters International* was established and it is now active in 15 countries around the world, with one of the most recent being Trinidad and Tobago, which joined the network in 2004.

The Mentoring Categories

The literature identifies multiple and quite heterogeneous types of mentoring that are relevant to the integration of the labor market, each of them with their own set of outcomes and success drivers. The four main types of mentoring covered by research are: (a) youth mentoring; (b) academic mentoring; (c) mentoring to work; and (d) workplace mentoring. These types reflect different phases of a life cycle, from the early stages of education up to career development. This classification is particularly relevant to migrants and refugee populations because of their peculiar age distribution. In Europe, for instance, in 2019, the median age of the population stood at 43.9 years, while the median age of immigrants was 29.2 (Eurostat 2021). If the benefits of mentoring programs depend on age or career stage, this has to be taken into account.

Although it is important to unbundle the insights from the different types of mentoring, it is also useful to recognize the common elements across life stages and to integrate the different perspectives delivered by the different takes on each mentoring type by the various academic fields. Each mentoring type is covered by at least two different disciplines, which provide complementary perspectives. In all cases, mentoring at each stage presumes a supportive relationship between a mentor and a mentee. This relationship is expected to either promote a positive outcome for the mentee or aim to avoid or undo a negative outcome.

What follows pulls out the policy insights of the multidisciplinary research on mentoring with a focus on the results directly relevant to labor market integration of migrants and refugees. We focus on policy insights, but discuss methodological issues when they are relevant or raise uncertainty regarding the robustness of some of the results. The discussion is thus selective.
Youth Mentoring

A significant share of the literature on Youth Mentoring (YM) is anchored to a simple theoretical model. This model holds that the positive impact of mentoring for youth depends on the strength of the personal connection with the mentor. Personal connection requires time to build trust, empathy, and sympathy. Time, therefore, should be factored into mentoring used as an integration tool, as Eddy et al. (2017) have found in their work on children at risk. This may be the first policy insight gleaned from the YM experiences; we will discuss it more broadly in the following section, where the relevance of mentorship duration and intensity is addressed.

The second set of policy insights on YM focuses on more specific process-related drivers of program effectiveness. Once the personal connection between mentee and mentor is established, the positive development of the young person is likely to come from three interrelated processes that nevertheless meet different needs. The first process enhances the youth’s social relationships and emotional well-being; the second improves cognitive skills through instruction and conversation; and the third fosters constructive identity development through role-modeling and advocacy (Rhodes 2005; Rhodes et al. 2006). Each of these outcomes is potentially relevant to young migrants and refugees seeking to integrate into the labor market. They should each be part of the checklist used in both ex-ante and ex-post evaluations. And there is already ample informal and anecdotal evidence about the life-changing impact of YM.

In the United States, for instance, in 2011, there were more than 5,000 programs serving an estimated three million young people (DuBois et al. 2011). At the broadest level, the empirical evidence produced from these experiences suggests the effects of YM have been moderate (DuBois et al. 2002, 2011; Eby et al. 2013). For instance, Tolan et al. (2014) conduct a meta-analysis on mentoring programs that targets delinquency and other related outcomes for youth at-risk. They conclude that all outcomes were significantly improved but the mean effect sizes were modest, ranging from 0.11 for academic achievement, 0.16 for drug use, 0.21 for delinquency, and 0.29 for aggression. More recent research has however encouraged programs to supply more robust evidence on the longer-term payoffs of mentoring.

The most recent and more robust evidence is most supportive of YM, in particular for migrants and refugees. It does so by focusing on the putative psychosocial benefits of mentoring design and prospects for long-term integration into the labor market. For example, Kosse et al. (2020) have shown, through a randomized control trial (RCT), that a mentoring program for elementary school children in Germany had improved prosocial attitudes such as trust, altruism, and other-regarding behavior in everyday life. This program is a well-established nonprofit program (“Baloo and You”) that provides children with volunteer mentors for one year. In practice, mentors are usually university students and the pair generally meet for one-on-one interactions one afternoon per week. The mentorship is supervised by professionals through
online diaries filled by the mentors as well as biweekly meetings with the mentors. In Italy, a large-scale RCT providing tutoring and career-counseling to high-ability immigrant students examines the educational choices made by children of immigrants (Carlana, La Ferrara, and Pinotti 2017). The program consists of 13 meetings, one-to-one and in groups, aimed at helping students reflect on their aspirations and providing general information on the Italian education system. The program succeeded in decreasing educational segregation. The authors also identified positive spillovers from treated students onto immigrant classmates, while there was no spillover effect on native classmates. The channel for this improvement seemed to be motivation and not cognitive ability.

**Academic Mentoring**

Mentoring in academic and university programs (AM) follow the apprenticeship model, where a more senior member of the community provides academic and non-academic support outside the classroom (Jacobi 1991; Johnson 2007; Crisp and Cruz 2009; Eby et al. 2013; Núñez et al. 2013; Crisp et al. 2017). The research on AM in the non-economics academic fields has often emphasized education policies that can tackle disparities in test scores and attend to socio-emotional abilities across ethnic groups, as these disparities can increase significantly if left unaddressed. Recently, AM has attracted the interest of economists (for example, Card and Giuliano 2016; Carlana, La Ferrara, and Pinotti 2017; Autor et al. 2019). Most of their research has provided robust confirmations of many of the results provided by the voluminous case studies documented in other fields.

For migrants and refugees, the evidence suggests that AM makes it likelier that children benefit from the social-ladder benefits of education (Brunello and Checchi 2007; Guyon, Maurin, and McNally 2012; Guyon and Huillery 2021). AM also boosts the integration of migrants and refugees into the labor market in three principal ways. First, mentoring that targets language ability has lasting positive effects. For example, Núñez et al. (2013) show that a middle-school mentoring program improved academic outcomes in mathematics and language; even more notable were the self-regulated learning outcomes (for example, goal-setting, planning, self-monitoring). Second, the nature of the support is important; AM delivers both career and emotional support, such as direct training or encouragement. Third, alternative forms of AM are often a good complement to more traditional forms. Li (2018) and Benton, Silva, and Somerville (2018) show that mentoring that provides simple information or reminders are effective approaches. Behavioral economics, indeed, seems to have been omitted from this policy area, despite the evidence of its potential in related fields, notably education (for example, Koch, Nafziger, and Nielsen 2015; Damgaard and Nielsen 2018).
Mentoring to Work

Mentoring to work (MtW) represents relationships in which the mentors support and guide mentees in their labor market integration, as discussed in De Cuyper, Vandermeerschen, and Purkayastha (2019). Although MtW is increasingly used as a tool for integrating migrants into the labor market, its academic analysis is quite recent. Nonetheless, the studies are already informative for design considerations specific to migrants and refugees.

First, MtW has to be seen as just one of a number of tools. By itself, it cannot deliver integration. The study of the Swedish migrant-mentoring experience by Månsson and Delander (2017) makes this obvious. As a complement to existing public services, MtW gives the mentee a targeted approach to a work sector in addition to specific knowledge (Vandermeerschen and De Cuyper 2018). These are useful reminders of the limits of policy designs, particularly those that ignore job-search support.

Second, not all MtW relationships function well. These are the factors marking successful outcomes for highly skilled immigrants (Vandermeerschen and De Cuyper 2018):

1. matching mentors and mentees based on the sector of activity;
2. providing clear guidelines for both the mentor and mentee—there is therefore a trade-off between having a strong framework and targeting the mentee’s specific needs;
3. requiring good, systematic follow-up of the mentorship;
4. supervising mentors through good screening and training; and
5. having strong knowledge about the target population.

Under these conditions, mentoring supports the mentee through the provision of different forms of capital. Cultural and informational capital are the most affected by MtW, followed by psychological and economic capital. Social capital is, however, harder to influence, and mentoring may not always provide the network ties that mentees expect (Vandermeerschen and De Cuyper 2018).

Third, MtW may particularly complement another form of integration policy: Language acquisition. The knowledge of a language is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to ease the labor market integration of migrants. Several studies have assessed its importance, showing that it not only affects labor force participation (Lochmann, Rapoport, and Speciale 2019), it also mitigates wage inequities between migrants and locals (Bleakley and Chin 2004, 2010), providing long-term benefits for succeeding generations as they enter and are integrated into the labor market (for example, Bleakley and Chin 2008). Furthermore, language training combined with mentoring on other labor market dimensions magnifies the rewards of language training. This was an early lesson from an experiment conducted in Germany (Lange, Pfeiffer, and van den Berg 2017). Young male refugees were randomly assigned to
a soccer-based project designed to facilitate social and labor market integration. It combined mentoring and language courses and found positive short-term integration effects.

**Workplace Mentoring**

Workplace mentoring (WM) provides orientation assistance to mentees in their workplace organizations; socialization tools relevant to the profession and career advancement tips are also provided. This form of mentoring focuses on helping individuals both keep and grow into a job. It appears to be as important as finding a job for successful, long-run integration. Most of the relevant insights on WM come from organizational and management research; it benefits from a long track record (see Eby et al. 2008, for an early take). And it has been analyzed across a range of professions—for example, in medicine (Sheri et al. 2019 reviewed the literature from 1990 to 2017).

The meta-analyses of the many studies provide two robust and policy-relevant insights for those designing labor market integration for migrants (Allen et al. 2004). First, when measuring the performance of mentoring programs, both objective (for example, compensation) and subjective (for example, satisfaction) career outcomes need to be considered. The evidence shows that positive career outcomes (objective and subjective) can be achieved through career-oriented and psychosocial mentoring. Second, the evidence is mixed, however, on the matching of outcomes with the type of mentoring. In other words, contrary to what the anecdotal evidence suggests, no solid statistical evidence points to a stronger correlation between objective outcomes and career mentoring on the one hand and subjective outcomes and psychosocial mentoring on the other. Overall, effective mentoring depends on a mentor’s ability. Unless this ability is assessed, shaped, and maintained, any payoffs are unlikely to meet expectations.

**Diverse Mentoring Outcomes and their Drivers**

All the disciplines mentioned in the previous section show that mentoring can help at all life-cycle stages. Their research is also useful to identify the many and disparate expected outcomes from mentoring as well as the factors that moderate or drive them. This section synthesizes the insights from the various mentoring types and their relevance for labor market integration policies. Diverse outcome expectations are generally positive, but they can thwart the construction of a comprehensive overview of outcomes and the possibility of trade-offs. For instance, improving the odds of labor market integration may suggest having to relinquish some other expectations.

As we focus on labor market integration, we examine the evidence on design dimensions and any variables that might affect such outcomes. In the process, we
address psychosocial, technical, and institutional factors. Although the existing evidence could be more robust, almost all of it is insightful. To keep the discussion manageable, we focus only on those elements that seem to drive effective mentoring from a policy perspective.

The synthesis starts with the mentees, who constitute the demand side of the mentoring market. We begin with a review of mentees’ outcomes that can be affected by mentoring. The resulting list of outcomes describes the many ways mentoring can help individuals generally. But the outcomes are easily extrapolated to the needs of migrants at their various life stages. From a policy perspective, the diversity of vision shows a precise range of impacts that mentoring can have. It also shows how difficult delivery can be if an excessively standardized approach to mentoring is used. Choices will have to be made, and decisions will be fairer and more efficient when informed by a diagnostic based on a sound understanding of the range of possible mentorship needs. Then, we review mentee characteristics that may drive the effectiveness of mentoring.

The demand-side perspective (mentees) has its complement in the supply side, represented by the mentors. There is a modest literature on the impact of mentoring on the mentors and on the way they view the role of mentoring. This perspective highlights an often-underestimated aspect of mentorship program design. Then, as for the mentees, we focus on mentor characteristics that are important for successful relationships. We determine what these are and, for analytical purposes, come up with an additional set of control variables. These variables will help us assess the extent to which specific mentoring programs are leading to the desired outcomes for specific mentees.

The rest of the section discusses these demand and supply perspectives, in that order. We then review the relevance of two other drivers of effective mentoring: Properly matching mentors with mentees; and managing the duration and intensity of the mentorship. Finally, we summarize some of the constraints on mentoring and offer alternatives. As in other sections, we try to organize the information into categories that can produce a checklist of dimensions to be considered in ex-ante and ex-post evaluations.

The Mentee’s Perspective

The insights on mentees cover a range of their concerns. They include the expected mentoring outcomes but also important lessons on context and the unique characteristics of the individuals expected to benefit. These insights can be classified into those relevant to expected outcomes and those characterizing the mentees as drivers of successful mentoring.

First, expected outcomes can and should vary across mentees. Eby et al. (2008) take a cross-disciplinary perspective to suggest that many types of outcomes could
improve with mentoring at all stages of educational, personal, and professional development:

- **Behavior**: Enhance a positive behavior (including performance and achievement of tasks, helping others) or reduce a negative behavior (such as dropping out or substance use).
- **Attitudes**: Situational satisfaction, sense of commitment, or career attitudes (such as expectations, satisfaction, or perceived opportunities).
- **Emotional and health-related outcomes**: Psychological stress or self-perceptions.
- **Motivation**: Aspirations, commitment, and persistent pursuit of a goal.
- **Interpersonal relations**: Trust, communication, relationship quality, and positive peer relationships.
- **Career orientation**: Skills development or career recognition and success.

Second, the number of outcome types considered can itself influence the ex-ante and ex-post evaluations of the potential or actual impacts of mentoring. The omission of some outcomes may bias the conclusions of an assessment. Card, Kluve, and Weber (2010) show that studies based on the duration of registered unemployment are more likely to find positive short-term impact than studies based on direct labor market outcomes such as employment or earnings.

Third, the effects of mentoring across outcomes are not homogeneous. Larger effects are found in the mentee’s attitudes than in behavior, health, or career outcomes. This may suggest that attitudes are features that change more rapidly. Indeed, many studies assess only the short-term impact of mentoring. Larger effects were also found for AM mentoring than for WM and YM (the absolute effect sizes associated with the different types of mentoring range respectively from 0.11 to 0.36; 0.03 to 0.19; and 0.03 to 0.14; Eby et al. 2008).

With respect to the mentee’s characteristics and context in the design of mentoring and evaluations, three characteristics appear to dominate discussions and evaluations. First is the mentee’s life-cycle stage. The outcomes for a mentee seem to differ in a few essential ways according to life stage. Mentoring should have target outcomes that match the mentees’ expectations given their life stage—otherwise an impact evaluation may point to underperformance. In other words, the measures of success in terms of specific outcomes should be different at each stage (Eby et al. 2008, 2013).

The second relevant dimension is the mentees’ psychological capital. This is clearly shown by Baranik, Hurst, and Eby (2018) in an overview of many studies. This capital can easily explain the integration difficulties in countries as diverse as the Netherlands and Greece (Pajic et al. 2018). Moreover, more vulnerable populations benefit more from mentoring. Vulnerability may include exposure to past and present environmental risk or pre-existing difficulties (DuBois et al. 2011). Similar conclusions emerge from the academic mentoring literature. Rodríguez-Planas (2012 and 2017) analyzes a randomly designed mentorship program (Quantum Opportunity...
Program, QOP) complemented with group activities over five years for U.S. high-school students. This program is designed to provide students an incentive to enroll in postsecondary education or training and to reduce risky behaviors. Students with the worst ex-ante peer networks were more likely to benefit from the program.

Third, the gender of the mentee may matter as well. There exist gender-related constraints that affect the economic performance of women, and training programs are not gender-neutral. Designs that account for the specific constraints faced by women can thus lead to better outcomes (Buvinić and O’Donnell 2019). In their 2005–2007 Survey of New Refugees, Cheung and Phillimore (2017) find that neglecting gender in integration programs resulted in significant and gendered differences in outcomes. In terms of language acquisition, self-reported health, ability to budget household expenses, and access to a formal social network, refugee women in the UK sample were less well integrated than the men. A similar bias resulting from apparent gender neutrality was observed for Syrian refugees in Turkey by Knappert, Kornau, and Figengül (2018). The authors linked the de facto gender bias to a host-country replication of gendered roles prevailing in the home country.

When host countries anticipate these biases, research shows that migrant women may benefit more from mentoring than men along a number of dimensions and contexts. To start with, women mentees are more likely to benefit from long-lasting relationships. Blau et al. (2010) and Li (2018) show that mentoring improves the women’s labor market prospects by closing gender gaps. One explanation is offered by Rhodes et al. (2008) in youth mentoring, showing that girls reported greater initial difficulties in their parental relationships. This confirms the initial role of poor domestic conditions noted by DuBois et al. (2011). In addition, girl mentorships last longer than mentoring relationships for boys, and girls are more cognizant of lasting mentorships than boys.

Moreover, girls who have not faced ex-ante difficulties do not necessarily benefit from reduced segregation by gender as a result of mentoring. Carlana, La Ferrara, and Pinotti (2017) show that, in Italy, a mentoring program increased the probability of migrant boys enrolling in academic or technical high schools, compared with vocational schools, closing the gap with the native-born on grade retention. Girls were unaffected, but made similar choices and performed like native-born girls in the absence of the program. Finally, mentee women enjoy more psychosocial support in an organizational context (O’Brien et al. 2010). The authors find no difference, however, between men and women in the reported impact of career-related support.

The Mentor’s Perspective

Mentoring can also impact the mentor. The meta-analysis produced by Ghosh and Reio (2013) points to notable career benefits for mentors working in organizations. Mentors are more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to the
organization. Moreover, the types of mentoring have differing effects on the mentors’ career prospects. Psychosocial mentoring leads to more commitment to the organization, career mentoring induces career success, and role modeling is associated with higher job performance.

In addition, the research gleaned insights about the characteristics of mentors and how they influence the mentoring relationship with the mentee. Any of these characteristics should be considered in the design of mentoring programs for migrants. First, the mentors’ awareness of the personal costs of mentoring may influence how intense their commitment is and hence mentoring’s effectiveness. Despite career and personal benefits of mentoring, mentors are aware of and concerned about the challenges (Billett 2003). In a year-long study of mentorships in a large manufacturing plant, some mentors reported significant difficulties in finding time to mentor. They also reported lack of support for and recognition from management. The experience of mentors is important, as it affects the type of mentoring they are willing to commit to. Weinberg and Lankau (2011) show that mentors eventually learn how to optimize their time and reap the personal and organizational payoffs; this includes shifting their mentorships away from vocational aid to psychosocial and role-modeling support.

Second, and on a related note, specific desired outcomes should play a role in the choice of mentors. Moreover, effective mentoring depends on a mentor’s qualifications, so this should be factored into mentor-recruitment schemes. Organizational theory provides additional notions about mentorships that may be important to control for (Smith, Howard, and Harrington 2005). To begin with, mentor qualities matter. Among the various characteristics, the respectability subscale (honesty, integrity, and high moral standards) matters the most, followed by the subscale for sensitivity (empathy, compassion, genuineness); wisdom is generally ranked as less important than the two previous scales. However, the results show that the importance of these qualities depends on the outcome measure. Wisdom matters in skills development, while sensitivity matters in psychosocial support. Moreover, context is important as a mentor’s qualities matter differently across sectors. In the traditional armed forces, sensitivity was ranked least important in comparison with business and academic contexts (Smith, Howard, and Harrington 2005). Matching supply with demand is also essential in the mentoring market, as discussed in more detail in the next section.

Third, in some contexts it makes sense to select mentors for attitude and experience. For YM, mentors with positive attitudes toward their mentees and a record of successful mentorships are more likely to establish strong mentorships. Also valuable are those with high self-efficacy, for their ability to model relevant behaviors. There is, however, no clear consensus on the value of previous mentoring experience because while it is likely to increase proficiency in the helping role, it might also sway expectations and lead to frustration or disappointment (Finnegan, Whitehurst, and Deaton 2010; Raposa, Rhodes, and Herrera 2016).
Fourth, gender matters; men and women tend to be more effective with respect to different types of mentoring. O’Brien et al. (2010) conducted a meta-analysis on the role of gender in mentoring relationships and concluded that men are more likely to focus on career support; women tend to provide more workplace psychosocial support. Matching of genders may make a difference as well, according to another meta-analysis of 70 programs (Raposa et al. 2019). For mentee populations comprised predominantly of boys, a higher share of male mentors (or mentors with a helping-profession background) has greater impact. Finally, differences in perspectives between migrants and their host-country on gender issues can be reduced by mixing genders on the mentoring teams. One component of a program aiming at preventing violence against adolescent girls was evaluated in a refugee camp in Ethiopia. It consisted of mentoring sessions run by women. By randomizing access to this program, Stark et al. (2018) show that, although the program had no direct effect on violence, it changed both gender attitudes and social support networks. How a mentoring program is staffed and organized can thus make a difference in a key component of labor market integration for migrants.

Finally, the inherent skills or occupation of the mentor, of course, matter as well. But various studies show that these qualities can be enhanced through training and other forms of coaching and need to be sustained by a strong support system and proper supervision of the relationship (for example, DuBois et al. 2002, 2011; Foster and Finnegan 2014; Johnson and Gandhi 2015; McDaniel and Yarbrough 2016; Foreningen Nydansker 2017; Kupersmidt et al. 2017). All evaluations should account for the extent to which mentors have been trained, supported, and supervised to deliver on their mandate.

Any of these general observations is relevant to mentoring migrants and refugees. In addition, the opportunity to work with migrants may provide other types of incentives to mentors and influence outcomes. Young, Haffejee, and Corsun (2018) show that the behavior of nationals functioning as mentors can be enhanced by their need to be involved in mentoring. Based on a quasi-experimental design testing diversified mentoring relationships between primarily white management-student mentors and newly resettled refugees in the United States, they find that even short-duration mentoring may be powerful in increasing the cultural intelligence and empathy of mentors. A recent study by Weiss and Tulin (2019) also showed that immigrant participation in a mentoring program can improve the attitudes towards them among the host population. They conducted an experiment in which German respondents are presented with two immigrant profiles, and they need to decide which they would prefer to come to live in their municipality. The authors show that the respondents positively value the participation of immigrants in a local mentoring program, both directly and indirectly through the mitigation of other characteristics, such as education for example.
Evidence also suggests that mentoring programs should account for more than a mentor’s specific individual characteristics and a mentee’s individual qualities. This is where the matching of these pairs intervenes. DuBois et al. (2011) and DuBois and Karcher (2014), show for example that, across mentoring types, matching the educational or occupational backgrounds of mentors and mentees can make mentoring programs more effective. This is well documented in the education literature (see for example, Izadinia 2016 for a recent survey) and in the workplace literature (Singh, Ragins, and Tharenou 2009; Ragins 2012). And the importance of matching has also been documented in a work environment. See Bimrose and McNair (2011) for an early, but still relevant, stocktaking. Among these studies of organizations, Feeney and Bozeman (2008) find that same-gender relationships led to increased network ties.

In the case of migrants in higher education, Crul and Schneider (2014) find that when students with an immigrant background are mentored by students with a comparable migrant background, gains are seen in cognitive achievement, self-esteem, and self-reliance. But both cross- and same-culture mentoring show potential for promoting acculturation and school engagement among first-generation immigrants and refugee youth. The understanding provided by same-culture mentorships might lead to a stronger connection with the youth (see for example, Crul 2002). But cross-culture mentorships, for their part, might ease adaptations to host-country behavioral and institutional norms (Oberoi 2016).

At this stage, the evidence on the differences between same- and cross-culture or demographic relationships is too limited to draw broad conclusions. Often, pairing mentees and mentors according to a shared culture or background was ineffective. Kanchewa et al. (2014) cover a gender-matching case that showed no impact on boys who were mentees. Likewise, Gaddis (2012) confirms that race-matching had no effect on mentoring outcomes for youth. Blake-Beard et al. (2011) describe a case in which matching mentees with mentors of their own gender or race for students in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) had no effect on academic outcomes but was successful from an emotional perspective, as mentees (especially women and students of color) reported receiving more help.

In other situations, certain similarities do not seem to affect the outcomes for the mentees. For instance, among economics PhDs, there are no differences in initial job placement and early research productivity between women who had female advisors and those who had male advisors (Hilmer and Hilmer 2007). In the context of youth with physical disabilities, being matched with a mentor with a similar disability does not make a statistically significant difference (Sowers et al. 2017). And it can even sometimes be harmful to pair mentorship partners according to such disability
criteria, especially if it means to forgo other important similarities like age, profession, and expectations (Heppe et al. 2019).

One possible explanation is that the relevant similarities may be more subjective than based on culture, race, or demography (Mitchell, Eby, and Ragins 2015). Neuwirth and Wahl (2017) evaluate the impact of a mentorship program for migrants in Austria through an online questionnaire which covers career and psychosocial functions, program satisfaction, quality of the received training, and program efficiency. They find that even though there was no correlation between objective similarity, such as race or culture, between mentors and mentees, the perceived subjective similarity positively and significantly affected the evaluation of the program by the mentees. Likewise, the perceived similarity within the match is found to increase self-efficacy among entrepreneurs (St-Jean, Radu-Lefebvre, and Mathieu 2018).

Overall, the most obvious similarities, such as culture, age, education, or race matter and often contribute to effective mentoring. But there are too many mixed results not to assume that omitted dimensions may explain the observed heterogeneity of effective mentoring. Any effort to create successful mentorship pairings demands more detailed assessments of relevant connections. These assessments should go beyond demographic basics like gender, race, or nationality. This is consistent with the case made for more detailed compatibility assessments made by DuBois et al. (2011).

One way to account for missing or omitted dimensions in mentorships is to consider other ways in which mentees and mentors can experience and benefit from a connection. In their interdisciplinary survey on just this topic, Eby et al. (2013) provide rich insights. They suggest distinguishing between three concepts of similarities: (a) surface-level (such as gender or race); (b) experiential (such as education, job tenure, or geographic location); and (c) deep-level (such as attitudes or beliefs). Most of the experiments reviewed earlier in this paper focus on superficial and experiential connections. But the last one, regarding deeply held beliefs and attitudes, may be just as important and account for many of the omitted qualities seen in mentoring matching based on surface and experiential similarities. For instance, similar deeply held beliefs and attitudes are associated with an increase in the perception of support that is both psychosocial and instrumental (or goal-oriented). This is largely about establishing trust. Betting on experiential and superficial similarities is less reliable in this dimension. This does not imply that matching for other similarities is ineffective. For example, experiential similarity is more likely to provide more technical, pragmatic, or other forms of instrumental support rather than psychosocial support.

Finally, the mentoring program must monitor the relationship. Clear boundaries to the relationship are important (Foster and Finnegan 2014), and both the mentor and the mentee should jointly agree to the goals of the relationship (Rhodes and DuBois 2006; Wise and Sait 2008; Foster and Finnegan 2014), keeping in mind that setting too many goals might discourage a mentee and cause them to give up (KPMG 2013).
Mentoring Duration and Intensity

It should not be surprising that mentoring duration (total length of the relationship) and its intensity (the frequency and length of meetings during the relationship) influence both the program effectiveness and its costs. Their importance as success drivers can have budgetary and staffing implications that should be considered. Rationing on either dimension tends to have an impact, as seen in evidence across mentoring types. But rationing may not be the only limiting factor because how frequently mentors and mentees meet and the availability of mentors also make a difference. For example, in workplace mentoring, a large survey of managers in Illinois and Georgia showed that longer-duration relationships are shown to increase access to networks, inside and outside the workplace (Feeney and Bozeman 2008). The evidence also suggests that the choices of duration and intensity need to account for a range of characteristics of the individuals involved to be as effective as they should be. For instance, the effects of gender, perceived similarity, or mentoring type decrease with the duration of mentoring. In other words, specific characteristics matter less in longer-term relationships (Turban, Dougherty, and Lee 2002; Allen and Eby 2003).

YM provides some of the most general insights of direct relevance to the design of mentoring for migrants to smooth their entry into the labor market. The evidence on the success drivers for YM has recently been reviewed by Crisp et al. (2017). On duration, for instance, Grossman and Rhodes (2002) provided early but robust evidence using 1,138 youth who applied to Big Brothers and Big Sisters randomly assigned to the mentoring program or to a waiting list. They show that the effects on youth outcomes were progressively greater for longer-term mentorships, and, conversely, mentoring relationships that terminated within three months had negative impacts on outcomes such as self-esteem. But increasing duration is not sufficient to deliver results. Raposa et al. (2019) actually find for a sample of 70 programs that shorter meetings yielded larger payoffs.

The literature suggests that the expectation about duration may matter more than the duration per se. Indeed, if youths know ex-ante that the relationship is supposed to be short-term, they are prepared for it and depersonalize the termination. This may reduce the duration needed for mentoring to be effective (DuBois et al. 2011; McDaniel and Yarbrough 2016).9

Although many assessments are not very statistically robust, as explained by Crisp et al. (2017), a growing body of research is relying on solid impact-evaluation techniques. For instance, the Friends of the Children program was evaluated over the first five years of an ongoing RCT. This showed that children who had professional full-time mentors hired to devote the time to build up relational skills reported significant positive effects (Eddy et al. 2017). The authors show that these conclusions are similar to those reached in the volunteering literature.
Many of these academic reviews have, in some countries, already had a policy impact. The New Zealand Government (2016) produced its own survey of various meta-analyses of youth mentoring to show that if a high-risk group of young people is mentored, then for every 12 of them given mentoring, on average, one less young person will reoffend. Most show that the more successful programs were those in which the mentor and mentee spent more time together at each meeting and meet more frequently. Longer duration mentorships did not lead to better outcomes, maybe because of difficulties in recruiting high-quality mentors for longer periods (Jolliffe and Farrington 2007).

The cross-disciplinary perspective confirms that interaction frequency is positively correlated with a wide range of payoffs. This includes the mentee’s perception of instrumental support, psychosocial support, and relationship quality. These payoffs tend to correlate more with frequency than duration (Eby et al. 2013). The combination of perceptions and duration matters in other ways as well. For instance, Neuwirth and Wahl (2017) looked at an Austrian program aimed at labor market mentoring for migrants. The correlation between the positive evaluation of the program and the perceived similarity between mentee and mentor was partly mediated by the duration of the relationship.

Discussion

This voluminous and disparate research provides important insights on how to design mentoring programs to smooth the labor market integration of migrants. In particular, it identifies a checklist of (a) outcomes that can be improved by mentoring and (b) dimensions that can influence the efficacy of mentoring interventions. Supplementary online appendix A1 lists different types of outcomes presented by an array of researchers. The outcomes can be grouped as the acquisition of specific skills, the accumulation of certain types of capital, and other realized outcomes. These groupings highlight the various potential purposes of mentoring. It is therefore important for a program to be explicit when defining its goals. Program evaluations should also use the program’s explicit goals when assessing outcome measures, making sure they are in line with the program’s stated objectives.

For example, if a mentoring program for newly arrived migrants aims to improve their information and cultural capital, then evaluating the impact of the program based on the mentees’ hourly wage may fail to capture potential payoffs. The acquisition of skills and capital is a first step in a causal chain leading to the realization of a specific outcome. But this first step does not always need to be necessary or sufficient in itself. For example, if the final goal of a program is to improve career outcomes, targeting cognitive skills might be key. But some individuals may already possess cognitive skills. What they lack is information capital. In other cases, it may not be sufficient, if, for example, an individual would gain from better cognitive skills yet faces
other serious barriers. All these considerations should be taken into account when setting up and evaluating a program. Mentoring that targets the specific needs of individuals might lead to better outcomes.

In addition to examining the outcomes achieved through mentoring, policy-oriented research should look at those factors affecting the odds of achieving these outcomes with at least as much attention. The factors affecting the mentoring relationship, and identified in the literature, are listed in supplementary online appendix A2. Classified along six dimensions, they are:

1. mentees’ characteristics;
2. mentors’ characteristics;
3. the matching of mentees and mentors;
4. the mentoring relationship;
5. the mentoring program; and
6. integration policies in general.

All these factors may influence the impact of mentoring on the mentee. As noted by Nickow, Oreopoulos, and Quan (2020), programs can not only be very effective, but they can also be quite versatile. It is therefore crucial to identify the factors affecting program success. For example, the gender of the mentee may affect outcomes. Mentor training is another example of a crucial factor. Some factors may even have overriding effects on others. For example, the length of the mentorship is found to lessen the impact of gender or the perceived similarity between mentor and mentee (Turban, Dougherty, and Lee 2002).

In the context of labor market integration for migrants, mentoring programs should be designed and evaluated to account for these six factors. They form the basis of a checklist used in designing of ex-ante and ex-post evaluations. These insights are summarized in table 1. An X marks the cases where the survey identified at least a correlation between the desired effect and a specific design characteristic. The table may not adequately reflect, however, the many experiences, pointing to the need to remain realistic about the likely impact of mentoring policies and programs as currently implemented. In some cases, there are opportunities to improve the quality and rigor of mentoring practices. In many others, mentoring may not be a sufficient tool for labor market integration, which depends on legal, institutional, economic, and political avenues for change. We have not addressed these other avenues for labor market integration in the survey.

Despite its limitations, the table provides two additional types of insights. The first is that there is room to improve our collective understanding of some of the dimensions, since there are characteristics for which there is not enough robust evidence or no evidence at all to guide policy design and implementation. This is revealed by the many boxes lacking an X. These gaps define a fairly basic research agenda. A more thorough research agenda would examine the degree of complementarity and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 1. Existing Evidence on Interactions Between (a) Mentoring Program and Policy Design and (b) Monitorable Payoffs</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design interventions</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>On the mentor</td>
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<td>Previous mentoring experience</td>
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<td>Personal traits</td>
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<td>On the mentee</td>
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<td>Focus on population at risk</td>
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<td>On the matching</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived similarity</td>
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<td>Surface level matching</td>
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<td>Gender matching</td>
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<td>Experiential matching</td>
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<td>Cultural matching</td>
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<td>Deep-level matching</td>
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<td>Matching on the interest</td>
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<td>On the relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 1. Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Design interventions</th>
<th>Health and psychological state</th>
<th>Positive behavior</th>
<th>Positive attitude</th>
<th>Interpersonal skills/Social capital</th>
<th>Societal integration</th>
<th>Job access</th>
<th>Job stability</th>
<th>Job compensation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearly defined goals</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clearly defined boundaries</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td><strong>On the mentoring program</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fit between the educational or occupational background of mentors and goals of the program</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Screening the mentors</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training the mentors</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supervision of the relationship</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the target population</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Target and differentiate mentoring according to mentee type</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Include psychosocial support</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>On integration policies</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Combine mentoring with other forms of job search tools and reforms</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ensure program financial viability</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>-</td>
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</table>

*Source:* Authors. See supplementary online appendix A3 for the methodology used to construct this table.
substitutability between the design options for the intended mentoring outcomes. And it is likely that digging a bit further into the experience of mentees and mentors through more precise questionnaires would identify additional dimensions regularly omitted from many of the papers reviewed for this survey. We clearly have a way to go before we can rely on exhaustive program and policy evaluations of mentoring programs for migrants, in particular in the context of labor market integration goals.

The second insight, implied in table 1, is mentoring has many design dimensions. In fact, effective mentoring may be strongly correlated with the extent to which it can be individualized. This observation is increasingly internalized by countries trying to make the most of mentoring benefits and willing to allocate funds to have an impact. In Denmark, asylum seekers are given a set of personal goals and duties (such as language acquisition). Job centers then have the task of assessing a migrant’s need for a mentor on a case-by-case basis. Mentors are then asked to provide “personal, social, and practical support in connection with virtually all forms of employment-promoting activities, as long as it is deemed that the help of the mentor is crucial in order to obtain or retain employment.” Assessments of a person’s needs and abilities determine the number of hours of support that may be granted. The maximum length of support is generally six months, with the possibility of extension. In addition, several local NGOs provide mentoring schemes for refugees and asylum seekers. Mentorship schemes are one of the standard tools of Danish active labor market policies and are not restricted to refugees (Madsen 2016).

Similar efforts were made in Sweden, where the Establishment Plan (Etableringsplan) ensures that newly arrived migrants receive individual guidance to help and support them during their job search and with their questions about studies, social issues, or Swedish society in general (Anxo 2016). In other countries, these services are provided by NGOs and other members of civil society. Sometimes the private sector provides help even if most of these programs are still, at least partly, funded by the public sector (Petrovic 2015). In Belgium, mentoring is conducted largely by NGOs. The organization DUO for a JOB (2019) for example matches young job seekers from an immigrant background with volunteers older than 50 on the basis of professional sector. The focus of the mentorship pairing here is mentorship along a career path. But it includes important noncognitive dimensions that are part of finding a job.

A notable gap in table 1 is the discussion of the cost-effectiveness of such programs and of budgetary allocations and of the costs of mentoring compared with other labor market integration policies. Only few studies have assessed the cost-effectiveness of mentoring programs. For instance, for each dollar spent on a mentorship program that targets microenterprises in Kenya, profits rise by $1.63 (Brooks, Donovan, and Johnson 2020). Another example comes from the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), a program pairing indigenous high-school students with volunteer university students. Their cost-benefit analysis suggests that for each dollar invested in the program, there is an $8.9 benefit for mentees in the form of earning or
employment (KPMG 2018). Other studies however depict a less-positive picture. In Sweden for instance, providing new migrants with intensive counseling and coaching by Public Employment Service caseworkers instead of the regular introduction program did increase the employment probability by six percent. The costs however were larger than the benefits (Joona and Nekby 2012). There is not enough evidence on cost-effectiveness, but we can however already conclude that the current evidence is mixed, and if anything, we have evidence that program characteristics have important effects on cost-effectiveness. For example, in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, the marginal cost of a participant in a community program is evaluated to be three times larger than for those in a school-based program (Alfonso et al. 2019).

Concerning the budgetary allocation of integration, this has been mostly addressed by international organizations (for example, OECD 2017b, or Westerby 2018, 2019) rather than by academic researchers so far. The range of experiences with labor market integration for migrants suggests, however, that different countries have varying perspectives; first, on how much to allocate for labor integration and, second, as to how to use the funds. According to the OECD (2017b), the cost for processing and accommodating asylum seekers is estimated around €10,000 per application for the first year. But it can be much higher if labor integration costs are included. The differences across countries in budgetary allocations, netted out of the €10,000 common cost estimate, provide a rough indication of the differences in the resources allocated to integration. In 2016, in Germany, the total allocation was about €18,000, in Sweden €37,000, while in the United States it was about €20,000 (USD 22,000). This means that a first-order approximation of the per capita integration ranges from €8,000 in Germany (where migrants have become a source of political tension) to €27,000 in Sweden (which is considered best practice for integration efforts).

We need more on the actual costs of migrant labor market integration and its various components. And it is important to know and assess the extent to which failures can be linked to underfunding. In some countries (or regions when these policies are decentralized), the budgets allocated to language learning only support a month of intensive training. Few individuals are likely to gain the language proficiency required in a work environment in only a month. In some countries, budgets have been allocated to improve the targeting of migrant mentoring at the individual level. This is the case in Denmark or Sweden.

Conclusions

This overview of the detailed and diverse insights on mentoring produced by researchers across disparate academic fields provides enough evidence to argue that mentoring is a potentially powerful tool to smooth the labor market integration of migrants. It can help at all stages of the life cycle. It can also be implemented at all stages of the migration process: Before departure (host countries embassies already
offer guidance on demand); during the journey (e.g., in refugee camps as discussed in Stark et al. 2018); or once migrants or refugees are in the host country (the form most covered by the academic literature although, often without enough robust evidence, see for instance the discussion by Abdel Jelil et al. 2018 or Battisti, Giesing, and Laurentsyeva 2019). Mentoring could also be used to support the labor integration of returning migrants into their home countries.

There is, however, a limit to what can be done with enough certainty of success in developed or developing countries. This is the result of four main weaknesses in the current state of research focusing on mentoring in general, and in particular in the context of labor market integration of international migrants and refugees.

First, a majority of the research still presents methodological weaknesses, especially when it comes to assessing the importance of third factors in the effectiveness of mentoring. Many, if not most, of the general insights on mentoring come from the identification of correlations rather than full-impact evaluations focusing on causality between the specific characteristics of mentoring design and the outcomes observed, a focus that ignores the relevance of many essential control variables. Second, while a lot of the research reviewed here is essential to inform the design of mentoring programs to smooth the labor market integration of migrants and refugees, much of it centers on youth or academic mentoring or on mentoring within organizations. Only a small share of insights has been formally tested in the context of labor market integration for migrants. Third, much of the research also focuses only on European and American experiences. Now that there is growing evidence that the efforts to integrate migrants and refugees are becoming a global challenge, the insights should be validated in other regions. This seems particularly important as economic, social, and cultural contexts are likely to matter for effective mentoring and integration. Fourth, little of this research has focused on the value for money of the resources allocated to mentoring migrants and refugees. Because fiscal constraints continue to be an issue and the competition for public resources is likely to grow with other demographic changes (for example, aging populations), the research agenda may want to include the need to evaluate the drivers of the relative cost-effectiveness of the various mentorship design options.

The policy payoffs of an improvement of the investigation of the mechanisms around job-search mentoring of migrants are hard to overestimate in the current political and social context. The poor integration of migrants and the need to address the associated policy failures deserve to become a priority in the agenda of national authorities in many countries. And this should add to the academic appeal of the research agenda.

Many of the institutional stakeholders such as international organizations and NGOs are aware of the need to improve evidence. More databases are now available from international organizations (for example, the EU and the IMF) and various national governments (for example, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Sweden,
and the United States). Many large NGOs are releasing data-intensive annual reports on their experiences (e.g., DUO for a JOB in Belgium). These data have already allowed a few solid analytical assessments (for example, the various IMF papers cited in this survey). However, much more is needed, and possible, to enable formal tests of many of the partial conclusions reached in research less anchored in formal evaluations of policy and program design options.

The research agenda is not simple. Besides the variety of outcomes that need to be identified and sometimes ranked, other important factors are seen to matter in mentoring relationships. First, as emphasized in the survey, many of the key drivers are quite subjective and measuring requires survey questions that are typically not included in typical household or employer surveys. Second, some dimensions are politically sensitive. For instance, it is illegal in some countries to ask people about their religion. Yet in some countries, discrimination against some religions can hinder labor integration. So, these influence the speed with which unemployment rates for some migrants converge with the rest of the population. Third, each program has specific characteristics. These characteristics include target populations, objectives and size of the program, type and duration of mentoring, recruitment of mentors, stakeholders, funding opportunities, and integration with other forms of support. Very little is known about the importance of each of these characteristics. Fourth, budgetary data are not always as transparent as they should be to ensure accountability and to allow assessments of value for money. Finally, mentoring is only one of many of the policies that can influence integration. Legal flexibility may be just as important. The way visas are granted and the speed of naturalization may be just as important in some settings. A study of otherwise similar immigrants to Switzerland shows that Swiss citizenship strongly improved long-term social integration (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Pietrantuono 2017).

This should prove to be a stimulating challenge, as it can rely on multiple methodological approaches, each producing different perspectives based on different uses of data that sometimes generates new data. Natural or quasi-natural experiments are increasingly being used to identify ways to nudge government to take on smoother cultural, social, and labor integration. New datasets are making it easy to address identification issues in the econometric treatment of data. And new surveys are producing new case studies, which in turn can be treated more carefully so assessments of mentoring programs and policies can move from correlation to causality. Jointly, these improvements should make it easier from now on to generate more evidence on the impact of mentoring as a way to ease the labor market integration of people with a migration background. Unless this knowledge is produced quickly, many governments will hesitate to adopt mentoring programs rapidly enough to meet the fast-growing demand from steadily increasing numbers of migrants and refugees. And the social costs of these hesitations are likely to lead to extreme political choices (e.g., building walls rather than bridges to rely on migrants to address global demographic tensions).
Notes

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1. Europe and Northern America alone attracted 52 percent of migrants.
2. For example, Gallotti and Mertens (2013).
3. The integration of migrants into host societies was listed as one of the World Bank’s priority areas with the possibility of lending in destination countries according to a briefing for its board (World Bank 2019).
5. The importance of including scientific research for the optimal design of mentoring in practice has been recognized for some time. Examples include the Center for Interdisciplinary Mentoring Research created in 2010 at the Portland State University in the United States and the European Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring in 2016.
8. The paper by Crisp et al. (2017) is particularly useful to understand the diversity of academic perspectives on a specific target of mentoring.
9. This importance is also illustrated by its inclusion in MENTOR (2009), a handbook of evidence-based elements for effective practice of youth mentoring that strongly emphasizes the importance of managing the closure of the relationship.
10. See supplementary online appendix A3 for the methodology used to construct this table.

References


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