International Journal of Intercultural Relations 96 (2023) 101853

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ijintrel

Community participation among immigrants: A generative journey towards personal growth

Sara Martinez-Damia [a,b,*], Daniela Marzana [a], Virginia Paloma [b], Elena Marta [a]

[a] Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Italy
[b] Universidad de Sevilla, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Community participation
Immigrants
Oppression
Personal growth
Volunteerism

ABSTRACT

Immigrants usually live under oppressive settings and experience social suffering because of the unjust socio-cultural conditions of host societies. Community participation can be particularly beneficial for them as it leads to positive outcomes and the ability to resist oppression. In this article we argue that volunteerism—a specific form of community participation rooted in generativity—not only helps immigrants in handling oppression and social suffering but also leads to positive psychological changes. Combining the liberation psychology and generativity approaches, a qualitative study was implemented based on in-depth interviews (N = 27) with immigrant volunteers of migrant community-based organizations settled in Milan, Italy. The results highlight how the process of immigrant volunteerism operates. Some immigrants cope with nostalgia for their countries of origin while others cope with social suffering in Italian society. In both cases, their coping is "generative" when connected to volunteerism, that allows immigrants to enact their social responsibility and care for future generations both in their country of origin and in host societies. The sense of mattering (i.e., feeling useful) and psychological sense of community (i.e., the sense of belonging to a group where solidarity is expressed) experienced within this type of organizations are related to paths of personal growth. Practical implications are presented.

When immigrants arrive in a new country their acculturation process is challenged by many factors, such as ethnicity, cultural similarity between their country of origin and the host country and discrimination that can characterize the context of reception (Schwartz et al., 2010). According to the liberation psychology approach (LPA; García-Ramírez et al., 2011) immigrants usually face conditions of asymmetrical intergroup relations and experience oppression because of the unjust socio-cultural conditions of host societies. Worldwide data suggest that immigrants experience poorer working conditions and occupational health than native workers (Sterud et al., 2018). In Europe, they experience occupational apartheid even when they do find jobs aligned with their education (Mpofu & Hocking, 2013), experience inequalities in access to healthcare services (Lebano et al., 2020) and report lower life satisfaction compared to locals (Arpino & de Valk, 2018). This is the case of Italy, an unfavorable context of reception for immigrants.

Exclusion and discriminatory policies—examples of oppression—result in a type of suffering among immigrants that can therefore be defined as "social" (Anderson, 2015; Kleinman, 1997). Nevertheless, despite or rather because of these conditions, LPA suggests that immigrants can develop strengths and use them for community betterment (Paloma et al., 2020). Community participation has been defined as a "fundamental orientation towards reciprocity" (Amnå, 2012, p. 613) and as a way "to improve conditions for others or to

* Correspondence to: Largo Gemelli 1, Milan 20123, Italy.
E-mail address: saramaria.martinezdamia1@unicatt.it (S. Martinez-Damia).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2023.101853
Received 5 October 2022; Received in revised form 22 June 2023; Accepted 23 June 2023
Available online 5 July 2023
0147-1767/© 2023 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 241). Community participation can support well-being as it provides immigrants with the opportunity to access community resources of value within a group context (Aceros et al., 2021; Buckingham et al., 2021; Paloma et al., 2010; Marzana, Martinez-Damia et al., 2020; Montero & Sonn, 2009). Indeed, literature suggests that immigrant participation within community-based organizations is connected to sense of belonginess (Guo, 2014), feelings of acceptance (Sonn & Fisher, 1996) and psychological well-being (Martinez-Damia, Paloma, et al., 2023). Nowadays, participation of immigrants is considered as a key aspect for their inclusion in host societies and is becoming increasingly prominent in the legal and political debate around immigration in Europe (European Commission, 2020).

In this study, we combine the literature on liberation with that on generativity. The former suggests that the dynamics of cultural differences are not sufficient to develop respectful immigrant policies because of the asymmetries of power in contexts of reception (García-Ramírez et al., 2011). It also pinpoints the fact that every human group has the capacity to resist oppression (Paloma et al., 2010). The latter frames volunteerism—a specific form of community participation (Omoto & Snyder, 2002)—as a generative social process as it refers to "the human experience of contributing to and promoting lives of others and oneself" (Kim et al., 2017, p. 8). This study fits into the new branch of positive psychology of immigrants that looks at the immigrants' strategies for coping and thriving vis-à-vis the challenges of adapting to new homelands (Cobb et al., 2019).

In this article we focus on immigrants migrating from developing countries with a low and medium Human Development Index (HDI)[1] who settled in receiving societies with a very high HDI (UNDP, 2018) and with discriminatory policies and attitudes, such as Italy, who volunteer within Migrant Community Based Organizations (MCBOs). The choice of focusing on this group of immigrants and resistance settings was determined by using LPA and its interest in the experience of oppressed people as our theoretical approach. However, we recognize that LPA is not necessarily applicable to all migratory journeys. The present study aims to understand the process of volunteerism among immigrants living in Italy, meaning the antecedents, experiences and generative consequences of participation within a type of organization that is managed and run by immigrants.

Oppression and social suffering of immigrants in Italy

From the LPA point of view, *oppression* in receiving societies can be defined as a process in which locals use their power to maintain their privileges and to restrict the access of resources to immigrants (Garcia-Ramirez et al., 2011; Martin- Baró, 1996). It operates on multiple levels (Buckingham et al., 2021). The psychological consequence or outcome of this oppression is usually immigrants' *suffering*. According to Kleinman (1997), suffering is social "because social institutions respond with assistance to certain categories of sufferers (categories that institutions have constructed as authorized objects for giving help), while denying others or treating them with bureaucratic indifference" (p. 321). In the case of immigrants targeted by our research, discrimination, social exclusion, poverty and treatment as "second-class citizens" can be defined as examples of oppression that are responsible of their social suffering (Anderson, 2015). The LPA indicates that social justice and immigrant well-being are interrelated (Paloma et al., 2014; Prilleltensky, 2008). Indeed, immigrants' expectations on how their life satisfaction in host societies can be improved are not always met (de Jong et al., 2002; Hendriks, 2015), especially in receiving societies with high level of social injustice that relegate immigrants to lower positions of power, restrict their access to resources and ultimately undermine societal "livability" for them (Paloma et al., 2014).

This is the case of Italy, where immigrants have easy access to manual jobs (Fullin & Reyneri, 2011), have less access to health care services compared to locals (Di Napoli et al., 2022) and face barriers when trying to access other social benefits (Ambrosini, 2013a; Caneva, 2014; Mantovan, 2018; Mazzara et al., 2020). Immigrants also experience self-perceived workplace discrimination—mostly due to being foreigners, their way of speaking Italian and their skin colour—which has a role in their mental health conditions (Di Napoli et al., 2021). Finally, in Italy the effect of self-perceived discrimination on well-being was found to be even more pronounced from one generation to another (Giuliani et al., 2018). This data helps to understand why Italy is an unfavorable context of reception that creates social suffering in the lives of immigrants living in this country.

Community participation as a source of well-being for immigrants

Recently, scholars described that community participation among immigrants can be a way for building resilience (Marzana et al., 2020) in the face of the hardships of an oppressive host society. Other studies found that immigrant community participation is generally linked to sense of belonging to a new society and to integration (Bloemraad & Terriquez, 2016; Handy & Greenspan, 2009; Marzana et al., 2019; Marzana et al., 2020; Sinha et al., 2011). Moreover, immigrants who participate also have higher levels of psychological well-being compared to those who do not (Aceros, Duque, & Paloma, 2021; Martinez-Damia, Marzana, Paloma, & Marta, 2023). Community participation provides pathways through which immigrants seek to matter and contribute to society despite social injustice (Sabir et al., 2017). Kim et al. (2015), for example, reported that senior Korean immigrants living in the United States who were involved in culturally meaningful activities had an interest in leaving a legacy and "demonstrated the value of being useful and contributing to others" (p. 7).

Among the general population different forms of community participation have been connected to several consequences (Piliavin & Siegl, 2007; 2015) and rewards (Bond et al., 2008) in terms of well-being, such as communal awards (i.e., interpersonal relationships earned through involvement) and agentic rewards (i.e., growth on a personal level expressed by seizing opportunities and feeling

[1] The HDI is a composite indicator that combines people's health, education, and income in just one number (UNDP, 2018).

enriched). In the case of immigrants, communal rewards are related to intercultural relationships since community participation allows immigrants to improve their bicultural competences and increase contacts with locals (Taurini et al., 2017).

Immigrant volunteerism as a form of community participation responding to oppression and as a generative social process

Community participation can be seen as the immigrants' resistance to the oppression of host societies and to the social suffering they experience (Buckingham et al., 2021). Among the different forms of community participation, volunteerism has generally received a lot of attention as a distinctive type of prosocial action that involves gratuitousness, spontaneity, organization, and solidarity (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Indeed, people choose to help strangers freely and their action stretches over extended time periods within an organized community setting that promotes social justice. Immigrant volunteerism usually occurs within MCBOs, i.e., organizations founded by immigrants for the main benefit of their immigrant group (Babis, 2016). Within MCBOs immigrant volunteers can provide legal, linguistic, social, and cultural support to other members of their community, i.e., people who share the adversities of the migration experience.

McAdams and St. Aubin (1992) highlighted that volunteerism can also be seen as the action of a person that results from a generative concern. Volunteerism is rooted in generativity, i.e., the desire to transmit what is considered to have value to future generations and to take care of the world (Snyder & Clary, 2004). In psychology literature, immigrant volunteerism has been investigated through the lens of generativity by only focusing on motivations and without considering asymmetries of power within contexts of reception. This is why the LPA is needed.

Alfieri, Marzana, and Cipresso (2019), expanding on the motivations of volunteerism by Omoto and Snyder (2002), offered a comprehensive model for the motivations that push and sustain immigrant volunteerism in the community. The authors suggested that by participating immigrants aim to: (a) protect their rights and stand up for the reputation of their ethnic group (i.e., advocacy motivation), and (b) raise awareness and disseminate the culture of their ethnic group (i.e., ethno-cultural motivation). Other studies highlighted that immigrants can be trigged to participate by feelings of procedural injustice (Klandermans et al., 2008) and negative emotions (Albanesi et al., 2016). Such factors can be the basis for social suffering that—at the certain level—can activate volunteerism (Black & Rubinstein, 2009; Bower et al., 2021). Evidence suggests, however, that when suffering is combined with the feeling of being irrelevant—and therefore, according to liberation psychology, is not connected to the social forces that cause it—it suppresses generative impulses (De Medeiros et al., 2015).

The present study

In this article, we combine the liberation psychology and generativity approaches by presenting a qualitative study we conducted looking at Italy as an oppressive context of reception. For that, we follow the Omoto and Snyder's model (2002), that featured three components of individual volunteerism (antecedents, experiences, and consequences). Thus, in this article we aimed to: (a) explore the antecedents of volunteerism among immigrants; (b) explore the generative process that immigrants undergo during their volunteer activity; and (c) clarify the generative consequences that volunteerism fosters among immigrants. To do so, we looked at volunteerism within MCBOs settled in Milan, Northern Italy, an area where the most exclusionary policies against immigrants have been implemented (Ambrosini, 2013b) and where—unsurprisingly—59.9 % of the 1149 MCBOs existing in the country are settled (Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2021).

The research is part of a larger multi-method project [https://www.partecipazioneimmigrati.it] that aims to identify the organizational challenges that MCBOs face, the process of community participation and the relationships between community participation, well-being, and empowerment. In this article we focus on presenting the results related to the proposed objectives.

Method

Participants and procedure

Twenty-seven volunteers within MCBOs were interviewed. The inclusion criteria were: (a) being first-generation immigrants, i.e., people born outside receiving societies who decided to emigrate at 18 or more years old (Rumbaut, 2004); (b) having lived in Italy for at least 2 years—as, based on our interventions with immigrants, we consider that two years represented enough time to adjust to the new country and get involved in an organization not as a user but as an active participant; (c) coming from countries with low or medium HDI (UNDP, 2018), such as some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, South and East Asia; (d) being a volunteer of a MCBO settled in Milan; (e) having been actively involved in the organization (i.e., being in charge of some organizational aspects, participating and supporting activities) for at least 3 months.

The recruitment of participants started from an umbrella organization that brought together all migration-related organizations settled in the Metropolitan Area of Milan. Among thirty-three MCBOs contacted, 32 % (n = 11) accepted to participate to the research. The sample was later expanded (n = 3) through both the snowballing technique (i.e., additional MCBOs were reported by those we had already involved) and field research of MCBOs in the city. We spent six months presenting the research and the team, developing trustful relationships with MCBOs, going to their events, and supporting their activities. The research involved a total of 14 active (i.e., organizing at least one event in the last year) MCBOs, all of which were medium-small community-based organizations (i.e., the number of active volunteers ranged from 1 to 15). MCBOs were involved in activities from different fields: (a) cultural services, i.e., activities aimed at remembering and spreading cultural knowledge through art, food and other recreational activities; (b) social

services, i.e., activities aimed at helping immigrants in need through assistance with legal documents, healthcare, tax return, language schools etc.; and (c) advocacy, i.e., activities aimed at fighting for immigrant rights through protest, demonstrations and collective actions.

The participants of this study were members of these 14 MCBOs. We asked for the participation of the presidents, who also indicated some of their active members within the organization. All participants came from South America, Eastern Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa, or Asia. Most of them were women, had the Italian citizenship, had a high education level, and had participation history in their country of origin. The average age of the sample was 45 (age ranged from 30 to 71) and the average time spent in Italy was 18 years (ranging from 2 to 33). Specific demographic information is shown in Table 1.

Participants did not receive any economic reward and were interviewed once. The interviews lasted between 1 and 2 h and were held in different spaces according to what was most comfortable for participants. Ethical approval was obtained by the university considering specific ethical issues such as participants' right to confidentiality (we used an ID for each participant and removed potential identifying information when quoting interviewees), written informed consent, face-to-face presentation of the research in the relevant communities, and communication in the participants' preferred language of Italian, English or Spanish. The research team expressed its commitment to share and discuss the results of the research with the MCBOs.

Interview guide

For this study, we asked questions on immigrants' personal journey around volunteerism. We explored five areas: (a) migration history (e.g., when did you arrive? With whom?); (b) volunteerism within the organization (e.g., can you tell me about your volunteerism? Since when have you been in this organization? What do you do? How did you start volunteering?); (c) immigrants' experiences as volunteers (e.g., what are the things that you do in this organization that are important for your life? What kind of relation do you have with the other members of the organization?); (d) relation with the country of origin (e.g., what is your relationship with your country of origin? How has it changed since you have joined this organization?); and (e) personal positive changes (e.g., in what ways has volunteerism changed your life? And how has volunteerism changed you?).

Data analysis and research team

Data was analyzed based on a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) and a reflexive thematical analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019; 2021). Most interviews were conducted in Italian, two were conducted both in Italian and Spanish and two were conducted both in Italian and English. The audio was digitally recorded and transcribed in Italian by a bilingual interviewer, so all the data set was managed in one single language.

The research team conducting the analysis consisted of five people. Two researchers read and re-read the interviews focusing on how participants experienced the community participation within the MCBOs. We separately and inductively ran an *open coding* using

Table 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of participants.

ID	Gender	Role	Age	Legal document	Level of education	Years in Italy	Country of origin
1	Female	Leader	50	Citizenship	Bachelor's Degree	30	Peru
2	Female	Leader	46	Apply for citizenship	Bachelor's Degree	16	Ecuador
3	Male	Leader	34	Citizenship	Bachelor's Degree	16	Albania
4	Female	Leader	50	Citizenship	Bachelor's Degree	22	Venezuela
5	Female	Member	45	Citizenship	High school	17	Venezuela
6	Female	Leader	67	Citizenship	Master's Degree	25	Argentina
7	Female	Member	52	Long term residence permit	Master's Degree	18	Romania
8	Male	Leader	51	Long term residence permit	High school	31	Senegal
9	Female	Leader	60	Citizenship	High school	16	Ukraine
10	Female	Member	33	Citizenship	Bachelor's Degree	19	Ukraine
11	Female	Member	39	Citizenship	High school	10	Chile
12	Female	Member	43	Family permit	Master's Degree	5	Senegal
13	Female	Leader	55	Apply for citizenship	Master's Degree	15	Moldova
14	Female	Leader	50	Citizenship	High school	30	Somalia
15	Female	Member	71	Long term residence permit	Middle-school	32	Ecuador
16	Female	Member	50	Citizenship	Professional Degree	30	Somalia
17	Female	Leader	47	Long term residence permit	Degree	16	Bulgaria
18	Female	Member	50	Citizenship	Professional Degree	20	Moldova
19	Male	Leader	51	Long residence permit	Master's Degree	33	India
20	Female	Leader	59	Citizenship	Degree	32	Philippines
21	Female	Member	37	Long residence permit	Degree	12	Bulgaria
22	Female	Member	31	No valid documentation	High school	13	Peru
23	Male	Member	34	Asylum permit	High school	2	Peru
24	Male	Member	27	Student visa	Degree	4	India
25	Male	Member	32	Work permit	High school	8	Senegal
26	Male	Member	28	Work permit	High school	6	Senegal
27	Male	Leader	30	Long term residence permit	Elementary school	8	Senegal

the Nvivo software. Then, we adjusted the codes after reviewing the literature on generativity and analyzing extracts based solely on antecedents, experiences, and consequences of the volunteer process model (Omoto & Snyder, 2002). In this way we combined the inductive approach with the deductive one. Once we defined the themes and developed a codebook (*axial coding*), other three researchers were involved as supervisors of data analysis. They provided feedback on the clarity of the themes that were developed, helping to refine them based on the literature, and developed reflection on relationships between themes to build the conceptual framework that we present in this article (*theoretical coding*). The use of supervisors helps to ensure credibility and trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004) and has been previously implemented by Corvino et al. (2022). Finally, the two initial researchers re-read all interviews separately by applying the codebook. For each interview we run a coding comparison query on NVivo finding that the average percentage of agreement was 90 %.

The researchers were all community psychologists with knowledge on the topic of generativity, had professional experience with immigrants and migration experiences at personal or family level, and volunteered within different types of community-based organizations. Their background made them sensitive to the resources used by immigrants to resist oppression and social suffering.

Results

Results highlighted three themes that correspond to the three components of volunteerism among immigrants: (a) generative coping to enter MCBO; (b) connecting to others emotionally within MCBO; and (c) perceiving personal growth outside MCBO. Each of these themes included subthemes indicating examples of variability and was connected to form the conceptual framework showed in Fig. 1. On the left, Fig. 1 shows that immigrants were coping with nostalgia for their country of origin and/or oppression in the host country. They connected their coping with responsibility for the future that they could assume by entering the MCBO. After becoming members of the MCBO, immigrants connected emotionally with others, experiencing a sense of mattering and a psychological sense of community (center of the figure). The spaces of MCBOs are represented by a dotted line that shows that their boundaries are porous, i.e., they have tiny spaces through which experiences and emotions may flow by promoting exchanges between immigrants and the host society. The psychological experiences within MCBOs affected immigrants' personal growth that ended up extending outside the organizations as immigrants felt complete and empowered in the wider community (right side of Fig. 1).

Major theme 1: generative coping to enter MCBO

This theme, found among all participants, refers to what activates and supports participation among underprivileged immigrants' in MCBOs. Specifically, 13 participants said they were coping with nostalgia for their country of origin and wanted to continue their traditions, while 14 said they strongly felt the oppression of immigrants in Italy and wanted to fight it. In both cases, participants expressed some degree of responsibility for the future rooted in their religious beliefs or values.

Coping with nostalgia

When thinking about the past, 13 participants expressed nostalgia for their country of origin as a result of an existing positive ethnic bond: *"I feel nostalgia, a typical feeling for anyone who lives abroad. You start missing the habits, the traditions"* (ID 17). They showed a deep connection with their ethnic origin: *"these roots make you a real person (. …). You can't go to another country and forget everything you've lived, because you'd be nobody [if you did]"* (ID 4). When thinking about their arrival, they said they missed relationships in their homeland: *"when you make the choice of going to a country that is not your own, the first thing you miss is your loved ones"* (ID 2).

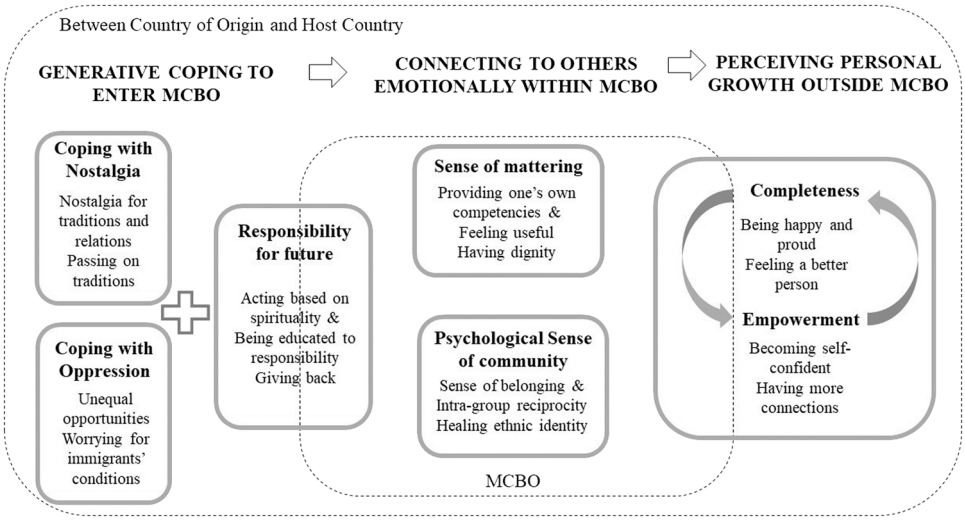

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of immigrant volunteerism: A generative journey towards personal growth.

Community participation provides the opportunity for many participants to manage nostalgia in an active way: *"there are certain things that migrants miss and [so they] fall into depression. And I didn't want to fall into depression"* (ID 4); "*the organization gave me back the loved ones I was missing, the friends who were there"* (ID 2). Within MCBOs it was also possible to keep traditions alive and reconnect with cultural roots so that these could be celebrated and passed down to future generations: "*We do many traditional workshops to pass our culture down to our children who grew up here, but we also feel a little bit at home while carrying out these traditions"* (ID 17); *"I like it when we are together and, I don't know…we perhaps keep our cultures and traditions alive and pass them down to those who will come after us"* (ID 21).

Coping with oppression

When thinking about the present, 14 participants reported the oppression of immigrants that they saw in Italy and the unequal opportunities that they had as reasons for taking action: "*If Italians want to promote a singer, they will promote an Italian singer rather than a singer of another nationality; that is a predetermined rule that we try to overcome [in our cultural organization]"* (ID 8)". Some participants recognized the structural oppression that immigrants live: *"I didn't want to get the Italian citizenship because, if I keep my first and last name, when going to any institution I will always be treated as a foreigner even if [my ID has] 'Italian citizen' written on it"* (ID 19);.

> *[reporters] don't get to ask "why are you sleeping on the floor? Where do you come from? What are you experiencing?" They don't want Italians to understand those things […], they want them to see that the black man doesn't think, that he's ignorant, and we have to fight that."* (ID 29)

Finally, many expressed concern and empathy for other immigrants and for the bad life conditions they experienced in Italy: *"when a person comes up and tells me about a problem I have a lot of empathy, because I have been there. I know what it's like to go to the police station trembling with fear that they will turn you down and I want to help them"* (ID 2).

Responsibility for future

Responsibility is usually something that many participants learned through family and cultural education: *"because it is already in my blood and in my culture to be a humanitarian, to help others, it is how my parents raised me"* (ID 20). Helping is perceived both as "natural" (i.e., being a deep part of oneself) and as a "duty" that stems from being aware of social problems and feeling the need to do something to solve them. The MCBO becomes the place where people can take action: *"everyone has to participate in the development of his country, whether he is a migrant or a local. We have the responsibility to participate"* (ID 11).

> *It's like going to work, it is a duty because I get paid there. Being part of this organization is a duty for me because I know something, and I can pass [this knowledge] to other people and then I am very glad to do that.* (ID 25)

Seven participants reported they could handle their nostalgia or concern for their country of origin by being involved in activities of co-development where they can improve the living conditions of their compatriots and thus "give back" what they received in the host country: *"you feel like you've left a piece of yourself there and you feel this urge to give something back there (.) We've done a lot here and we want to try to give back to our country"* (ID 2); "*I think when a community knows what their country of origin is going through, we cannot stand by"* (ID 4). In this way, responsibility for the future connects with responsibility for action. For a minority of participants spiritual beliefs could also take shape through participation:

> *I believe in karma, if you do something now it will surely come back to you someday, so this belief makes me get involved in the organization, in people's pain, maybe if I do something good in this human life it will come back to me someday"* (ID 24).

Major theme 2: connecting to others emotionally

This theme, found among all participants, refers to the generative psychological processes that immigrants undergo during their volunteer activity and that helps them connect with others, both immigrants and locals. In some cases, immigrants experience either a sense of mattering or a psychological sense of community within the MCBOs (this is why the two subthemes are inside the dotted line) and in other cases they experience both.

Sense of mattering

The first generative psychological process that 15 participants shared was feeling valued by others, as one interviewee said: *"I feel I am also acknowledged for my work, even if I am not on a stage [giving a speech], and I feel I am doing something useful"* (ID 7); *"I found being recognized as a co-development actor [an actor who develops the host country and the country of origin] is very nice, it's a personal benefit"* (ID 8). Participation is also an opportunity to contribute as volunteers through personal competences *"I can transfer something to others (…), it's always one helping the other. always based on our capabilities"* (ID 23). Feeling useful becomes a central issue in their lives as it is difficult to find other spaces for relevance in the host society: *"[the MCBO] has allowed me to do something that I have inside me, being useful to people, to work in the social field and for the community"* (ID 12); *"I think that the organization gave me a lot, but I contributed a lot too"* (ID 2). Moreover, participation made it possible for some to achieve their dreams and have dignity and respect, which may be hard due to immigrants' oppression in the host country:

> *The organization gives you dignity, it is a place where you regain dignity. Because you stop being just an immigrant, you become a person. This is the most difficult thing. You become a person also to the eyes of the others. It gives you dignity (…). I stayed in Italy only because at a certain point the organization gave me back my dignity."* (ID 1)

Psychological sense of community

The second generative psychological process that 19 participants reported refers to being part of the community-based organization, being supported and healing their ethnic identities. Many reported a strong sense of connection to others: *"fortunately I met some beautiful people with whom I have established a friendship, almost a kinship"* (ID 18); "*we are friends, we dine together, a phone call is enough to understand each other, because we trust each other (.) it is thrilling, to be part of something"* (ID 7);.

> *relationships are created and you feel less alone […] we become a small family and we help each other also in other areas of life, even in looking for an accommodation or with a simple hello"* (ID 17).

Their psychological sense of community was also built on intragroup solidarity, i.e., unconditional help and support: *"if there's a chance to help another person you do it, without asking for anything in return because you were also helped and that's the way this chain works"* (ID 23). Within the group sometimes you ask and sometimes you give, creating a virtuous circle of reciprocity that can also foster participation:

> *Before, when I was a student, I used to get support from people to do things, to go somewhere, also financial aid and other things [I used to get] from seniors [of the MCBO]. But now it is the opposite thing […] I am in the position to give back.* (ID 19)

Finally, through MCBOs immigrants can heal ethnic identity by being able to connect more with the culture of the country of origin through activities. For some participants, this meant forming relationships with people from their country of origin they had never had before: *"Well, to tell you the truth before this whole story led me to associationism I did not have any relationship with my compatriots, they were very sporadic, so yes [thought the MCBO] I was able to know my community."* (ID 11).

In other cases, participation allowed immigrants to cultivate relationships with compatriots in the host country and restore relationships with people still living there: *"For me [being a volunteer] means being more Ecuadorian. When we are there together and sharing (…), we speak the same language, we do activities or other stuff. it is a beautiful thing"* (ID 15).

> *The [international] projects we do now involve the same people I worked with before [in my country of origin]. So, it's not as if something was broken, but rather as if I joined the organization [here] to go back there [in my country of origin].* (ID 2)

As reflected in this last quotation, community participation comes with the emotional experience of going back home, thus helping people cope with nostalgia. This is echoed by other participants: *"it basically makes us feel like we were home, it brings us closer to Bulgaria"* (ID 21); *"Feeling much closer to your homeland…if it wasn't for this organization [I would not feel this] (. …) [The MCBO] helped me feel at home here*" (ID 17).

Major theme 3: perceiving personal growth

This last theme, found among all participants, represents the generative changes that volunteerism fosters among immigrants both within and outside MCBOs. Participants said they felt more complete than they were before belonging to a MCBO. Specifically, we traced back their words to two positive sensations: completeness and empowerment.

Completeness

Thirteen participants felt their participation gave them happiness and good feelings. Pleasure, satisfaction, and pride were associated with their actions. Some, for instance, felt positive emotions as a result of the help given, the skills achieved and the social role acquired: *"I feel so much positive energy coming back to me"* (ID 2); *"I feel complete and happy when I help people, I have a healthy soul, it makes me happy to help people"* (ID 11); *"sometimes I see a group of, say, five people hanging out, and they are hanging out thanks to me. Before they didn't know each other, you see? So, it makes me very happy and makes me very proud"* (ID 27). They also felt they had become better persons: *"I've become much more patient and altruistic (…) personally I feel complete with everything we've done (.), I've grown, it's become my universe, my life"* (ID 20).

Empowerment

Finally, 20 participants reported feeling empowered by community participation. Ten participants felt they had become more thoughtful and self-confident: *"Now I accept other people's opinions and I am able to discuss about certain topics, even if they don't share my ideas"* (ID 21); "*I'm learning so many things. I don't know anything but I'm slowly learning to believe in myself, to understand life and myself, that to face life you don't have to study, you've got to have the heart to go on*" (ID 27); "*(It gave me a) way of thinking, a way of being close to people in need (…) with the organization you do things and you realize what the real problems are."* (ID 16).

> *It helped me.also assess my history, understand things that had happened in my country of origin, and I did not understand why (.) I grew from the point of view of content (.) I began to think, to study, to reflect.* (ID 1)

For other 10 participants, empowerment also refers to an increase in the number of relationships with different people thanks to the MCBO. This is particularly important for immigrants, as they need to build a new social network in the new country: "*now I know a lot of people from different countries and I like that so much, they call me and they are nice, they invite me"* (ID 11), "*I participated in many activities that put me in touch with people who had different experiences, and that gave me something more"* (ID 12). Participants also referred to the opportunity of meeting institutions and people of higher status, which can help them overcome marginalization: *"These relationships are both informal and formal because, in addition to the members of the group, you also have the chance to meet new organizations, local authorities and local politicians"* (ID 18); *"[the relationships established] are endless, from institutions to universities, to partners, to*

participants…they are endless both at professional level and as friendships, human relationships" (ID 3).

Discussion

This work aimed to explore volunteerism among immigrants as a generative social process carried out within MCBOs settled in oppressive contexts of reception, such as Italy. Specifically, the results highlight three major themes that correspond to the three main components of immigrants' volunteerism: (a) generative coping to enter MCBO as an antecedent of volunteerism; (b) connecting to others emotionally as a part of the volunteerism within MCBO; and (c) perceiving personal growth as a consequence of volunteerism outside MCBO.

As for the first aim (to explore antecedents of volunteerism within MCBOs among immigrants), results show generative coping rooted both in the past—nostalgia for their country of origin—and present—reaction to the oppression experienced in the host society. We define this type of coping as "generative" as it is related to people engaging into a generative process, such as belonging to and volunteering in a MCBO. This generative coping may take place thanks to some aspects previously identified by Dollahite et al. (1998) as the core concept of generativity: (a) temporality and spatiality, as immigrants needed to connect their past, present and future orientations both in their host country and country of origin; and (b) agency, as volunteering gives choice and power to immigrants to take care of themselves. In our case, volunteering is connected to the desire to pass on traditions as a sort of cultural immortality and to act in response to other people's oppression. This is in line with previous research (Alfieri, Marzana & Martinez-Damia, 2019; Black & Rubinstein, 2009; Klandermans et al., 2008). Moreover, others generative aspects that are connected to becoming volunteers for immigrants are spirituality, that is linked to an orientation to the future that nurtures hope, and morality, that relates to responsibility (Bower et al., 2021; Dollahite et al., 1998). These aspects may help transform nostalgia and oppression into a generative action.

As for the second aim (to explore the generative process that immigrants undergo during their volunteer activity), we found that participation is related to feeling useful and contributes in ways that are not possible elsewhere. Being important to others is a fundamental need for all human beings (Prilleltensky, 2020) and is even more important for immigrants, who often lose their role, struggle to adapt to a new culture and lifestyle and experience a sense of irrelevancy (social suffering) that may suppress their generativity (de Medeiros et al., 2015). The results of this study support findings by Sabir et al. (2017) by indicating that "the need to make a personally meaningful societal contribution persists even under challenging conditions" (p. 32). This outcome highlights that immigrants in Italy may be mainly concerned about the need to matter and the fear of not mattering in the new society (Flett & Heisel, 2020). The other generative process we found within MCBOs is the creation of a psychological sense of community among members, who care for each other, share traditions and stories about their home countries, develop friendships and for once feel like they belong (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). This highlights the importance of considering the generative group dynamics of volunteerism (Gray & Stevenson, 2020). Additionally, it becomes clear how settings like MCBOs can potentially help people redefine the meaning of cultural origins within a new country. Other studies found that shared emotional connection—one of the dimensions of the sense of community—is strictly related to ethnic and national identity (Sonn, 2002). Sense of community also results from the fact that "feelings of being understood may also positively contribute to the psychological functioning of volunteers" (Omoto & Snyder, 2002, p. 857). This major theme (i.e., connecting to others emotionally) is in line with two aspects identified by Dollahite et al. (1998) as important to support generativity: (a) capability, i.e., focusing on people' strengths that can be used, which resonates with immigrants' sense of mattering; and (b) holism, i.e., sustaining connections and relationships among people as whole persons, which resonates with immigrants' sense of community. The importance of being emotionally connected with others speaks of the social suffering that immigrants go through and that involves invisibility or negative visibility—for example due to mass media narratives—and isolation.

Finally, as for the third aim (to clarify the generative consequences that volunteerism fosters among underprivileged immigrants), results highlight that volunteerism within MCBOs foster the perception of personal growth, specifically feelings of completeness and empowerment. This major theme is in line with the literature on generativity that use communal and agentic rewards to indicate the interpersonal relationships and personal growth earned through participation (Bond et al., 2008) and with the liberation psychology literature on activism among immigrants that indicates empowerment as a result of participation (Aceros et al., 2021).

Although we presented the results as a single and unique journey, it is important to note that immigrant volunteerism is personal and varies among immigrants based on individual life circumstances and sensibility, activities performed as volunteers and group climate within MCBOs. Indeed, even though in our research we focused on commonalities between participants' narratives, less than half of the sample was represented in most subthemes. This means there is a great variability in the experiences of participation that future phenomenological or narrative studies should investigate. Nevertheless, we believe the social generativity framework is useful to understand the general traits of the type of volunteerism that many participants followed.

This study is not without limitations. First, the research was only conducted in Milan, an area that belongs to a very exclusionary region but can still be considered as more welcoming compared to other cities, as shown for instance by the higher incidences of work permit or the higher presence of enterprises led by non-EU nationals compared to Italian-born people (Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali, 2021). A future line of research could therefore study MCBOs and immigrant community participation in other Italian cities. A second limitation concerns the participants we targeted as we focused on those who experienced oppression within Italian society although we recognize that: (a) immigrants also report positive experiences in their new homelands and, for this reason, in some cases decide to stay and to never go back home; (b) participants are not representative of all people migrating around the world and might be considered privileged. Indeed, the literature suggests that immigrants with high education levels, economic and legal stability or longer residence in the receiving country are those who can have the possibility of becoming actively involved in a community-based organization (Ambrosini & Artero, 2023). Moreover, we were not able to involve people from North Africa in our research despite the fact that, according to sources from 2020—the year when the research was conducted—Moroccans and Egyptians

represented almost 18 % of the population residing in Milan (Istat, 2021). As people from North Africa are distinctively Muslim for the most part and Fekete (2004) highlighted structured anti-Muslim racism in Europe, it is possible that the subjective experience that immigrant Muslims have in Muslim organizations based in Milan may have peculiarities we could not explore. Nevertheless, a recent systematic review of generativity (Benito-Ballesteros & de la Osa Subtil, 2020) indicated that cultural differences in expressing generativity per se do not affect the basic psychological mechanisms of generativity, i.e., what we identified as "sense of mattering" and "psychological sense of community". Future research should apply the framework we presented to immigrants in other countries with different profiles and should consider other type of organizations where they may be involved. A third methodological limitation is that we did not run a back translation for the parts of the interviews conducted in a language other than Italian. Although we used a bilingual expert, we might have missed some information in the process. Finally, in our study we specifically focused on generative and positive experiences and outcomes of volunteerism. However, some participants also reported hardships in continuing their volunteerism as found in other studies (Aceros et al., 2021). Future research should expand on this by interviewing immigrants who, at some point, interrupted their volunteerism experience. This would lead to a more comprehensive picture of immigrants' volunteerism.

Conclusion and implications

This study shows that volunteerism in MCBOs among immigrants results from a generative coping of nostalgia and social suffering thanks to a sense of responsibility, that the process of volunteerism is characterized by experiences of sense of mattering and psychological sense of community and that the main generative consequence of volunteerism is personal growth. The combination of spatial, temporal, and intersubjective elements of volunteerism that occurs within MCBOs fosters self-care among immigrants who, starting from nostalgia and oppression, earned completeness and empowerment. Our study contributes to literature and practice in different ways.

First, at theoretical level, our study increases the understanding of immigrant volunteerism as a form of community participation that constitutes both a response to oppression and a generative social process. Because we looked at volunteerism combining the LPA with the generativity literature, we provided empirical results on generativity showing that social suffering can be connected to generative outcomes when immigrants have the opportunity to be emotionally connected with other people. Results provide a new application of the generativity model by Dollahite et al. (1998), that until now has been used only within the realm of psychotherapy. Moreover, this study contributes to see MCBOs not only as mediating structures or spaces of resistance in host societies (Buckingham et al., 2021; Martinez-Damia, Paloma, et al., 2023), but also as spaces of existence and growth that can generate well-being for immigrants.

Second, at practical level, it suggests that immigrants participating within MCBOs experience positive generative effects that may have positive consequences on multiple levels. Indeed, at structural level, MCBOs can build relationships with local administrators based on mutual knowledge and trust. In this way, they can promote greater awareness of the intercultural opportunities that immigrants can bring at the structural level. This is in line with the results by Taurini et al. (2017) and with the conclusion by Paloma et al. (2010) that community-based organizations "bridge newcomers and the mainstream layers of society, its people, institutions and policies, legitimizing the new cultural group and its members as an accepted part of their new society" (p.110). At social level, when MCBOs open their activities to the wider community (as the MCBOs involved in this study did), they support the hybridization with the culture of the host country and create spaces to learn about other's people worldview and celebrate uniqueness. By participating actively in the host society, immigrants are kept from internalizing self-deprecation, are not confined to playing secondary and "oppressed" roles and are empowered to see themselves as people with competences to offer, instead of burdens to bear. Our study recognizes immigrants' strengths, their capacity to support each other through community-based activities and their role as agents of personal and social change within their communities.

Funding

This work was supported by the Catholic University of Sacred Heart under Grant D1 2021. R1074500198) "The generativity of immigrants who are active in organizations".

Declaration of Competing Interest

No competing interests to declare.

References

Aceros, J. C., Duque, T., & Paloma, V. (2021). Psychosocial benefits and costs of activism among female migrant domestic workers in southern Spain. *Journal of Community Psychology, 49*, 2905–2921. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22610

Adler, R. P., & Goggin, J. (2005). What do we mean by "civic engagement"? *Journal of transformative Education, 3*(3), 236–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1541344605276792

Albanesi, C., Mazzoni, D., Cicognani, E., & Zani, B. (2016). Discriminatory contexts, emotions and civic/political engagement among native Italians and migrants. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 26*(2), 179–186. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2245

Alfieri, S., Marzana, D., & Cipresso, P. (2019). Immigrants' community engagement and well-being. *TPM: Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology, 26*(4). https://doi.org/10.4473/TPM26.4.8

Alfieri, S., Marzana, D., & Martinez-Damia, S. (2019). Why do first and second-generation young migrants volunteer? The migrant volunteerism motivation model (MVMM). *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 7*(2), 1089–1107. https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v7i2.1104

Ambrosini, M. (2013a). Fighting discrimination and exclusion: Civil society and immigration policies in Italy. *Migration Letters, 10*(3), 313–323.
Ambrosini, M. (2013b). 'We are against a multi-ethnic society': Policies of exclusion at the urban level in Italy. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 36*(1), 136–155. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2011.644312
Ambrosini, M., & Artero, M. (2023). Immigrant volunteering: A form of citizenship from below. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 34*(2), 252–262. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-022-00454-x
Amnå, E. (2012). How is civic engagement developed over time? Emerging answers from a multidisciplinary field. *Journal of adolescence, 35*(3), 611–627. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2012.04.011
Anderson, R. E. (Ed.). (2015). *World Suffering and Quality of Life*. New York: Springer.
Arpino, B., & de Valk, H. (2018). Comparing life satisfaction of immigrants and natives across Europe: The role of social contacts. *Social Indicators Research, 137*(3), 1163–1184. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1629-x
Babis, D. (2016). Understanding diversity in the phenomenon of immigrant organizations: A comprehensive framework. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 17*(2), 355–369. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-014-0405-x
Benito-Ballesteros, Á., & de la Osa Subtil, I. (2020). La generatividad a través de la cultura. Una revisión sistemática [Generativity through culture. A systematic review]. *Tendencias Sociales Revista Délelőtt Sociología, 5*, 63–79. https://doi.org/10.5944/ts.5.2020.27748
Black, H. K., & Rubinstein, R. L. (2009). The effect of suffering on generativity: Accounts of elderly African American men. *Journals of Gerontology: Series B, 64*(2), 296–303. https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbn012
Bloemraad, I., & Terriquez, V. (2016). Cultures of engagement: The organizational foundations of advancing health in immigrant and low-income communities of color. *Social Science & Medicine, 165*, 214–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.02.003
Bond, L. A., Holmes, T. R., Byrne, C., Babchuck, L., & Kirton-Robbins, S. (2008). Movers and shakers: How and why women become and remain engaged in community leadership. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 32*(1), 48–64. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00406.x
Bower, K. L., Lewis, D. C., Bermúdez, J. M., & Singh, A. A. (2021). Narratives of generativity and resilience among LGBT older adults: Leaving positive legacies despite social stigma and collective trauma. *Journal of homosexuality, 68*(2), 230–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2019.1648082
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589–597. https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806
Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18*(3), 328–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238
Buckingham, S. L., Langhout, R. D., Rusch, D., Mehta, T., Chávez, N. R., Ferreira van Leer, K., Oberoi, A., Indart, M., Paloma, V., King, V. E., & Olson, B. (2021). The roles of settings in supporting immigrants' resistance to injustice and oppression: A policy position statement by the Society for Community Research and Action. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12515
Caneva, E. (2014). Intolerant policies and discourses in northern Italian cities. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies, 12*(4), 383–400. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2014.938144
Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS (2021, November 28). *Ricerca associazioni migranti* [Searching immigrant associations]. Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali. ⟨https://integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-Associazioni⟩.
Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE,.
Cobb, C. L., Branscombe, N. R., Meca, A., Schwartz, S. J., Xie, D., Zea, M. C., & Martinez, C. R., Jr (2019). Toward a positive psychology of immigrants. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 14*(4), 619–632. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691619825848
Corvino, C., Martinez-Damia, S., Belluzzi, M., Marzana, D., & D'Angelo, C. (2022). "Even Though We Have Different Colors, We Are All Equal Here": Immigrants building a sense of community and wellbeing through sport participation. *Journal of Community Psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22897
de Jong, G. F., Chamratrithirong, A., & Tran, Q. G. (2002). For better, for worse: life satisfaction consequences of migration. *International Migration Review, 36*(3), 838–863.
de Medeiros, K., Rubinstein, R., & Ermoshkina, P. (2015). The role of relevancy and social suffering in "generativity" among older post-Soviet women immigrants. *The Gerontologist, 55*(4), 526–536. https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnt126
Di Napoli, A., Rossi, A., Baralla, F., Ventura, M., Gatta, R., Perez, M., & Petrelli, A. (2021). Self-perceived workplace discrimination and mental health among immigrant workers in Italy: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Psychiatry, 21*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-021-03077-6
Di Napoli, A., Ventura, M., Spadea, T., Giorgi Rossi, P., Bartolini, L., Battisti, L., & Petrelli, A. (2022). Barriers to accessing primary care and appropriateness of healthcare among immigrants in Italy. *Frontiers in Public Health, 10*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.817696
Dollahite, D. C., Slife, B. D., & Hawkins, A. J. (1998). Family generativity and generative counseling: Helping families keep faith with the next generation. In D. P. McAdams, & E. de St Aubin (Eds.), *Generativity and Adult Development: How and Why We Care for the Next Generation* (pp. 449–481). American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/10288-014.
European Commission. (2020). *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion* (pp. *2021–2027*). European Commission,. ⟨https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/ec-reveals-its-new-eu-action-plan-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027_en⟩.
Fekete, L. (2004). Anti-Muslim racism and the European security state. *Race & Class, 46*(1), 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396804045512
Flett, G. L., & Heisel, M. J. (2020). Aging and feeling valued versus expendable during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond: A review and commentary of why mattering is fundamental to the health and well-being of older adults. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-020-00339-4
Fullin, G., & Reyneri, E. (2011). Low unemployment and bad jobs for new immigrants in Italy. *International Migration, 49*(1), 118–147. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2009.00594.x
García-Ramírez, M., de la Mata, M. L., Paloma, V., & Hernández-Plaza, S. (2011). A liberation psychology approach to acculturative integration of migrant populations. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 47*(1), 86–97. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9372-3
Giuliani, C., Tagliabue, S., & Regalia, C. (2018). Psychological well-being, multiple identities, and discrimination among first and second generation immigrant Muslims. *Europe's Journal of Psychology, 14*(1), 66. https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v14i1.1434
Gray, D., & Stevenson, C. (2020). How can 'we' help? Exploring the role of shared social identity in the experiences and benefits of volunteering. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 30*(4), 341–353. https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2448
Guo, S. (2014). Immigrants as active citizens: Exploring the volunteering experience of Chinese immigrants in Vancouver. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 12*(1), 51–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2013.858527
Handy, F., & Greenspan, I. (2009). Immigrant volunteering: A stepping stone to integration? *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 38*(6), 956–982. https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764008324455
Hendriks, M. (2015). The happiness of international migrants: A review of research findings. *Migration Studies, 3*(3), 343–369.
Istat (2021). Stranieri residenti al 1° gennaio – cittadinanza [Resident foreigners on January 1st – citizenship]. Istat. ⟨http://dati.istat.it/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DCIS_POPSTRRES1⟩.
Kim, J., Kim, M., Han, A., & Chin, S. (2015). The importance of culturally meaningful activity for health benefits among older Korean immigrant living in the United States. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, 10*(1), 27501. https://doi.org/10.3402/qhw.v10.27501
Kim, S., Chee, K. H., & Gerhart, O. (2017). Redefining generativity: Through life course and pragmatist lenses. *Sociology Compass, 11*(11), Article e12533. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12533
Klandermans, B., Van der Toorn, J., & Van Stekelenburg, J. (2008). Embeddedness and identity: How immigrants turn grievances into action. *American Sociological Review, 73*(6), 992–1012. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300606
Kleinman, A. (1997). "Everything that really matters": social suffering, subjectivity, and the remaking of human experience in a disordering world. *Harvard Theological Review, 90*(3), 315–336.

Lebano, A., Hamed, S., Bradby, H., Gil-Salmerón, A., Durá-Ferrandis, E., Garcés-Ferrer, J., & Linos, A. (2020). Migrants' and refugees' health status and healthcare in Europe: A scoping literature review. *BMC Public Health, 20*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08749-8

Mantovan, C. (2018). 'They treat us like criminals': Urban public spaces and ethnic discrimination in Italy. *Patterns of Prejudice, 52*(4), 338–354. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2018.1476209

Martin- Baró, I. (1996). In A. Aron, & S. Corne (Eds.), *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Martinez-Damia, S., Marzana, D., Paloma, V., & Marta, E. (2023). The mediating role of migrant community-based organizations: Challenges and coping strategies. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-023-00572-0

Martinez-Damia, S., Paloma, V., Luesia, J. F., Marta, E., & Marzana, D. (2023). Community participation and subjective wellbeing among the immigrant population in Northern Italy: An analysis of mediators. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12652

Marzana, D., Alfieri, S., Marta, E., & Paloma, V. (2020). Community involvement as a vehicle for integration: A study with young immigrants. *Journal of Civil Society, 16*(2), 138–157. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2020.1752020

Marzana, D., Martinez-Damia, S., Alfieri, S., & Marta, E. (2019). Youth and their challenge to promote a fairer multicultural society: A qualitative study of African immigrant activists. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 20*(2), 557–576. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0615-8

Marzana, D., Martinez-Damia, S., Atallah, D., & Loreto Martinez, M. (2020). The resilience of Peruvian immigrants through participation in community-based organizations in urban Chile. *Journal of Community Psychology, 48*(5), 1327–1346. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22284

Mazzara, B. M., Avdi, E., Kadianaki, I., Koutri, I., Lancia, F., Mannarini, T., & Salvatore, S. (2020). The representation of immigration. A retrospective newspaper analysis. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2020.1836299

McAdams, D., & St. Aubin, E. de (1992). A theory of generativity and its assessment through self-report, behavioral acts, and narrative themes in autobiography. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*, 1003–1015. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.62.6.1003

McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*(1), 6–23. https://doi.org/10.1002/1520-6629(198601)14:1<6::AID-JCOP2290140103>3.0.CO;2-I

Ministero del lavoro e delle politiche sociali (2021). La presenza dei migranti nelle città metropolitane [The presence of migrants in metropolitan cities]. ⟨https://www.lavoro.gov.it/documenti-e-norme/studi-e-statistiche/Documents/La%20Presenza%20dei%20Migranti%20nelle%20aree%20metropolitane,%20anno%202021/Quaderno-di-Sintesi-RAM-2021.pdf⟩.

Montero, M., & Sonn, C. C. (Eds.). (2009). *Psychology of Liberation: Theory and Applications*. Springer.

Mpofu, C., & Hocking, C. (2013). "Not Made Here": Occupational deprivation of non-English speaking background immigrant health professionals in New Zealand. *Journal of Occupational Science, 20*(2), 131–145. https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2012.729500

Omoto, A. M., & Snyder, M. (2002). Considerations of community: The context and process of volunteerism. *American Behavioral Scientist, 45*(5), 846–867. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764202045005007

Paloma, V., de la Morena, I., Sladkova, J., & López-Torres, C. (2020). A peer support and peer mentoring approach to enhancing resilience and empowerment among refugees settled in southern Spain. *Journal of Community Psychology, 48*(5), 1438–1451. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22338

Paloma, V., García-Ramírez, M., & Camacho, C. (2014). Well-being and social justice among Moroccan migrants in southern Spain. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 54*, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-014-9663-1

Paloma, V., García-Ramírez, M., de la Mata, M., & AMAL. (2010). Acculturative integration, self and citizenship construction: The experience of Amal-Andaluza, a grassroots organization of Moroccan women in Andalusia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34*(2), 101–113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.11.005

Piliavin, J. A., & Siegl, E. (2007). Health benefits of volunteering in the Wisconsin longitudinal study. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 48*(4), 450–464. https://doi.org/10.1177/002214650704800408

Piliavin, J. A., & Siegl, E. (2015). Health and well-being consequences of formal volunteering. In D. A. Schroeder, & W. G. Graziano (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of Prosocial Behavior* (pp. 494–523). Oxford University Press.

Prilleltensky, I. (2008). Migrant well-being is a multilevel, dynamic, value dependent phenomenon. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 42*(3–4), 359–364. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-008-9196-6

Prilleltensky, I. (2020). Mattering at the intersection of psychology, philosophy, and politics. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 65*(1–2), 16–34. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12368

Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, life stages, and generational cohorts: Decomposing the immigrant first and second generations in the United States. *The International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1160–1205. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2004.tb00232.x

Sabir, M. G., Yull, D., Jones, J., & Pillemer, K. (2017). Personalized generativity in the work pursuits of African Americans of the great migration. *The International Journal of Reminiscence and Life Review, 4*(1), 24–33. ⟨http://143.95.253.101/~radfordojs/index.php/IJRLR⟩.

Schwartz, S. J., Unger, J. B., Zamboanga, B. L., & Szapocznik, J. (2010). Rethinking the concept of acculturation: Implications for theory and research. *American Psychologist, 65*(4), 237. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019330

Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*(2), 63–75.

Sinha, J. W., Greenspan, I., & Handy, F. (2011). Volunteering and civic participation among immigrant members of ethnic congregations: Complementary not competitive. *Journal of Civil Society, 7*(1), 23–40. https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2011.553409

Snyder, M., & Clary, G. (2004). Volunteerism and the generative society. In E. de St Aubin, D. P. McAdams, & T. C. Kim (Eds.), *Generativity Society. Caring for Future Generations* (pp. 221–237). Washington, DC: A.P.A.

Sonn, C. C. (2002). Immigrant adaptation. In A. T. Fisher, C. C. Sonn, & B. J. Bishop (Eds.), *Psychological Sense of Community* (pp. 205–222). Springer.

Sonn, C. C., & Fisher, A. T. (1996). Psychological sense of community in a politically constructed group. *Journal of Community Psychology, 24*(4), 417–430. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1520-6629(199610)24:4<417::AID-JCOP9>3.0.CO;2-Q

Sterud, T., Tynes, T., Mehlum, I. S., et al. (2018). A systematic review of working conditions and occupational health among immigrants in Europe and Canada. *BMC Public Health, 18*, 770. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-5703-3

Taurini, E., Paloma, V., García-Ramírez, M., Marzana, D., & Marta, E. (2017). Effects of the community engagement of migrants on their well-being: The case of Moroccan leaders in southern Spain. *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 45*(1), 32–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/10852352.2016.1197737

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2018). Human development indices andindicators: Statistical update. United Nation Development Programme. http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-indices-indicators-2018-statistical-update.