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**SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN IMMIGRANTS:
How intergroup social connections influence its impact**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	2
1. SOCIAL EXCLUSION: THEORIES, EMPIRICAL FINDINGS, AND OPEN ISSUES.....	5
1.1. Social exclusion: an overview.....	5
A taxonomy of the episodes of social exclusion.....	7
1.2. Theoretical perspectives and recent findings.....	9
Motivational theories: The Need to Belong and the Sociometer Theory.....	9
The Temporal Need-Threat Model.....	14
The Multimotive Model.....	20
1.3. Open issues in the study of social exclusion.....	23
2. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRANTS.....	26
2.1. How social psychology can benefit from studying immigration.....	26
2.2. The phenomenon of migration.....	27
Push and pull factors influencing migration.....	29
2.3. Psychological theories of immigration.....	31
The acculturation framework.....	32
The intergroup relation framework.....	36
2.4. Social exclusion in immigrants.....	46
3. THE RESEARCH PROJECT.....	50
3.1. Introduction.....	50
The empirical investigation of chronic social exclusion.....	51
The role of intergroup social connections for immigrants' psychological response to social exclusion.....	54
3.2. Overview of the studies.....	57
4. THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES.....	59
4.1. Study 1 - The role of intergroup connections for asylum-seekers' response to social exclusion: preliminary evidence.....	59
Method.....	60

Results	63
Discussion.....	66
4.2. Study 2 - Secondary analyses on 2206 first-generation adolescents in four European countries from the CILS4EU project: a replication and beyond ...	68
Method	69
Results	71
Discussion.....	75
4.3. Study 3 - Identifying the temporal framework of the chronicity of social exclusion and its long-term health implications	77
Method	78
Results	80
Discussion.....	83
4.4. Study 4 - Intergroup social connections longitudinally moderate the long-term development of the resignation stage	85
Method	85
Results	87
Discussion.....	91
4.5. Study 5 - Experimental evidence further extending the moderating role of intergroup connections to the immediate emotional impact of social exclusion.....	93
Method	94
Results	97
Discussion.....	102
5. GENERAL DISCUSSION	106
5.1. The role of social connections with the national majority group	107
5.2. The role of social connections with other immigrant minorities.....	110
5.3. Limitations and future research.....	113
CONCLUSION	117
REFERENCES.....	118
APPENDIX.....	154
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	161

ABSTRACT

Social exclusion has detrimental consequences on humans' health, especially if experienced pervasively and persistently over time. The literature converges in identifying psychological resignation and behavioral withdrawal as the sole and inescapable consequences of chronic social exclusion (Williams, 2009; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Preliminary research supported that people experiencing persistent exclusion are likely to enter the resignation stage, characterized by feelings of depression, alienation, unworthiness, and helplessness. However, firm empirical evidence of this univocal link and the potential factors influencing the development of the long-term consequences of social exclusion is still lacking. The current project investigated the onset of the resignation stage in immigrants, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees who are persistently exposed to episodes of social exclusion. This project also focused on the role of intergroup social connections with the national majority and other immigrants minorities in moderating the development of the resignation. Five studies showed that social connections with the national group protected from the onset of the resignation stage, whereas connections with other immigrants aggravated it. Study 1 provided cross-sectional evidence of this pattern of results focusing on asylum-seekers hosted within welcoming centers in Italy. Study 2 replicated the findings on a larger sample of first-generation immigrant students in four European countries. Study 3 provided longitudinal causal evidence that social exclusion led to the resignation stage in a temporal framework of six months. Study 4 longitudinally replicated the moderating role of intergroup connections. Lastly, Study 5 experimentally supported the relevance of intergroup connections for the immediate emotional responses to social exclusion in forced and voluntary immigrants. The studies enriched the existing literature emphasizing that intervening factors can moderate the causal exclusion-resignation link. Furthermore, the current project contributed to understanding the impact of social exclusion in immigrants, highlighting the health benefits of bridging connections and the risk of societal segregation.

INTRODUCTION

It was on a hot day of August when, along the usual cycling-way I took to the seaside, I saw a guy lying on his mattress under a bridge, wrapped in his dirty blanket. After a few days he stayed there, I decided to approach him, asking how he felt. I understood that he could only speak Urdu, and I realized that he was a migrant who ended up somehow in that countryside area. When I came back in December during the winter break, he was still there. He had already spent four months in that remote area, isolated from the rest of the social world, unable to talk with anybody else, and likely persistently exposed to the indifference of the rare locals passing by.

This brief story tells of a person that is experiencing a real-life persistent condition of social exclusion. Social exclusion was broadly defined as the experience of being kept apart from others physically (*e.g.*, due to physical isolation) or emotionally (*e.g.*, by being ignored or explicitly told that one is not wanted) (Riva & Eck, 2016). Like that man, many other people worldwide, likely belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized social groups such as immigrants and homeless people, risk experiencing similar stressful life conditions, characterized by a severe and persistent detachment from others and the broader social life. What are the long-term psychological costs of such a chronic state of social exclusion? How long must chronic social exclusion last to display its detrimental impact on people's psychological health? Are there any factors that can help people belonging to marginalized social groups cope with their distressful condition? Or, oppositely, what is further aggravating the mental health toll of persistent social exclusion? Can social connections with people belonging to the high-status majority or other low-status minorities influence the consequences of chronic social exclusion for marginalized social groups? The present

dissertation aims to answer these research questions focusing on immigrants, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees, as a case study of a marginalized population at risk of experiencing frequent and persistent episodes of social exclusion. Specifically, the current research project aims to provide empirical findings regarding the long-term psychological implications of chronic social exclusion in immigrants and on the crucial role of social connections with the national high-status majority and with other immigrant low-status minority groups in moderating the impact of social exclusion.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I will present the leading scientific theories that focused on the fundamental relevance of social connections for human well-being, such as the *Need to Belong Theory* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the *Sociometer Theory* (Leary et al., 1995), and the *Social Monitoring System* (Pickett & Gardner, 2005). Chapter 1 will describe the current theoretical knowledge about the short- and long-term impact of social exclusion, presenting the *Temporal Need-Threat Model of Ostracism* (Williams, 2009) and the *Multimotive Model* (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Both these models provided detailed explanations of the psychological and behavioral reactions to social exclusion. Besides the theoretical models, the chapter will also present the most relevant empirical findings, further extending and challenging the current knowledge on the consequences of social exclusion and identifying the open research questions that remain to be addressed.

Chapter 2 focuses on immigrants, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees, providing an overview of the phenomenon of migration and focusing on the different *types* of migrants and the reasons that push them to migrate. The chapter will review the main psychological theoretical framework that contributed to understanding the phenomenon of migration. Lastly, the chapter will address the daily stressors immigrants are at risk of being exposed to, contributing to relegate them to a marginalized and persistently excluded condition and undermining their adaptation in the host societies.

Chapter 3 will detail the research questions and hypotheses, describing the methodological issues related to the investigation of chronic social exclusion and the

potential role that intergroup social connections could have in influencing immigrants' responses to social exclusion.

In Chapter 4, I will present the five empirical studies conducted during the doctoral program. I will describe the findings answering the research questions, replicated across different methodologies (*i.e.*, cross-sectional, longitudinal, and experimental) and samples (*i.e.*, asylum-seekers and refugees, immigrant adolescents in Europe, and non-forced long-standing immigrants).

Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the emerged findings, interpreting them in light of the insights from the literature on intergroup relations and social identity, also addressing the limitations of the results and their implications for future research and intervention promoting social cohesion.

Chapter 1

SOCIAL EXCLUSION: THEORIES, EMPIRICAL FINDINGS, AND OPEN ISSUES

Social exclusion: an overview

Humans are social creatures. We rely upon each other to survive and guarantee ourselves satisfying psychological well-being (Lieberman, 2013). From the early stages of human evolution, the gathering of human beings in social groups ensured the satisfaction of the basic physiological needs providing secure access to shelter, food, protection from predators, and reproductive chances (Williams, 2009). In ancient societies, the cooperative style of group living based, for instance, on the sharing of essential resources and the collaborative care of children, allowed early humans to prosper under the harsh, primitive conditions they would likely succumb to if alone (Leary & Cottrell, 2013). In modern societies, social connectedness supplies us with psychological benefits and resources fundamental for a healthy life. Through social relations, individuals foster their self-esteem, social identity, existential meaning, and access the social and instrumental support that protects them from hardships in times of stress (Wesselmann et al., 2019). Ultimately, people that are strongly connected with others have better physical and psychological health than individuals with low social relations (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). The fundamental relevance of social connectedness, however, constitutes a double-edged sword for individuals' well-being. If social relationships promote long and healthy life (Yang et al., 2016), the disruption of social bonds generates a cascade of negative psychological and health

consequences ranging from immediate distress (*e.g.*, Gerber & Wheeler, 2009), late-life depression (Wong et al., 2016), cognitive decline (Cacioppo & Hawkley, 2009) to an aggravated risk to suffer from infections, sleep and mental health disorders, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions (Aldridge et al., 2008; Cacioppo et al., 2002). Studies have found that the health risks posed by a relative lack of connectedness equaled the established threats from obesity, smoking, and blood pressure (House et al., 1988).

Social exclusion is among the most frequent and common phenomena – yet extremely harmful – endangering social connectedness in people’s everyday life (Nezlek et al., 2012). It can be considered as a universal phenomenon that has been documented in a variety of cultures and human contexts throughout human history (Williams & Nida, 2011), and also among other social animals (Goodall, 1986). The prevalence of social exclusion across human societies can be explained in light of the essential functions it exerts for individuals and groups. For instance, social exclusion strengthens the group boundaries by excluding outgroup members, corrects antisocial members who violate the group norms, and ejects the burdensome or disengaged members (Hales et al., 2017; Leary & Cottrell, 2013; Wesselmann, 2011). Social exclusion can also serve at the interpersonal level to avoid unpleasant people (Hales et al., 2016), those who seek to take advantage in dyadic interactions (Kurzban & Leary, 2001), or to keep at distance people belonging to devalued social groups (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009).

Regardless of the reasons, social exclusion remains an aversive experience for the victims. Previous research showed that exclusion evokes negative emotions (Buckley et al., 2004) and feelings of being hurt, both at self-report and neurological level (Eisenberger et al., 2003; Leary et al., 1998b). Social exclusion impairs self-esteem, self-regulation, and cognitive ability (Gerber & Wheeler, 2009; Baumeister et al., 2002; 2005), provokes feelings of meaninglessness and suicidal thoughts (Chen et al., 2020), and generates acute negative physiological responses (*e.g.*, heightened heart rate and blood pressure; Jin & Josephs, 2016).

Existing research has investigated the consequences of social exclusion in many life situations and contexts. In the school setting, peer rejection was found to be

responsible not only for great psychological suffering but also for adverse emotional, behavioral, and academic outcomes in the future (Ollendick et al., 1992; Laird et al., 2001; Prinstein & Aikins, 2004). Similarly, research has investigated the detrimental emotional and behavioral consequences of rejection or abandonment by romantic partners (Baumeister et al., 1993; Stinson et al., 2016). Other works have focused on the costs of ostracism, prejudice, or discrimination due to ones' race (Goodwin et al., 2010; DeSouza et al., 2019), weight (Miller et al., 1995), or other stigmatizing characteristics (Bockting et al., 2013).

Therefore, social exclusion appears as a complex phenomenon occurring in various social situations. If, on the one hand, it responds to fundamental individuals' and groups' needs, on the other, it severely harms its victims, endangering their social connectedness. This chapter reviews the scientific research that has contributed to shedding light on the many forms that social exclusion can take and its multifaceted repercussions for individuals.

A taxonomy of the episodes of social exclusion

The research sought to classify the vast array of exclusion instances into two broad categories of *rejection*- and *ostracism*-based experiences (Wesselmann et al., 2016; 2019). In episodes of rejection, people receive direct negative attention from others, and they experience a relational devaluation suggesting that they are not wanted (Wesselmann et al., 2016). Cues of rejection do not necessarily consist of an explicit communication telling that one is not wanted, and people can feel rejected even when someone addresses them with hurtful laughter (Klages & Wirth, 2014) or in an angry manner (Wesselmann et al., 2010). Even discrimination and stigmatization at both the interpersonal and societal level can be included among the broad categories of rejection-based exclusion conveying relational devaluation (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Discrimination conveys interpersonal rejection when it takes the form of dehumanizing language and derogatory names, such as racial slurs and animal metaphors (Andrighetto et al., 2016). Indeed, the dehumanizing message essentially suggests that the victims are inferior on the core characteristics of human beings (Demoulin et al., 2004). People belonging to stigmatized social groups can also experience rejection daily via *microaggressions*, which can be either subtle, rude, and

invalidating comments or even direct insults targeting the stigmatized persons' social group (Sue et al., 2007). DeSouza *et al.* (2017) found that sexual minorities recognized events from subtle neglect to explicit hostility as microaggressions frequently happening in their lives.

Different from rejection, when ostracized, people experience being ignored by others. Ostracism occurs when one's presence is not acknowledged, and people are treated as if not existing, leading to a profoundly upsetting experience (Williams, 2009). The perception of being ignored may arise from verbal and non-verbal cues like being forgotten (King & Geise, 2011), not being given eye contact (Nezlek et al., 2012), being left out from information circulating among others (Jones et al., 2009), or being part of a conversation with people talking in an unspoken language (i.e., linguistic ostracism; Dotan-Eliasz et al., 2009). Also, linguistic bias, involving the use of words that selectively disregard specific social categories, can make people feel ignored. Stout and Dasgupta (2011) found that women reading job descriptions using gender-exclusive pronouns (*he*) felt more ostracized than other women reading posts using gender-neutral and gender-inclusive (*he* and *she*) languages. Also, the use of smartphones while interacting face-to-face with others – being *phubbed* (Roberts & David, 2016) – can make people feel ostracized. Indeed, people reported *phubbing* someone with the explicit intention to avoid that person (Smith, 2015), and individuals recalling being phubbed reported feeling excluded and devalued (Hales et al., 2018). Recent findings highlighted the potentially severe consequences of *phubbing* in the family context, showing that the experience of being phubbed by the parents was associated with adolescents' feelings of social disconnection from them (Pancani et al., 2020).

Despite the many faces that social exclusion can take, rejection- and ostracism-based events evoke similar negative emotions and threats in their victims (Wesselmann et al., 2019), highlighting the harmful consequences that social exclusion implies regardless of whether it comes in extreme or subtle forms. According to the existing theoretical models, this is because of the severe threat that social exclusion, irrespective of how it occurs, poses to the fundamental human needs of belonging, self-

esteem, control, and being recognized by others as meaningfully existing (Williams, 2009).

Theoretical perspectives and recent findings

Motivational theories: The Need to Belong and the Sociometer Theory

Two major social psychological theories have focused on the detrimental impact that social exclusion can have on fundamental human needs and on how the motivation to satisfy those needs can drive humans' emotions, cognitions, and behaviors towards the avoidance of the adverse experience of being excluded. Those are the belongingness hypothesis (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and the sociometer theory (Leary et al., 1995).

According to the *Belongingness Hypothesis* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the main reason why social exclusion is so detrimental for human beings is that it threatens their fundamental need to belong. The core assumption of the belongingness hypothesis is that "human beings have a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; p 497). People need to achieve a minimum quantity and quality of social connections, and they need those connections to be frequent, pleasant, stable, and close. To satisfy the need to belong, the regular interactions with others must be pleasant, or at least free from negative affects and conflict. Moreover, people need to feel an interpersonal attachment or bond in their interactions, foreseeing their relationships as secure, stable, and continuative in the future. Therefore, the social interactions required to satisfy the need to belong differ from the mere positive social contact with others. A crucial feature required is the perception of intimacy, relatedness, and bond.

The conception of belonging as a fundamental need considers the individuals' propensity to connect with others due to a psychological drive that powerfully determines how people feel, think, and behave. Indeed, the need to belong stimulates individual behaviors aiming to maintain an adequate satisfaction of the need, which primarily consist in seeking positive and intimate interpersonal connections and

avoiding the disruption of those bonds threatened by instances of social exclusion. The authors presented converging evidence showing that people tend to invest a significant amount of resources in fostering supportive relations, also highlighting how social relationships tend to arise spontaneously and readily, such as friendship or romantic bonds. Similarly, people seek to avoid the disruption of the established bonds. Moreover, the authors pointed that the affective consequences of the need to belong can be identified in the positive emotions that typically arise when forming new positive social connections, and from evidence showing that people more prone to engage in positive interactions have higher levels of happiness and well-being (McAdams & Bryant, 1987). By contrast, the disruption of close bonds easily elicits negative emotions, with people with poorer social connections reporting higher feelings of unhappiness and depression (Myers, 1992).

Consistent with the fundamental role of the need to belong, the authors also provided evidence that severe deprivation of belongingness causes a wide range of ill effects beyond the mere negative emotions, including psychological and physical pathologies. For instance, the supporting evidence showed that rejected children presented a higher prevalence of psychopathology than others (*e.g.*, Bhatti et al., 1989). Children raised without receiving adequate care from caregivers showed emotional and behavioral pathologies (*e.g.*, Bowlby, 1969; 1973). For adults, a systematic review showed that mental hospital rate admission was at least three times higher among people divorced or separated than among married people (Bloom et al., 1979). A thwarted need to belong also leads to physical pathologies. House *et al.* (1988) systematically reviewed existing research focusing on the causal role of social relationships on a wide range of diseases and risk factors for mortality. They found that the risk poses by poor relationships on health was even stronger than coronary heart disease and cigarette smoking. More recently, in a meta-analysis on 148 studies with more than 300.000 participants, Holt-Lunstand *et al.* (2010) showed that individual's social relationship significantly and causally predict mortality, with an overall effect size corresponding to a 50% increase in the odds of survival as a function of social connections.

Literature pointed out that social relationships can have such a powerful impact on humans' health according to two complementary processes: the stress-buffering and the main effect models (Cohen et al., 2000). The buffering hypothesis considers the fundamental role of the resources – informational, emotional, and tangible – that are conveyed by close social relationships. Social relationships can provide useful resources that help individuals in times of hardships or during life transitions, promoting adaptive behavioral and neuroendocrinal responses to stressors (Praharso et al., 2017). Differently, the main effect models highlighted the direct implications that social relationships can have on health via biological, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional impact that are not necessarily conveyed by social support. Indeed, group membership could benefit well-being by promoting more healthy norms and behaviors or increasing self-esteem and belongingness (Cohen et al., 2000).

In a recent theoretical paper, Hirsch and Clark (2019) proposed that the need to belong cannot be fulfilled only via the establishment of close, significant, pleasant, and lasting relations, as prescribed by the belongingness hypothesis. Indeed, there could be three additional paths to fulfill belonging: the *general approbation*, the *group membership*, and the *minor sociability* paths. Through the general-approbation, people seek to satisfy the need to belong by gaining other admiration via high-status achievement. People would do so by striving for accomplishment, making others aware of their success, appearing with prestigious others, and avoiding low-status ones. The need to belong can also be satisfied via group membership. The knowledge that social groups provide the members with meaning, self-esteem, belonging – among other psychological resources (e.g., Jetten et al., 2012; Haslam et al., 2018) – is well-established in the literature (e.g., Brewer, 1991). Besides the provision of social identity, Hirsch and Clark (2019) underlined that group membership allows individuals to enact shared social behaviors, such as playing music together with ones' band, and these inclusive social interactions would fulfill belongingness. The minor sociability path predicts that even brief, pleasant, and reciprocal interactions with others can foster a sense of belonging. Examples of these interactions include making eye contact with others and smiling reciprocally, small talks with acquaintances, or greeting familiar people.

The belongingness hypothesis (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) also predicted that people invest considerable cognitive resources in interpersonal interactions and relationships, for instance, prioritizing the cognitive processing of relationship-related information. Indeed, advances of the need to belong theory have further theorized and empirically supported the existence of a cognitive regulatory system of the belonging need. The *Social monitoring System* (Pickett & Gardner, 2005) was theorized as a mechanism that monitors the satisfaction of the need to belong and of individuals' inclusionary status. When the need is thwarted, the system becomes activated, enhancing individuals' sensitivity to cues signaling a forthcoming rejection. People also become more attuned to interpersonal strategies that could effectively restore belonging and inclusion. Therefore, the social monitoring system solves the two functions of heightening individuals' interpersonal and rejection sensitivity (Downey & Feldman, 1996) and attuning them to opportunities for social inclusion. Ultimately, the social monitoring system enhances the possibility to restore the threatened social inclusion and success in further interactions. The system also includes a feedback loop informing the state of belonging with new information coming from the prompted social interactions. Empirical evidence supporting the social monitoring system came from the investigation on people in chronic need of belonging – who, according to the theory, are expected to display a heightened sensitivity to social cues. Gardner *et al.* (2005) found that people with higher levels of loneliness and those who reported fewer friends showed enhanced monitoring of social information, measured with the ability to recall social information, the attention directed towards emotional vocal tone, and the accuracy in identifying emotional facial expressions.

The social monitoring system was inspired by and aligned with another theory that considered the relevance of the motivational system controlling the inclusionary status of the individuals: the *Sociometer Theory* (Leary et al., 1995). The model considers the undisputed role of self-esteem as a fundamental need that humans strive to satisfy to promote positive affects, buffer against stress, and to enhancing personal adjustment (*e.g.*, Baumeister, 1993). However, the authors questioned existing literature on the reasons why people strive for self-esteem, advancing the novel hypothesis that self-esteem can be considered as a psychological outcome monitoring

individuals' inclusionary status and the quality of their social relationships. Indeed, when an individual's relational value is hindered, the resulting outcome would be feelings of unworthiness (Leary et al., 1998a). In this sense, self-esteem is considered as a mere indicator of the quality of one's social relationships and inclusionary status. Individuals' self-esteem levels reflect the extent to which people are valued, accepted, and respected by others (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Therefore, the sociometer theory considered the self-esteem system as a key regulatory process for maintaining satisfying interpersonal relations and preserving ones' levels of inclusion. Individuals' feelings of self-esteem are viewed as an internal marker of the level of acceptance by others, and the motive to maintain positive self-esteem serves to avoid exclusionary threats to the need to belonging. In other words, when people perceive their self-esteem to be low, this indicates that their social inclusion is being threatened, and the innate drive to maintain positive self-esteem directs them towards behaviors aiming at restoring social connectedness. Therefore, self-esteem functions as a monitoring system that responds to exclusionary threats that endanger ones' relational value by promoting behaviors that are likely to meet other peoples' regards, decreasing the likelihood to be ignored, avoided, or rejected (Leary, 2005). The sociometer theory has been supported by experimental findings showing that the depletion of self-esteem only occurred when people perceived to be devalued, rather than being affected by mere inclusion or exclusion. The results supported the pivotal role of self-esteem in signaling specific threats to belongingness in cases where derogatory and rejecting messages are conveyed (Leary et al., 1995).

The need to belong theory and the sociometer theory considered social exclusion a threat to the fundamental needs for belonging and self-esteem. These theories contributed at a foundational level to understand why social exclusion is so relevant for individuals, why people invest cognitive and behavioral resources to minimize the occurrence of social exclusion, and why being excluded can be a highly distressing experience leading to adverse immediate and long-term psychological and physical health consequences. Starting from these models, the literature on social exclusion has proceeded further, generating theoretical frameworks capable of

describing in detail the psychological and behavioral responses to social exclusion that people display over time.

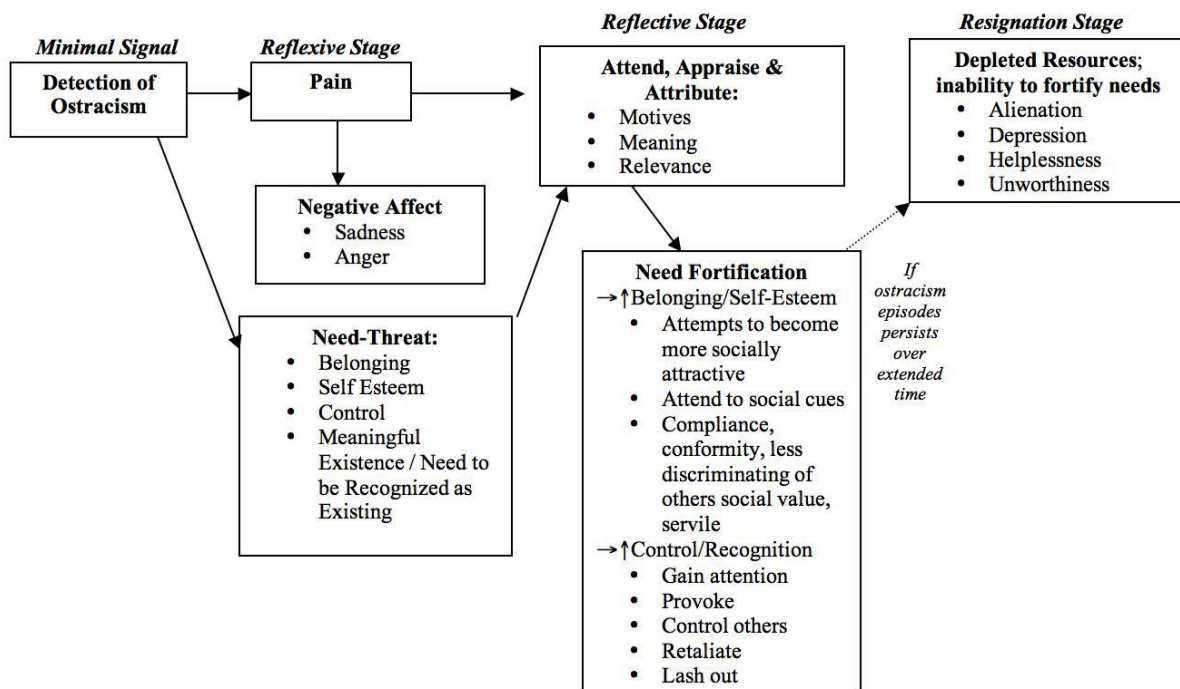
The Temporal Need-Threat Model

One of the most comprehensive models investigating individuals' psychological and behavioral responses to social exclusion is the *Temporal Need-Threat Model of Ostracism* (Williams, 2009) (figure 1). The model emphasizes two specific features of individuals' responses to ostracism. The first central one is that individuals' reactions to ostracism develop over time. They can be categorized in three subsequent stages describing the immediate, short-term, and long-term responses to social exclusion (*i.e.*, the *reflexive*, *reflective*, and *resignation* stages). The second is that the threat posed by exclusion is extended to four fundamental needs, which are the need for belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. In line with the belongingness hypothesis (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and the sociometer theory (Leary et al., 1995), Williams' (2009) model bases its assumptions on an evolutionary perspective. Williams emphasized the severe survival threat that social exclusion constituted for early humans and the consequent development in later humans' evolution of cognitive and behavioral mechanisms susceptible to exclusionary threat and attuned to social cues. Humans had become oversensitive to signals of social exclusion, and therefore modern individuals are prone to detect quickly even the most rudimentary instances of ostracism. The attunement to social exclusion can be so sensitive to lead to an over-detection-bias of social exclusion. Numerous studies showed that people tend to perceive social exclusion even at its slightest signals, such as when not being given eye contact from a computer avatar (Wirth et al., 2010) or even when watching a minimal computer animation depicting a sphere moving between two squares on the sides of the screen, but not towards the participant (Williams, 2009).

The reflexive stage. Following the early detection of social exclusion, individuals enter the first stage of the model, the *reflexive* stage, characterized by the intense experience of hurt feelings and social pain. According to the evolutionary basis of the model, pain serves as an intense signal that something dangerous is happening, orienting individuals' attentions towards the threat and prompting behaviors directed at ending it. The painful experience of social exclusion was supported by converging

self-reported and physiological evidence. For example, participants relieving previous experiences of social exclusion reported higher levels of pain (Chen et al., 2008). Participants being socially excluded showed the activation of the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), whose activation increases when people experience physical pain or loss of social connections (Eisenberg et al., 2003; Lieberman, 2007). Besides pain, ostracized individuals in the reflexive stage experience negative emotions and a threat to the needs of belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. Whereas the threat to belonging and self-esteem were already discussed by previous theoretical accounts (*i.e.*, Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary et al., 1995), the model innovatively considered the impact of exclusion on control and recognition by others. Indeed, control is threatened because social exclusion is unilateral, and victims can only passively experience it. The need for recognition is frustrated by the lack of acknowledgment implied in being ignored, and people are treated as if they were invisible or not existing.

Figure 1. The Temporal Need-Threat Model of Ostracism (Williams, 2009)



Whether the need threat induced by social exclusion has been supported by several experimental evidence (e.g., Gerber et al., 2017), the finding that social exclusion causes negative emotions and distress has received conflicting support. In a meta-analysis, Gerber and Wheeler (2009) supported that rejection lowered emotions; however, Blackhart *et al.* (2009), in a meta-analysis on 192 studies, found evidence supporting that social exclusion is likely inducing a state of numbness, in which participants showed a flattened emotional response. A compelling argument confronting the *reflexive stage* and explaining the numbness state is that social exclusion causes *cognitive deconstruction* in its victims (e.g., Twenge et al., 2003). Accordingly, the impact of social exclusion on individuals' self-worth would be so powerful that people would prefer to avoid bringing awareness to the emotional distress by entering a mental state characterized by a lack of meaningful thought, numbness, and a focus on concrete and immediate stimuli. Some studies have supported the theory showing that social exclusion reduced intelligent thought (Baumeister et al., 2002), induced lethargy and numbness (Twenge et al., 2003), impaired self-regulation (Baumeister et al., 2005), reduced physical pain sensitivity and the ability to empathize with others (DeWall & Baumeister, 2006).

Bernstein and Claypool (2012) found an answer to the debate focusing on the different experimental manipulations that led to conflicting findings: studies using the *Cyberball* paradigm found that ostracism hurt, whereas experiments with the Future-alone procedure supported the numbness hypothesis. Cyberball is a ball-tossing virtual game in which participants can either pass a ball with the other avatars throughout the session (the inclusion condition) or stop receiving the ball after a few tosses with the two other players (the exclusion condition) (Williams & Jarvis, 2006). Differently, the Future-alone procedure consists in providing participants with the bogus feedback from a personality test that they are very likely to end up alone in their lives, without meaningful and lasting relationships (Twenge et al., 2001). Bernstein and Claypool (2012) solved the conflicting findings pointing at the strength of the manipulation: when the induced social injury shifts from a relatively low severity (as done by Cyberball) to a relatively high severity (as in the Future-alone procedure), the

social pain experienced increases until a critical threshold is reached, beyond which numbness begins.

The reflective stage. In the *reflective stage*, individuals appraise the meaning, the motives, and the relevance of the episode of exclusion, preparing to behave in ways that will reestablish optimal levels of the most saliently threatened needs. In this stage, the needs that are most threatened by social exclusion drive the subsequent coping strategies that individuals will adopt to reestablish satisfying levels of inclusion. If belonging and self-esteem – the inclusionary need cluster – are the most endangered, people would respond with prosocial behaviors that are expected to meet others' approval (Williams, 2009). Examples of such behaviors include nonconscious mimicking (Lakin et al., 2008), working hard in team task (Williams & Sommer, 1997), making pledges (Carter-Sowell et al., 2008), obeying (Riva et al., 2014a), and displaying affiliative intentions (Maner et al., 2007). Otherwise, if the needs for control and meaningful existence are most threatened – the power and provocation cluster – individuals are more likely to respond aggressively. Experimental studies showed that those who cannot control the onset of a blasting noise following exclusion delivered a greater amount of hot sauce to another person (Warburton et al., 2006); similarly, a highly unexpected rejection – thwarting predictive control – led to higher aggression (Wesselmann et al., 2010). Also, experiments using the Future-alone paradigm that undermine people's sense of control over their future tended to provoke aggressive reactions (Twenge et al., 2001). Although empirical support of the link between the thwart to the need for meaningful existence and aggression has not been provided yet, converging literature on radicalization showed the loss of personal significance as a key predictor of the interest in violent extremist groups (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2014; Webber et al., 2018). A third behavioral response to ostracism that literature has recently addressed is social withdrawal (see also below in “The *Multimotive Model*” section). Experimental findings showed that ostracized people were more likely to seek solitude following ostracism (Ren et al., 2016), with these findings being further replicated in a recent series of experiments (Ren et al., 2020). Social withdrawal could occur for two main reasons. Especially in chronically excluded individuals who have learned to expect social pain from forthcoming interactions (Vangelisti et al., 2005),

social withdrawal could serve to avoid the painful experience expected from foreseen episodes of social exclusion (Wesselmann et al., 2014). Differently, social withdrawal permits to engage in contemplative behaviors that have been shown to buffer against the need-threat of social exclusion (Long & Averill, 2003).

Individual differences and the perceived characteristics of the excluding situations can also affect how the recovery of the need satisfaction in the *reflective stage*. For example, individuals with high rejection sensitivity tended to respond more aggressively to social exclusion (Ayduk et al., 2008). Previous studies showed that high levels of social anxiety (Oaten et al., 2008), a concrete *vs.* abstract thinking mindset (Pfundmair et al., 2015b), and an individualistic *vs.* collectivistic cultural background (Pfundmair et al., 2015a) impeded the recovery of the threatened needs. Other studies found that religiosity and spirituality (Wesselmann & Williams, 2010), mindfulness and meditation (Zeidan et al., 2012), and self-compassion (Beekman et al., 2017) buffered from the impact of social exclusion.

Focusing on social and situational construals, authors found that ostracism by a despised political group impacted less than if ostracism came from ones' political ingroup (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007). Similarly, a permanent group membership buffered from the impact of exclusion (Wirth & Williams, 2009), as well as did the use of marijuana (Deckman et al., 2014), alcohol intoxication (Hales et al., 2015), the presence of a pet companion (Aydin et al., 2012). Moreover, Eck *et al.* (2017) showed that belonging to a majority, but not to a minority group, buffered the need-threat of social exclusion. Oppositely, perceiving exclusion as unfair leads to a more severe need threat (Tuscherer et al., 2016).

The resignation stage. The last stage of Williams's model (2009) is the *resignation stage*. When episodes of social exclusion persist, people's resources necessary to refortify the threatened needs become depleted over time, and they enter a psychological condition characterized by feelings of resignation. In people exposed to persistent social exclusion, thwarted belongingness could develop into alienation, self-esteem into depression, reactance into learned helplessness, and attempts to prove their worthiness into feelings of unworthiness (Williams, 2009). Perhaps because of the challenges of investigating chronic social exclusion empirically, only a few qualitative

(Williams, 2001; Williams & Zadro, 2001; Zadro, 2004) and quantitative studies (Riva et al., 2016) have focused on this research topic. The available studies suggest that the outcomes associated with the resignation stage (i.e., alienation, depression, helplessness, and unworthiness) are the psychological responses typically observed in populations experiencing persistent exclusion. A study from Martin *et al.* (2018), focusing on real-life rejection from sorority recruitment, showed that the impact of social exclusion on depressive symptoms, mental health, and perceived belonging and social status lasted up to three months following the rejection.

Other cross-sectional and retrospective studies from related fields of investigation showed the severe impact of persistent exclusion on mental health. For instance, social exclusion in retired people was associated with a decreased engagement in physical activities that, in turn, predicted depression and suicidal intentions (Bailey & McLaren, 2005). Prolonged solitary confinement in prisoners caused severe negative psychological effects, such as hallucination, depression, and emotional breakdown (Kupers, 2008). Also, events of school shootings have been linked to episodes of chronic exclusion. Anderson *et al.* (2001) found that the perpetrators of school violence were likely exposed to persistence exclusion, such as being the victims of bullying or being left-apart from the peer-group. Similarly, Leary *et al.* (2003) found that alongside other risk factors such as fascination with guns and mental health problems, acute or chronic social exclusion was particularly dominant in individuals committing school shootings.

Despite the early findings pointing at the detrimental impact of persistent exclusion, the literature lacks a rigorous and systematic investigation of the long-term implications of chronic exclusion. The resignation stage remains the less articulated part of Williams's model, which has received little empirical attention (Wesselmann & Williams, 2017). Indeed, Williams (2009) postulated that persistent exclusion would inescapably lead to the resignation without considering any potential intervening factor that could moderate its onset. In this regard, to our knowledge, only one study so far has explored the possibility that variables can modulate the development of the outcomes associated with the resignation stage in chronically excluded populations. Aureli *et al.* (2020) showed that prisoners included in a prison support group had

similar levels of the resignation of free-citizens, whereas inmates who were not included in the support group presented significantly higher levels of resignation.

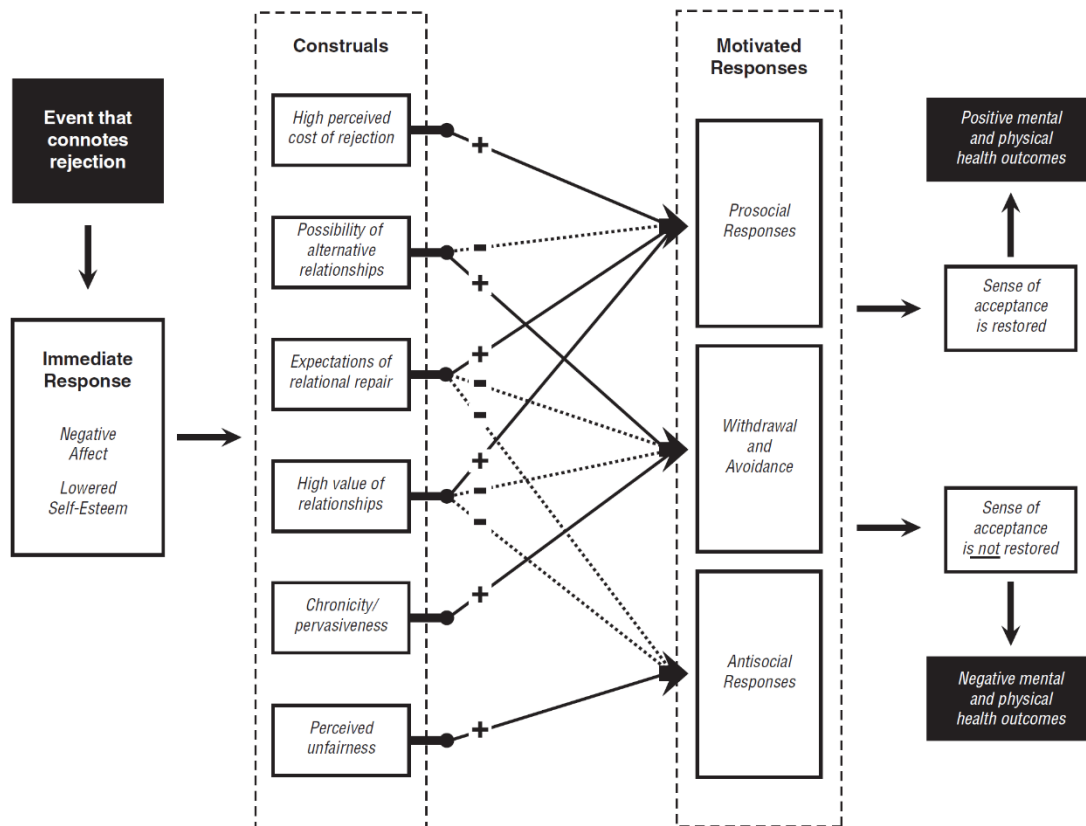
The Multimotive Model

The *Multimotive Model* (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009) focused on three possible behavioral responses to social exclusion: prosocial behaviors, aggressive behaviors, and social withdrawal (figure 2). The model integrates and advances Williams' (2009) Temporal Need-Threat Model. Accordingly, the need-threat postulated in the Williams' (2009) models does not occur as a direct consequence of the exclusionary threat, but it is rather determined by the individuals' cognitive evaluations of the occurring instance of social exclusion. It is only following these secondary features of the specific episode of rejection that victims feel a threat to the four fundamental needs. The model focused on the perceived characteristics of the social threat and identified six construals based on which individuals evaluate the excluding situation. The six construals are the cost of exclusion, the possibility of alternative relationships, the expectations of relational repair, the value of the relationship threatened by exclusion, the chronicity, and the perceived unfairness of exclusion. These six construals, alone or in patterns, ultimately predict prosocial, antisocial, or withdrawal behaviors.

Prosocial behaviors. Prosocial behaviors are predicted by a high perceived cost of exclusion, a high value of the threatened relationship, high expectations of relational repair, and a low possibility of alternative affiliation sources. This pattern of evaluation predicts relationship-promoting behaviors in order to avoid the anticipated psychological costs of the disruption of meaningful relationships, such as romantic bonds or friendships in which people significantly invest in terms of time, money, social identification, and shared experiences (Rusbult, 1980). In line with the principle of substitution detailed in the belongingness hypothesis (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) – stating that social relationships providing belongingness are to a certain extent interchangeable – people are more likely to withdraw from the source of exclusion, especially if previous attempts of repair had failed, and to turn their affiliative behaviors towards the alternative relationships. The relational substitution, if directed towards sources of social support, would have the double benefits of alleviating the

social pain from the occurred rejection and reinforcing the threatened need to belong (Cohen et al., 2000).

Figure 2. The Multimotive Model (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009)



Antisocial behaviors. Antisocial behaviors are likely occurring when people perceive to be excluded unfairly, when they do not anticipate the possibility to repair the relationship, and when they attribute low value to the relationship. In an extensive review, Leary *et al.* (2006) pointed out that exclusion can lead to aggression based on a series of concurrent hypotheses, yet all reasonable and empirically supported. For instance, aggression can arise as a spontaneous reaction to the pain caused by the rejection, it can result from the exclusion-induced impairment in self-regulation, or as a desire to retaliate against the excluder. The rejection-aggression link appeared to be a multifaceted relation that makes it difficult to identify a firm conclusion about why

exclusion causes aggression. Yet, empirical findings converged in underlining the particular severe threat to the need for control by unfair exclusion, prompting antisocial responses (e.g., Tuscherer et al., 2016). However, scientific research is needed to identify the precise causes of the exclusion-aggression link.

Social withdrawal. Social withdrawal from a relationship threatened by social exclusion is positively predicted by the possibility of alternative sources of affiliation and by the perception of social exclusion as chronic and pervasive. Oppositely, if people expect that the damage to the relationship can be repaired and if it is highly valued, individuals are less likely to withdraw. Although conflicting with the predictions of the belongingness hypothesis and the sociometer theory stating that people are pervasively driven to maximize their inclusionary status (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary et al., 1995), the withdrawal response could have an adaptive self-protecting function. People who have been rejected and hurt, especially if persistently over time and pervasively across social situations, would self-isolate and withdraw to avoid being hurt further. Indeed, according to the *learned helplessness* theory (Seligman, 1975), chronic and pervasive exposure to social pain could lead people to expect further hurt from forthcoming social interactions. Such expectations would push people to avoid social interaction driven by the motive to protect themselves from further pain (Vangelisti, 2001; Ren et al., 2020). The fear of being hurt would lead people to distance themselves from those who previously hurt and from others whose acceptance is not secure (Vangelisti et al., 2005). Longitudinal evidence showed that a lack of peer acceptance predicted the development of social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in adolescents (Teachman & Allen, 2007). Similarly, experimental evidence showed that the fear of negative evaluation prevented excluded participants from engaging in affiliative behaviors (Maner et al., 2007).

According to the Multimotive Model, the perception of chronicity and pervasiveness of social exclusion is the main factor leading people to self-isolate. This prediction is in line with the resignation stage from the Temporal Need-Threat model (Williams, 2009). If exclusion persists over time, people learn that they are not able to avoid it, they consequently give up any attempt to reconnect with others, and their

chronically frustrated needs turn into chronic feelings of depression, alienation, unworthiness, and helplessness.

In conclusion, the two most influential theories on how individuals react to social exclusion converged in identifying social withdrawal, in its behavioral and psychological expressions, as the direct and inescapable consequence of social exclusion that persists over time.

Open issues in the study of social exclusion

The theories and the experimental findings presented in this chapter showed how largely the literature on social exclusion and its impact grew since the publication of the seminal theories of the need to belong and the sociometer theories (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary et al., 1995) that systematically established the relevance of social exclusion for individuals. Since then, studies have proliferated. The current literature predicts how social exclusion impacts psychological well-being over time, which are the behavioral responses that are more likely to occur when coping with exclusionary threats, and what are the individual differences, cognitive factors, social and situational variables that intervene in making the adoption of certain behaviors more likely than others. Alongside this progress, there still are some open issues in the study of social exclusion that remain unsolved. In this dissertation, I will address the unanswered questions concerning the investigation of persistent social exclusion.

To my knowledge, the two theoretical models presented above that have addressed the question of the consequences of chronic social exclusion could only provide preliminary predictions. The Temporal Need-Threat Model and The Multimotive Model converged in theorizing that chronic exclusion causes the psychological withdrawal of the resignation stage and the behavioral ones of the social avoidance (Williams, 2009; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). However, both of them could only present theoretical speculation based on preliminary findings, and the first open issue in the study of social exclusion regards the empirical research of the chronic exclusion and its long term consequences.

As many pointed, the investigation of persistent social exclusion is highly challenging (*e.g.*, Wesselmann & Williams, 2010). Indeed, its experimental investigation is not feasible. Exclusively the Future-Alone procedure (Twenge et al., 2001) is capable of inducing an expectation of life-lasting social exclusion. However, it presents crucial limitations that prevent it from being a well-adequate manipulation to study term chronic exclusion. Indeed, it only induces anticipated expectation of long-term exclusion. Researchers using it can only investigate the immediate impact of such a shocking cognitive perspective, rather than real-life chronic exclusion, which is the compelling and lacking knowledge in the literature (Wesselmann & Williams, 2010). Moreover, the social threat elicited by the manipulation can be so severe as to induce people in a state of shock, and this could raise ethical concerns (Bernstein & Claypool, 2012). Due to the paradigm, participants experience severe social pain, and they could internalize the false feedbacks about their personalities provided during the procedure (Wirth, 2016).

The challenges of the study of chronic exclusion also extend outside the laboratory settings. Field studies could investigate chronic social exclusion in marginalized social groups such as prisoners, homeless people, or marginalized immigrants. However, these chronically excluded social groups are – by definition – hard to reach, and field studies investigating chronic exclusion in ecological settings could be highly costly and effortful. Besides the challenges, future research should focus on marginalized social groups to provide firm evidence of the consequences of persistent social exclusion while unfolding in real-life dynamics. At the same time, research efforts should aim to develop feasible experimental manipulations of chronic social exclusion. In this sense, using virtual reality technologies, researchers could recreate situations inducing persistent exclusion (*e.g.*, imprisonment) and study the impact of different permanence times in such environments.

A related open issue concerns the development of interventions tackling the impact of persistent exclusion. The literature provided useful findings informing about the regulatory strategies tackling the immediate effects of exclusion. For example, literature has identified the more adaptive (*e.g.*, acceptance, physical exercise) and dysfunctional (*e.g.*, rumination, gambling) self-administered coping strategies

commonly deployed to tackle the immediate emotional impact of social exclusion (Riva, 2016). Also, strategies helping the need recovery of the Williams' (2009) *reflective stage* have been systematically identified in the use of social surrogates (e.g., parasocial attachment with media figures, connectedness with nature) or reminders of social bonds (Eck et al., 2016). Differently, a crucial literature lack concerns the study of chronic social exclusion and its long-term impact. Indeed, research should focus on the potential intervenient factors that could buffer or aggravate the long-term consequences of social exclusion. Indeed, the existing theoretical model that addressed the issue of chronic exclusion only speculated a direct and inescapable link between social exclusion and its theorized outcomes. Despite the challenge that it would imply, research should seek to identify what are the key variables that could be targeted in structured interventions tackling the impact of chronic exclusion on persistently excluded social groups. As done for the immediate and short-term impact of social exclusion, future research could focus on identifying resilient and risk factors that buffer or aggravate the long-term consequences of persistent exclusion. Those factors can either be individual differences or social and situational variables. Indeed, people belonging to persistently marginalized groups face the threat of social exclusion at both the interpersonal level (*i.e.*, via insults) and the social level (*i.e.*, via structural discrimination and stigmatization; Hatzenbuehler & Link, 2014). For example, open research questions concern how the membership in different social groups can satisfy the need to belong in chronically excluded people, how the exclusion from different groups impacts on marginalized populations, or if chronically excluded individuals develop numbness to further exclusion or increased sensitivity to it.

In the present research, I will address some of these open issues, investigating the long-term impact of social exclusion on asylum-seekers and refugees and the intergroup factors that can influence its development.

Chapter 2

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRANTS

How social psychology can benefit from studying immigration

In an Agenda article published in the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Verkuyten (2018) highlighted the potential benefits that social psychological research can gain from studying the migration phenomena that are impacting the social equilibrium of many European countries. Social psychology can take advantage of migration by introducing new research topics, challenging the current methodological and theoretical frameworks, developing new research questions, and providing answers that could have applied implications for governments and policymakers, ultimately improving the evidentiary and applied value of the discipline.

Verkuyten (2018) called for researching some emerging topics that could have a profound theoretical and applied impact on the understanding of immigration. Besides the focus on the sections of the population who undermine social cohesion with explicit hostility towards newcomers, new systematic works could address why and when people act prosocially toward refugees and immigrants. Emerging research questions concern the concept of *toleration*, and research is needed to clarify the psychological processes that lead to accepting outgroup norms, the boundaries of the acceptance of those norms, as well as the impact on individuals' well-being and group action for immigrants who perceived to be tolerated. Also, the issues of *nationhood* and *citizenship* require deeper research effort. The study of lay-people representations of nationhood and citizenship, addressing, for instance, the concept of sovereignty, can

provide novel insights on how intergroup attitudes develop or how those representations can serve as the basis for social inequality and discrimination. The new questions raised by the migration and the deriving societal diversity could also lead to overcome the established majority-minority research framework that, if extremely valuable in the understanding of the relations between host society and immigrants, does not consider the raising need to investigate inter- and intra-minority relations. Rising questions regard the implications of hostile or cooperative interactions between minority groups, how the social comparison with other minorities can affect attitudes and group behaviors, as well as how immigrants negotiate dual citizenships, multiple identities, and group belonging in their everyday lives.

In conducting the present research project, I tried to be inspired by this call for research and follow some of its innovative principles. The studies of the current research project investigated the long-term consequences of a social exclusion that, in the case of asylum-seekers and refugees, occurs in multiple levels of analyses – from the foundational level of the legal rights to the domain of interpersonal rejection by people from the host society. The studies also focused on how intergroup social connections with the majority and other immigrant minorities can determine the impact of social exclusion.

The phenomenon of migration

The trend of migration worldwide is continuously increasing. In 1970, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimated the number of international migrants to be approximately 70 million. Based on the *World Migration Report* of 2020 (IOM, 2019a), in 2019, the number of international migrants had increased up to 272 million, equating the 3.5% of the global population. This count, however, is only a minor proportion of the persons that can be defined a *migrant* person, considering, for example, that a much larger portion of the migrant population migrates within the country of origin (internal migrants were estimated to be approximately 740 million in 2009; IOM, 2019a). *Migrant* refers to an umbrella term reflecting “the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence,

whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (IOM, 2019b). The vast majority of migrants move for reasons concerning work, family, and study in a migration process that does not involve particular challenges to them or to the country they leave. However, many of them leave their countries of origin for dramatic reasons such as war, disaster, and persecution. For these motives, they are often in need of support and assistance from the country they arrive in. To better understand the phenomenon of migration, the IOM (2019b) edited the *Glossary on Migration*, classifying migrants based on the status and reason of migration, among other attributes.

Migrant in an irregular situation: a person who has moved to a foreign country without legal authorization (*i.e.*, unlawful entry) or whose permission to stay is no longer valid (*i.e.*, overstayer due an expired residence permit).

Forced migrant: people whose migration involves force, compulsion, or coercion. The term is often used in opposition to **voluntary migrants**, identifying those who are not driven by force or coercion in their migration. Based on their legal status, forced migrants can be further categorized as asylum-seekers and refugees. Also, they can be categorized based on the reason for the migration, such as environmental migrants, among others.

Asylum-seeker: a person who seeks international protection in the country of arrival and whose claim has not been decided yet by the host country.

Refugee: based on the 1951 UNHCR Refugee Convention in Geneva, a refugee is a person outside the country of origin with founded fear of persecution due to one’s race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group who is unable or unwilling to avail protection from the home country. The term also defines people to whom a State has officially accorded international protection.

Environmental migrants: people who are forced to migrate due to progressive environmental changes that are threatening their lives or living conditions.

Economic migrant: a person who moved from the country of origin primarily motivated by economic opportunities. Although highly controversial, the term is often used alongside *voluntary migrants* to distinguish between those who are entitled to international protection from those who are not. However, IOM recommended using

migrant workers to identify people engaged in remunerated activities with a foreign State. In turn, migrant workers can be *highly* or *low skilled*, identifying those with a high or low level of education, making them eligible to practice their occupation in the foreign country.

Although sometimes overlapping and controversial, these categories are useful in the social psychological research, given that often lay people's representations of migrant often relies on these terms. For example, studies found that humanitarian concerns related to forced migrants predicted empathy and support, whereas voluntariness of migration predicted anger and less support (e.g., Verkuyten et al., 2018).

A sociological focus of analysis of migration that contextualizes the migration phenomenon concerns the factors that attract migrants to move (i.e., push factors) and repel people from leaving (i.e., pull factors).

Push and pull factors influencing migration

The study on the push and pull factors influencing migration usually identified three levels of analyses focusing on the macro-social level (e.g., socioeconomic structures of the countries of origin and destination), meso-level (e.g., related to more proximal influences from cultural, social, and family contexts), and micro-level (e.g., individuals' economic and psychological resources; Massey et al., 1993). Within this framework, a relevant work was done by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO, 2016), who produced a systematic literature review of the push/pull factors influencing migration. The report presented converging findings that are likely to influence the migration process similarly across the various contexts of migration worldwide, although situational circumstances or personal characteristics situated in specific contexts could influence the relevance of the push/pull factors identified. Macro-level factors were found to exert the greater influence on the selection of the destination countries and on the push to migrate. Among those, environmental degradation and natural disaster, violence, conflicts, human rights abuse, political instability, and the threat to personal security were among the main factors driving the migration of asylum-seekers (Raleigh, 2011; Afifi, 2011; Shellman & Stewart, 2007). Several of the reviewed studies also highlighted the role of socioeconomic variables

like that living standard in the destination countries, expected wage differential, and expected education and employment opportunities as general push factors for forced and economic migrants (e.g., Ruysen et al., 2014; Docquier et al., 2014; Vervliet et al., 2014). Also, the economic and technological development of the destination and the generosity of the welfare provision predicted people's movement from rural to industrial societies (Yoo & Koo, 2014). Migration policies of the destination also intervene in the decision to migrate and in the selection of the country. For example, Czaika and de Haas (2014) showed that visa restrictions reduced migration inflow and even prompt outflows from the country. Also, cultural similarities drove people's migration. Indeed, a shared colonial past, linguistic similarities, and political ties were important factors shaping immigrants' destination choice (Havinga & Böcker, 1999; Grogger & Hanson, 2011).

Besides these macro-social variables, the report revealed that social networks play a crucial role in influencing migration. The presence of existing or potential social networks has been shown as importantly influencing the desire to migrate and the choice of the destination for both asylum-seekers and economic migrants (Crawley, 2010; Epstein & Gang, 2006; Neto & Mullet, 1998). Gross and Schmitt (2012) found that networks of acquaintances, friends, and family were particularly motivating low-skilled workers to move. In contrast, highly-skilled ones mostly based their decision on standards of living or expected acquisition of specific skills. Alongside social networks, factors related to the characteristics of the household were found to be relevant. Stark and Taylor (1989) highlighted the benefits that the migration of a household member can have for the whole family by maximizing the economic income both in absolute terms and in comparison with peer households. The access to financial resources from migrant household members has been consistently shown to be a significant factor promoting migration (e.g., Vervliet et al., 2014).

The abovementioned macro- and meso-level factors are conditioned by more proximal ones. For instance, individual poverty and economic hardship were found to limit migration (Czaika & de Haas, 2012). Forced displacement was dependent on individuals' and communities' abilities to cope and adapt to environmental stress (Renaud et al., 2011). Individuals' decision to migrate was also influenced by other

micro-level variables, such as the person's knowledge and skillset (Sjaastad, 1962), attitudes about migration (Mabogunje, 1970), and the individual technological resources providing access to information about the living standard in the destination country (Koser, 2010). In conclusion, the studies reviewed (EASO, 2016) highlighted the influence of the broad socioeconomic and political processes and the formal and informal social networks in the destination countries as strong determinants of the phenomenon of migration. Notably, these general considerations were subject to important influence depending on migrants' sociodemographic characteristics, family situation, educational and skill level, and psychological resources, highlighting the essentially dynamic and heterogeneous nature of the migration process.

Given the variety of types of migrants, the reasons to migrate, and the factors affecting it, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of migration has drawn the attention of numerous scientific disciplines, including the psychological research.

Psychological theories of immigration

The study of immigration is of key interest for many disciplines, such as demography, economics, political sciences, sociology, and anthropology, that have founded and led the research on immigrants, whereas psychology has struggled to develop its perspective on the topic, at least up to the last decade (Berry, 2001; Hernandez, 2009). Indeed, two broad areas of psychology have been growingly addressing the phenomenon of immigration: the acculturation framework and the study of intergroup relations. The first one originated from the anthropological research tradition. It is currently one of the primary focuses of the cross-cultural psychology that studies how human personality, cognition, emotion, and behaviors are influenced by cultural contexts comparatively across cultures (Berry et al., 2002).

The research on intergroup relations developed from sociology, and it is currently among the most fertile research framework in social psychology addressing how group membership influences the broad individuals' psychological life and social group dynamics (Brown & Gaertner, 2003). Taken together, the acculturation and intergroup relation frameworks significantly contributed to explaining the

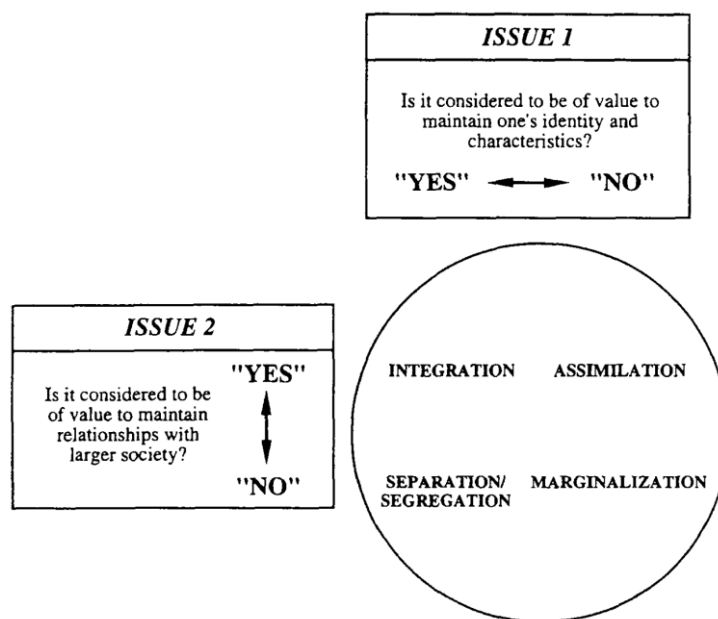
phenomenon of immigration and its implication for individuals and social cohesion. On one side, the two approaches consider the perspective of the host populations and their attitudes favoring or opposing immigrants. On the other, they focus on the immigrant groups who face the demanding challenge to integrate into the host society.

The acculturation framework

In cross-cultural psychology, *acculturation* was initially defined as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (Redfield et al., 1936, p.149). Acculturation was defined as a bidirectional process interesting both people that enter a new cultural environment and those from the mainstream society that hosts them. In effect, however, acculturation has much stronger consequences and impact on the people entering the new society, and research on the acculturation process has primarily focused on them (Berry, 2001). The study of acculturation analyzed the changes in language, behaviors, values, attitudes, and social identity that people undergo when immigrating to new culturally diverse societies. The several theories of acculturation that developed can be placed in the two broad categories of the uni-dimensional and multi-dimensional models of acculturation (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2008). The uni-dimensional approach considers acculturation as a linear change in the cultural adaptation, moving progressively from ones’ cultural heritage to the host culture. Differently, the multi-dimensional approach views the maintenance of the cultural heritage and the acquisition of the new cultural values as independent processes (*e.g.*, Sam, 2006). Several empirical evidence has provided firm empirical support that the multi-dimensional approach is more valid than the uni-dimensional one (Ryder et al., 2000; see Verkuyten & Wolf, 2002). Besides the emphasis on the independence between the maintenance of the heritage culture and the acquisition of the new one, the multi-dimensional model also highlighted that the acculturation process functions in several domains of the psychological life (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2008). Berry (1997; 2006) – who originally presented this approach – proposed that the immigrants’ adaptation process involves six psychological areas of functioning, namely language, cognitive style, attitudes, behaviors, identity, personality, and acculturative stress. The

acculturation on these different areas can influence each other or remain relatively independent. The latter can be the case, for instance, of immigrants who have become proficient in the language of the new country and adapted to its costume while still feeling a strong identification with their home country (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2008). Berry (1997) proposed a classification of acculturation strategies that categorize the combination of answers that immigrant would provide when faced with the two fundamental questions naturally occurring when entering a new cultural context: “Is it considered to be of value to maintain one’s identity and characteristics?” and “Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationship with larger society?” (Berry, 1997, p.10) (figure 3).

Figure 3. Multi-dimensional acculturation model (Berry, 1997)



Based on the answer, the model identifies four acculturation strategies. *Integration* is the strategy acted by immigrants who answer yes to both the questions, meaning that they both value the acquisition of the cultural elements of the host society and the maintenance of the personal cultural background. *Assimilation* is defined when people seek interaction with the host culture and do not wish to maintain their cultural heritage. In contrast, when the opposite pattern occurs and people only seek to maintain the cultural background being closed to the new one, *separation* is defined.

Lastly and worst, if there is no possibility to maintain the cultural heritage – as in the case of people fleeing from genocide and cultural destruction – and invest little in the interactions with the host society – due, for instance, to chronic exclusion – *marginalization* occurs (Berry, 1997; 2006).

Berry (1997) pointed out that the four acculturation strategies are widely dynamic. People can switch from a strategy to another in different moments of the acculturation process. Some authors suggested that different types of migrants (*e.g.*, economic and forced migrants) could show differences in the acculturation strategies selected (Yeh, 2003; Hernandez, 2009). Moreover, the research highlighted that immigrants with a marginalization strategy often do not choose to adopt it, given that it could be caused by the exclusion from the host society and by the destruction of one's cultural heritage due to uncontrollable dramatic events, such as wars and genocide (Van Oudenhoven et al., 2008). Several studies showed that the integration strategies led to the best adjustment outcomes, whereas marginalization to the worst. Brown *et al.* (2013) found that international students categorized in the integration strategies reported higher well-being than those using separation. Immigrant adolescents adopting the integration strategy reported fewer mental health problems than those with marginalization (Bhui et al., 2005). Psychiatric immigrant patients with the integration strategy reported less severe symptoms of depression than those with the marginalization one (Nguyen et al., 2017). Moreover, studies showed that integration predicted the most adaptive outcomes in immigrants (*e.g.*, Horenczyk, 1996; Van Oudenhoven et al., 1998).

The research also gave attention to the role of the receiving societies, developing acculturation models that focused on both the acculturation strategies of the host societies and those adopted by immigrants. Bourhis *et al.* (1997), paralleling Berry's acculturation framework (1997), presented the Interactive Acculturation Model, according to which the ideology of the receiving society towards immigration can be categorized along two dimensions, based on the conferred legitimacy to 1) endorse the cultural values of the society, and 2) to maintain their heritage cultural background (figure 4). Members of the society can adopt five acculturation orientations: individualism, exclusion, segregation, assimilation, and integration. The integration

orientation represents the believes that immigrants are at the same time allowed to preserve their cultural heritage and to endorse the values of the current society. The assimilation indicate the push from host society to reject immigrants' cultural background in favor of the adoption of the public values of the receiving society, whereas segregation prompt the separation of the immigrant communities from the larger society by entitling immigrants only to adopt their cultural values. Exclusion reflects a generalized intolerant position towards immigrants, opposing the right to preserve their culture and refusing immigrants to adopt features of the receiving culture. Exclusion conveys the underlying ideology that immigrants constitute a symbolic threat to society's cultural values (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) and that they should never be accepted. Lastly, individualism highlights the importance of defining people as individuals rather than focusing on group membership, downgrading the importance of the cultural values and also empowering immigrants to adopt the strategy that they prefer (Bouhris et al., 1997).

Figure 4. The host community acculturation model (Bourhis et al., 1997)

Dimension 1:
Do you find it acceptable that immigrants maintain their cultural identity ?

		YES	NO
Dimension 2: Do you accept that immigrants adopt the cultural identity of the host community?	YES	INTEGRATION	ASSIMILATION
	NO	SEGREGATION	EXCLUSION INDIVIDUALISM

Based on the combination of the acculturation strategies of host society members and immigrants, the model predicts three different outcomes in terms of

harmony in the intergroup relations. For instance, more consensual relations are likely to happen when both the parties adopt integration or assimilation; a frank conflict is expected when the host society adopts exclusion or segregation, whereas problematic relations can emerge when the members of the host society adopt an assimilation and immigrants integration. The model from Bourhis *et al.* (1997) highlighted the importance of state-level policies for harmonious intergroup relations. Green *et al.* (2020) found that more tolerant policies predicted higher everyday intergroup contact, lowering the host society members' perceived threat by immigrants. More importantly, the work from Bouhris *et al.* (1997) highlighted how the study of immigration should not solely consider the experiences of immigrants but also recognize the fundamental role of the social dynamics that unfold when different cultural and social groups enter in contact.

The intergroup relation framework

Social psychological theories of intergroup relations have been widely considered to understand the social relations between immigrant groups and members of the host society. Several theories tried to respond to how group membership influences individual and collective behaviors and attitudes, whose intuitions and findings, despite often originated from the perspective of the majority population or general social group dynamics, have been applied to study the relations with immigrant groups from their minority standpoint. In this section, I will review the main social psychological theories that have contributed to the study of immigration.

Perceived threat theories and immigration

The *Integrated Threat Theory* (ITT; Stephan & Stephan, 2000) was developed to explain the negative affects and hostile attitudes and behaviors that the majority population endorse towards minority groups (*i.e.*, prejudice; Devine *et al.*, 2003). The models addressed the role of the fear towards minorities and the threat perceived from them in precipitating prejudice. The theory considered four sources of threat: the *realistic* threat, the *symbolic* threat, the intergroup anxiety, and the negative stereotypes. Based on the realistic group conflict theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif, 1966), the realistic threat defines the majority perception that other minorities can undermine their existence. The threat arises from the perceived competition between the groups

on fundamental elements of the welfare, such as political and economic power (e.g., job opportunities), material goods (e.g., housing), and physical well-being (e.g., access to hospitals and other health care resources). The symbolic threat refers to the perceived danger to the values, beliefs, morals, living standards, attitudes, and the general worldview of the group. It can include the perceived threats to the group's religion, laws, ethics, and traditions that are perceived to jeopardize the group's cultural integrity and domination (e.g., Sidanius et al., 1992). Intergroup anxiety is a threat at the individual level. It refers to the threat to a positive view of the self – such as feeling embarrassed, ridiculous, or rejected – as potentially arousing in the social interactions with people from the other groups. Negative stereotypes were seen as a threat to one's group, considering that the negative stereotypes lead people to expect adverse events and consequences from the interaction with the other group. Later developments of the theories have considered negative stereotypes as an antecedent of the perceived symbolic and realistic threats and intergroup anxiety as a direct consequence (Stephan et al., 2002). Research has further highlighted the role of other forms of threat in predicting negative attitudes, such as the threat to one's safety posed by terrorist attacks (i.e., terrorist threat; Cohrs et al., 2005), criminal act (i.e., safety threat), infectious diseases (i.e., health threat), social functioning (i.e., the threat to social coordination), personal freedom (i.e., rights threat) (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). Previous research supported the role of symbolic, realistic, safety, and health concerns in predicting negative attitudes (e.g., Louis et al., 2007; Yitmen & Verkuyten, 2018). Landman *et al.* (2019) differentiated between *direct threat* – directly posed by immigrant refugees, such as the symbolic, safety, and realistic threat –, and *extended threat* – derived by the presence of refugees but related to processes within the in-group and the broader societal implications (e.g., changes in the political landscape or the rise of xenophobia). They also identified the *altruistic threat* – reflecting the concerns for adequate refugee care (e.g., housing and supplies). They found that all the types of threat predicted negative attitudes and support for restrictive immigration policies (Landman et al., 2019).

Other theories have applied the framework of the ITT to the relations between immigrants and host society members. The *Instrumental Model of Group Conflict* (Esses

et al., 2001) identified two determinants of intergroup hostility. The first one considers together the perceived competition for the resources (*i.e.*, the realistic threat), unequal access to them, and the acceptance of the inequality based on social hierarchy (*i.e.*, the social dominance orientation; Sidanius et al., 1992). The second determinant regards the majority perception of the relevance of the immigrant outgroup. The model posits that the interaction of the two factors predicts intergroup conflict. If the majority members perceive the immigrant group as salient and highly distinctive (*e.g.*, due to the number of immigrants or their physical appearance), the material resources as scarce, and if they are oriented towards a hierarchical structure of the society, then intergroup conflict is likely. At a cognitive level, individuals will endorse a zero-sum belief system that drives the perception that any benefits for the immigrant group would necessarily reduce the benefits for the majority group. Emotionally, people would show fear and anxiety toward immigrants.

The model has been supported in research examining majority attitudes towards immigrants in Canada and the United States (Esses et al., 2001). Studies also supported the role of the perceived salience of the immigrant groups as a driver of intergroup hostility. For instance, a higher immigrant group's size elicited a stronger perceived threat (Ceobanu & Escandell, 2010). Papademetriou & Banulescu-Bogdan (2016) argued that the rate of immigrants arrivals could influence threat and prejudice, whereas Strabac (2011) highlighted the role of the perceived size of immigrant groups in driving prejudice. Moreover, a recent review focused on nuanced facets of immigrant groups' perception and threat (Esses, 2020). For instance, the perceived economic situation of the immigrant groups and the national groups were strong predictors of attitudes towards immigrants (Fussell, 2014). Similarly, the belief that immigrants drain jobs and other economic resources negatively affected attitudes towards immigrants (*e.g.*, Card, 2005, Esipova et al., 2015). Others found that the perception of cultural threat increased when immigrants were perceived as not adapting to the mainstream society or retaining cultural norms in conflict with the dominant society, pointing out how segregated immigrant groups can reinforce the perceived threat (Papademetriou & Banulescu-Bogdan, 2016). Similarly, immigrants

perceived as more adapted were less threatening than less adapted ones (Burhan & Leeuwen, 2016).

Social Identity theory and immigration

The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provided a seminal theoretical framework for the understanding of the intergroup dynamics between immigrants and members of the host society. The early development of the theory was based on the observation that the mere categorization of people in groups – even based on trivial criteria like the preference for abstract painters (*e.g.*, Tajfel, 1970) – produced strong favoritism towards those who shared the same group membership. These preliminary observations led to the formulation of the social identity theory, whose core assumptions are that 1) people have a pervasive drive to obtain a positive view of the self, 2) such need for self-esteem partially and importantly springs from the social groups one belong to, and 3) the evaluation of one's group is determined through the comparison with other groups, and it results in a biased evaluation favoring one's ingroup distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The main assumptions of the social identity theory were based on three core cognitive processes that were, respectively 1) the *social categorization* of individuals in ingroups based on features that are relevant for the social context, and can include, among other characteristics, skin color, religion, language, nationality, and cultural and ethnic background; 2) *social identification* with one's ingroup, meaning that people must have internalized the group membership as a core aspect of the self-view, therefore subjectively identifying with the ingroup; 3) *social comparison* that is needed as a tool to estimate one's group value with reference to other outgroups relevant in terms of similarity, proximity, and situational salience among other variables. The comparison must lead to a maximum differentiation of the ingroup from the outgroup (*i.e.*, distinctiveness) and, in order to satisfy the need for positive self-esteem, it must be biased in favor of the ingroup (*i.e.*, ingroup bias) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). If the social comparison yields to a negative evaluation – as in the case of minority groups like immigrants comparing the national majority group – individuals and groups have three possible strategies to cope with the threat to the self-esteem. The first one is *individual mobility*: people seek to move from a low-status group towards a higher status one. It can be the case, for example,

of immigrants that try to distance themselves from the immigrant group through the adaptation to the host country by seeking a more prestigious job, becoming proficient in the national language, or by pursuing national citizenship (Shinnar, 2008). However, it can be that individual mobility cannot be feasible, and other strategies are required to enhance the group esteem. The second strategy is *social creativity*, which occurs when groups seek a favorable comparison by altering one's perception of negative evaluation (Wright & Tropp, 2002). It can consist in seeking new attributes for the intergroup comparison, redefining the value of the attribute of the existing social comparison, or selecting an alternative reference outgroup to which the ingroup is compared. For example, immigrants could feel pride and enhance their perception of themselves as valuable, hard-workers, honest, and trustworthy when conducting a labor-type job (Shinnar, 2008). Indeed, Jetten *et al.* (2005) identified the boost in ingroup pride and respect as a coping strategy to deal with negative social identity. The last strategy is *social competition*, consisting in engaging in social action to change the perception of the derogated ingroup. Collective action has been considered among the most important expressions of social competition strategies given its potential to fight social inequality towards the disadvantaged. Several studies and theories have empirically shown the relevance of social identity processes in shaping collective action (*e.g.*, Hopkins *et al.*, 2006; Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008; Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2011; Chayinska *et al.*, 2019).

The social identity approach has been widely used to study immigrants' relations with other social groups, in particular concerning the concept of ethnic identity and in relation to their experience of rejection and discrimination.

Ethnic identity. The social identity approach to ethnic identity has been central to Phinney's (1990) works, which provided a multidimensional theory of ethnic identity. Accordingly, immigrants' in host society face challenges regarding both the maintenance or development of their ethnic heritage identity and the acquisition of and identification with the host culture (Phinney *et al.*, 2001). Regarding the ethnic heritage identity, immigrants can have an unexamined ethnic identity (the positive or negative view of their ethnic origin are not considered), an ethnic identity under exploration, or an achieved ethnic identity (with a clear cultural and practical meaning

of one's ethnicity; French et al., 2006). The acquisition of the host society identity follows a similar pathway, with immigrants potentially showing an underdeveloped or well-established identification with the host group (Phinney et al., 2001). Considering the two processes together, immigrants can present an integrated ethnic identity (when they possess both the identities), a separated ethnic identity (retaining only the ethnic heritage identity), or an assimilated ethnic identity (possessing only the host group identity). However, the acquisition of ethnic identities may not be as continuous and linear as presented. Immigrants can have more than dual identities in case of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds, and the self-categorization in different ethnic groups can be subject to negotiated boundaries and relations between the groups (e.g., blended identities; Stuart & Ward, 2011). The complexity of multiple identities' acquisition can be especially evident in conflictual societal contexts where the adoption of dual identities can be problematic (e.g., Kunst et al., 2018; Wiley et al., 2019). For instance, in a daily diary study, Schwartz *et al.* (2019) found that those who perceived higher incompatibility between the host culture and ones' cultural background showed higher distress and lowered well-being. Literature findings showed that in contexts where the identities are compatible and do not give rise to problematic backlashes, the possession of *dual* identities is associated with several psychological benefits. Zhang *et al.* (2018) found that immigrants with dual identities showed over time a better psychological adjustment in terms of life satisfaction, depressive symptoms, and loneliness. Further theoretical advances showed that a *hybrid* ethnic identity – people with a relatively high degree of dynamism, flexibility, novelty, and personalization in the integration of the multiple identities – showed higher well-being compared to those with an *alternate* ethnic identity style, namely people who shift between the multiple identities based on the social context (Ward et al., 2018).

Ethnic identity and social exclusion. The relevance of ethnic identity for immigrants' well-being has also been supported by studies and theories addressing the impact of perceived discrimination and rejection of immigrants. The rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) predicts that when members of minority groups, like immigrants, are excluded by the majority, they would turn to their ethnic

group and increase their group identification as a coping strategy to reestablish belonging, self-esteem, and well-being. In the complementary rejection-dis-identification model, rejection from the majority would lead immigrants to dis-identify from the national excluding group, which would predict more hostile attitudes towards national members (Jasinskaja-Lahti et al., 2009; 2018). Bobowik *et al.* (2017) simultaneously tested the rejection-(dis-)identification models on two samples of refugees and voluntary immigrants from several ethnic groups. They found empirical support for both the processes in the two samples, further extending the negative impact of the dis-identification from the national group on well-being. These findings supported the conceptions of social and ethnic identities as a source of powerful psychological resources like social support, feelings of belonging, and self-esteem that can buffer immigrants facing social adversities (Jetten et al., 2012). Badea *et al.* (2011) provided empirical findings of the rejection-dis-identification paths. They showed that rejection from the host society and the ethnic group impaired identification with the host and ethnic groups, respectively. The findings aligned with the current knowledge of the behavioral reactions to social exclusion. Accordingly, people would distance themselves from the source of exclusion (*e.g.*, Ren et al., 2020), especially if the exclusion is perceived as chronic and pervasive, as it could be in the case of perceived rejection and discrimination from the national groups (Smart Richaman & Leary, 2009). Çelebi *et al.* (2017) further examined the social identity processes that can buffer immigrants from rejection. Based on the *Motivated Identity Construction Theory* (Vignoles, 2011) – that posits that social identification satisfies several identity needs including self-esteem, distinctiveness, belonging, efficacy, meaningfulness, and identity continuity –, the authors found that ethnic identification buffered Syrian refugees from the physical and mental impact of rejection, in particular via the increased sense of efficacy, distinctiveness. Differently, the feelings of belonging, self-esteem, and continuity did not protect from the impact of discrimination, highlighting how different resources channeled in group membership can contribute to a different extent to cope with social rejection. Besides, the authors did not find support for the rejection-identification path (Branscombe et al., 1999), given that perceived discrimination did not lead to increased ethnic identification (Çelebi *et al.*, 2017).

Similarly, a study from Korkmaz and Cingöz-Ulu (2020) showed that immigrants' identification as *immigrants* lowered their psychological well-being. In line with similar reasonings on the negative impact of the identification with stigmatized groups (e.g., Wakefield et al., 2019; Cruwys & Gunaseelan, 2016), the authors suggested that the stigma attached to the category of *immigrants* could invalidate the potential benefits of the group identification (Korkmaz & Cingöz-Ulu, 2020).

Despite the large contribution that the social identity approach has provided to the understating of the intergroup relations between immigrants and the host society, the faceted and sometimes conflicting findings provided underline how the implications of social identity processes for immigrants still require further research attention.

Intergroup Contact Theory and immigration

Another classical social psychological theory provides a theoretical framework particularly relevant for the study of intergroup relations between immigrants and the host society: the *Intergroup Contact Theory*. Allport (1954) formulated the *contact hypothesis*, which assumes that bringing together members of different groups has the power to reduce intergroup hostility and prejudice. Allport identified four optimal conditions under which intergroup contact would lead to more harmonious group relations. First, the groups, or at least the individuals who met, should be of equal social status. Second, the context in which they met should require cooperation or the pursuit of a common goal. Third, the contact experience should promote a close and meaningful relationship between the group members. Forth, the contact should occur under a supportive climate legitimized by the institutions and norms from authority. Several reviews and meta-analyses have empirically tested the validity of Allport's contact hypothesis, and they found converging support for them (e.g., Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis on 515 studies addressing the contact hypothesis on more than 250.000 participants. The main findings highlighted that contact led to a reduction of prejudice even when Allport's (1954) optimal conditions were not met - even though the studies who structured the contact situation following the optimal conditions showed a greater effect of contact in reducing prejudice. The study largely demonstrated that

direct, face-to-face intergroup contact could be a useful tool for reducing prejudice. It also showed that the prejudice-reduction effect could be influenced by intervening factors like age (the effect was larger in children than adults) or social status (it was larger in members of the majority than minority groups) (see also Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Further research on intergroup contact focused on the mediators that can drive prejudice reduction. Theories and findings identified both affective processes – such as the reduction of intergroup anxiety and perceived threat, perspective-taking, empathy, and self-disclosure (Hewstone, 2009) –, and cognitive ones – like the *de-categorization* from social categories in favor of an interpersonal, personalized mode of interaction (e.g., Brewer & Miller, 1984), and the *re-categorization* into a common superordinate group (Gaertner et al., 2016) – as key mechanisms underlying the contact effect. Besides the implication of direct face-to-face contact, literature also addressed the role of indirect forms of contact in reducing prejudice. Indirect forms of contact include *vicarious* contact (i.e., observing the interaction between the ingroup and outgroup members; Vezzali et al., 2014), *extended* contact (knowing that an ingroup member has a close relationship with an outgroup member; Wright et al., 1997), *imagined* contact (imagining the interaction with an outgroup member; Crisp & Turner, 2009), and *parasocial* contact (media portrayals of positive interactions between ingroup and outgroup members; Schiappa et al., 2005) (Dovidio et al., 2011).

Existing studies showed that indirect contact displayed the same prejudice-reduction effects, although relying on psychological processes complementary with those mediating the effect of the direct contact (Dovidio et al., 2011). For instance, Vezzali *et al.* (2012) showed that children imagining to meet an unknown immigrant child showed a reduced outgroup inhumanization and more positive behavioral intentions via improved outgroup trust.

The theoretical framework of the intergroup contact theory has been widely used to investigate majority attitudes and prejudice towards immigrants. Voci and Hewstone (2003) found that reduced intergroup anxiety mediated the effect of contact on attitudes towards immigrants in Italian participants. De Coninck and Matthijs (2020) investigated the role of direct and indirect contact on attitudes towards refugees

in four European countries. They found that interethnic friendship predicted improved intergroup attitudes, with this being fully mediated by a reduction in perceived symbolic and realistic threat. Also, exposure to public media news on refugees positively influenced attitudes towards them. Koc and Anderson (2018) found that vicarious contact with Syrian refugees indirectly reduced social distance towards them via intergroup anxiety. Similarly, imagined contact with asylum-seekers led high-school students to a stronger tendency to approach them (Turner et al., 2013). Graf and Sczesny (2019) found that positive intergroup contact with asylum-seekers predicted higher support towards them via improved attitudes; oppositely, negative intergroup contact predicted lower support via worsened attitudes. Besides this cross-sectional evidence, Kotzur *et al.* (2019) experimentally supported the causal effect of contact on prejudice reduction, showing that participants interacting with an asylum-seeker reported higher perceived warmth and supportive collective action intentions in favor of asylum-seekers. In two recent longitudinal studies, Kotzur and Wagner (2020) investigated real-life intergroup contact of the German minorities in city areas where a reception center for asylum-seekers was recently established. They found that previous positive contact did not have an effect on later prejudice; oppositely, the previous negative contact experience predicted increased prejudice. In addition, they observed that increased intergroup contact opportunities over time increasingly predicted prejudice. The findings appear innovative for several reasons. At first, they found ecological and causal evidence of the *asymmetry hypothesis* (e.g., Barlow et al., 2012), according to which the negative contact is more influential in increasing prejudice than positive contact in reducing it, especially if the contact occurs with stigmatized groups (Paolini & McIntyre, 2019). Secondly, they did not find support for the established prejudice-reduction effect of contact, and they also highlighted the downsides of increased contact opportunities for increasing prejudice – contradicting emerging findings (e.g., Wagner et al., 2020). To explain the counterintuitive findings, Kotzur and Wagner (2020) highlighted the role of several situational factors that could contribute to increasing prejudice. Those included the negative political climate, which opposed forced immigrants' reception (e.g., Christ et al., 2014), the segregated housing of asylum-seekers, and the existence of only superficial contact between the

participants and immigrants. By emphasizing the key role of situational factors in determining the influence of contact on prejudice, the findings highlighted the fundamental importance of the causal investigation of intergroup contact in real-life settings to be able to understand in a nuanced and ecological way the multifaceted implications of intergroup contact.

One of the major limitations of the existing research on intergroup contact with immigrants is that they almost entirely focused on the perspective of the majority groups, and they rarely account for the minority perspective (Paolini et al., *in press*; Marinucci et al., 2020) – let alone among forced immigrants. Some existing studies investigated intergroup contact in relation to group identifications in ethnic minorities. Schaafsma *et al.* (2010) showed that immigrants' involvement in their ethnic minority culture negatively predicted contacts with the majority. Oppositely a higher attachment to the majority culture predicted more frequent contacts. Sixtus *et al.* (2019) provided an opposite causation path. They showed that positive (negative) contacts with the majority and ethnic groups positively (negatively) predicted identification with the majority and ethnic groups, respectively. Other studies further extended the benefits of intergroup contact for the minority on health and well-being. Eller *et al.* (2016) showed that direct contact with the majority had beneficial effects on the physical and psychological health of indigenous in Mexico and Chile. Tip *et al.* (2019) showed that refugees' intergroup contact with the British majority positively predicted their well-being over time.

The studies reviewed showed the relevance of studying intergroup contact for the intergroup relations between majority and immigrant groups, underlining the need for further research in ecological settings accounting for the perspectives of the minority groups.

Social exclusion in immigrants

Asylum-seekers and refugees, among other immigrants in general, can be considered a social group excluded from the dominant society (*e.g.*, Ager & Strang, 2010; Bobowik et al., 2017). The social exclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees can

occur simultaneously at several levels of the system, beginning with the most foundational level of political rights. Indeed, according to their political status, asylum-seekers are granted limited social, legal, and citizenship rights (Ager & Strang, 2008). The limited rights prevent them to fully participate in the social and cultural life of a society, relating them in a marginalized position (UN, 2016). For instance, asylum seekers in Italy have limited access to the educational system (Decreto Legislativo n. 140, 2005), with this having an impact not only in determining their current status of marginalization but also impeding their societal adaptation.

Following the political rights, the marginalizing process of immigrants proceeds at the socio-economic level. As James *et al.* (2019) indicated, financial disadvantage affects immigrants on three layers, which are 1) the policies that prevent them to work (Allsopp *et al.*, 2014), 2) the inadequate support that impedes their economic development (Phillimore & Goodson, 2006), and 3) the dislocation in remote areas that offers limited socio-economic opportunities (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014). Esses (2020) showed that societal discrimination towards immigrants involves various domains, including employment, housing, and policies. Besides, asylum-seekers and refugees, depending on the country's policies, often suffer from periods of mandatory detention, which, alongside the socio-economic and policy-related stressors, literature has systematically shown dramatically affecting immigrants' mental health (Li *et al.*, 2016).

Besides the legal and socio-economics barriers, immigrants face upon their arrival a series of stressful conditions that contribute to determining their marginalized position in society and their psychological adjustment. The post-migration stressors can be particularly burdensome for vulnerable asylum-seekers and refugees, who are often exposed to traumatic events prior the migration and during the journey (Echterhoff *et al.*, 2020). Many of those stressors respond to the definition of *acculturative stress*, indicating the “stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experiences of acculturation, the psychological difficulties in adapting to a new culture, or psychological stressors resulting from unfamiliarity with new customs and social norms” (Wei *et al.*, 2007, p. 386). Immigration in a foreign country implies various demands, including unfamiliar and sometimes hostile immigration policies and regulations, restrictions in the freedom of movement, the loss of a familiar

way of life, social status, and skill set, and the confrontation with alien habits and cultural norms, as well as language barriers (Aranda 2007; Castro & Murray, 2010; Kuo, 2014; Yakushko, 2010; Cabaniss & Cameron, 2018). In addition, the process of relocation implies several losses in which close social connections and relatedness to others are often disrupted (Bennett et al., 1997). Immigrants may experience separation from the family, friends, work, and living context of their country of origin (Saldaña, 1992; Yakushko et al., 2008). They may struggle with establishing new social relationships (Ammons et al., 1982), being involved in the new community (Munton & Forster, 1990), adapting to new lifestyles, and learning new languages (Stack, 1981). Also, they can feel left out by people speaking a foreign language (Dotan-Eliasz et al., 2009). Similarly, the loss of cultural values and beliefs may elicit feelings of isolation and rejection (Pedraza, 2006). As psychological responses, immigrants may feel isolated (Rothberg, 1991), lonely, and uprooted, with a sense of not belonging anywhere or to anybody (Keyes & Kane, 2004). Indeed, the challenging post-migration stressors threaten fundamental human needs (Ward et al., 2001), such as the need for control, self-esteem, belonging, meaningfulness, and certainty about the future (Echterhoff et al. 2020), the same fundamental needs that are severely threatened by experiences of social exclusion (Williams, 2009). Several studies showed that these threats severely endanger mental health, causing overall distress, depression, anxiety, and experience of powerlessness (Li et al., 2016).

To further aggravate the scenario, an additional source of distress comes from the hostility of the members of the host society (da Silva Rebelo et al., 2018). Members of majority groups can develop stereotypes, prejudice, and racism that can turn into discriminating, dehumanizing, and aggressive behaviors towards ethnic minorities, targeting groups like immigrants with exclusionary threats (Brigham, 1971; Brown, 2011; Esses et al., 2013; Jones, 1997; Tsuda, 1998; Verkuyten, 1998; Williams et al., 2003). Mullen and Rice (2003) showed how immigrant groups are exposed to both direct (e.g., lower admission and naturalization rates) and indirect (e.g., discriminating public portrayals) forms of social exclusion. Kabir (2015) showed that events such as being treated unfairly and differently from others at work, being excluded at school for wearing ethnic related clothing (e.g., hijab), and being ignored during conversations

had a negative impact on well-being and led to the perception of being isolated and excluded from the mainstream society. Sue (2010) showed how ethnic minorities are targeted with persistent microaggressions in daily interpersonal interactions that communicate hostile, derogatory, and rejecting messages, sometimes resulting in direct aggression (Fijalkowski, 1993). DeSouza *et al.* (2019), in a study on Afro-Brazilian immigrants in the US, found that participants' recalled experiences of ostracism occurred on a racial basis in 75% of the cases. In addition, they found that Afro-Brazilian minorities in Brazil reported frequent experiences of microaggression that evoked feelings of social exclusion. Indeed, immigrants could suffer from social stigma due to their minority status and being subject to victimization (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013). Asendorpf and Motti-Stefanidi. (2017) found that immigrants, at least in the first year of middle school, were more rejected by their classmates compared to Greek students.

The wide board of negative experiences of hostility often persist for a very long time and become a burdensome stress factor, leading to severe impairment of asylum-seekers and refugees' psychosocial well-being (da Silva Rebelo *et al.*, 2018). The negative consequences of race-related exclusionary threats (e.g., perceived ethnic discrimination) on physical and psychological health have been well demonstrated several via meta-analytic reviews and empirical research (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009; Agudelo-Suarez *et al.*, 2011; Schmitt *et al.*, 2014). Noh *et al.* (2007) showed that perceived overt discrimination in Korean immigrants was associated with negative affects. Moreover, perceived exclusion and feelings of powerlessness and shame mediated the direct relationship between more subtle forms of discrimination and depressive symptoms.

Given the reviewed findings, immigrants, in particular asylum-seekers and refugees, can be considered a social group chronically exposed to persistent and chronic stressors evoking a sense of profound inadequacy, exclusion, and marginalization from the broad society.

Chapter 3

THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Introduction

The present research project aims at investigating the long-term consequences of persistent social exclusion in asylum-seekers and refugees. Specifically, the research project addresses two major open issues in the literature of social exclusion.

At first, the studies here presented sought to provide causal evidence that individuals exposed to persistent social exclusion are likely to develop the resignation stage, as theorized by Williams' (2009) in the Temporal Need-Threat Model. Indeed, the resignation stage has received the least empirical support (Wesselmann & Williams, 2017). To date, no study has provided conclusive evidence that chronic social exclusion causes the long-run feelings of depression, alienation, unworthiness, and hopelessness.

A second question addressed in this dissertation regards the factors that intervene in aggravating or protecting immigrants from developing the long-term implications of social exclusion. The theoretical perspectives on chronic social exclusion did not consider any potential moderators of the development of the resignation stage and social withdrawal, which were considered as the sole and inescapable consequences of chronic exclusion (Williams, 2009; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009).

The studies of this research project aimed at addressing these literature gaps focusing on asylum-seekers and refugees. Indeed, their marginalized position in

society permitted the empirical investigation of the processes related to social exclusion while unfolding in real-life and ecological social dynamics.

The empirical investigation of chronic social exclusion

The underdevelopment of the scientific knowledge on the impact of chronic exclusion can be attributed to the methodological challenges that the investigation of persistent instances of social exclusion poses to researchers. Indeed, three main issues may have hindered the proceeding of the research: 1) the lack of a temporal framework conceptualizing the chronicity of social exclusion and its long-term implications, 2) the impossibility to experimental manipulate chronic exclusion, and 3) the confounding overlap between perceived feelings of exclusion and the objective states of chronic exclusion.

First, the most prominent theoretical models about chronic exclusion (Williams, 2009; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009) did not provide a clear temporal framework defining how long exclusion must last to display its chronic implications. Indeed, chronicity referring to social stressors has been framed without any temporal delimitation. Zhang *et al.* (2017, p. 2) defined chronic social adversity as 'repeatedly, continuously, or accumulatively' occurring. Williams (2009, p. 302) considered 'persistent' ostracism, and Smart Richman and Leary (2009, p. 370) framed the chronicity of social rejection as occurring 'over a prolonged period of time'. In contrast, disciplines from medical and clinical sciences defined the temporal extension of chronic diseases more accurately. For example, chronic fatigue lasts for at least six months (Surawy *et al.*, 1995; Wessely *et al.*, 1996), whereas chronic pain is defined as physical pain lasting for at least three months (Blyth *et al.*, 2001; Merskey *et al.*, 1979). Drawing on the pain overlap theory (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; see also Riva *et al.*, 2014b), Riva *et al.* (2016) applied the temporal framework of chronic physical pain to chronic social pain, defining it as an experience of social exclusion lasting at least three months. The authors presented quasi-experimental evidence showing that people reporting a three-month experience of social exclusion presented higher resignation than control groups (Riva *et al.*, 2016). Apart from this research effort, the literature lacks a temporal framework of the chronicity of social exclusion or the

resignation stage, leaving researchers without clear criteria to rely on to identify and subsequently study chronic processes of social exclusion.

Second, research faces the unfeasibility to manipulate and induce chronic social exclusion in experimental settings. The impossibility is due to both ethical issues – given that it would be obviously unethical to keep someone separated from others for prolonged periods of time for scientific purposes – and the lack of existing valid alternative experimental procedures. In previous experimental studies, researchers have developed the Future-Alone paradigm, which is the only available experimental induction of the condition of persistent social exclusion (Twenge et al., 2001; see Chapter 1). However, besides the ethical concerns, the most evident limitation of the Future-Alone paradigm is that it only induces experiences of life-lasting rejection experimentally. Indeed, it does not allow studying persistent social exclusion while occurring in real-life contexts in which complex interpersonal and intergroup factors could intervene in shaping its consequences (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002).

Lastly, the association between objective and subjective social exclusion risks biasing the investigation of chronic conditions of social exclusion. Subjective social exclusion refers to someone's perception of exclusion, regardless of the actual situation. Objective social exclusion can be defined a priori based on the occurrence of specified conditions that qualify the exclusionary experience (e.g., being physically kept apart from others within the bars of a prison). Subjective feelings of social exclusion do not always imply the presence of an actual condition of social exclusion. Previous studies have shown that some people (i.e., patients with borderline personality disorder) may feel excluded even when they are objectively included (De Panfilis et al., 2015).

Similarly, people might feel lonely even when not socially isolated (Lee & Ko, 2017). The research on loneliness provided extensive findings on how the subjective experiences of persistent social exclusion and isolation could lead to severe health repercussions (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008). Studies showed that loneliness predicted cardiovascular conditions over a 4-year period and increased mortality risk in individuals older than 50 over six years (Hawkey et al., 2010; Luo et al., 2012). Moreover, loneliness increased depressive symptoms in three years, net of

demographic characteristics, perceived stress, and social support (Cacioppo et al., 2006). Research also showed that the subjective experience of loneliness and its negative mental health repercussions could mutually reinforce. For instance, Lim *et al.* (2016) showed that loneliness and social anxiety predicted each other over time. Similarly, Vanhalst *et al.* (2015) showed that chronically lonely individuals could act in a way that perpetuates loneliness. Given the discrepancy between subjective feelings and objective conditions of social exclusion, the long-term implications of loneliness could diverge from the consequences of chronic objective exclusion. The findings from the long-term impact of loneliness could not be adequate for generating hypotheses related to the temporal development of the psychological consequences of objective chronic exclusion. The need to disentangle the between objective conditions of social exclusion from the subjective feelings of being excluded becomes impelling when studying the long-term psychological implications of social exclusion.

The reciprocal intertwinement between negative evaluations about oneself and one's social world and a depressed mood (Drevets & Raichle, 1998; Jankowski et al., 2018) does not allow drawing inferences about the directionality of the association between self-reported chronic exclusion and its theorized outcomes. The research on chronic exclusion needs to apply methodologies allowing causal inference (e.g., longitudinal study) that can distinguish between the effect that perceived chronic exclusion has on the long-term resignation from the reciprocal influence that resignation can play in generating feelings of being rejected and ostracized. It is the case, for example, of the longitudinal study by Martin et al. (2018) investigating the short- and long-term effects of rejection from university sorority recruitment. The authors showed that the negative implications for participants' well-being caused by an acute episode of rejection could persist for three months.

Currently, two feasible ways to deal with the issues above-mentioned can be foreseen. The first way implies using objective measures of chronic social exclusion, such as peer-reported indices (Asher & Coie, 1990). With such indices, the measurement of social exclusion would not rely on the potentially biased self-perception of being excluded, rather on the actual occurrence of exclusion as reported by the excluders. Another approach implies sampling individuals belonging to

marginalized social groups whose inherent discriminated social situation objectively put their members in a real-life persistent condition of exclusion from society at large. Examples of these groups include homeless people (Hulme, 2000), prisoners (Wesselmann et al., 2014), and immigrants, who are the focus of the current research project.

The role of intergroup social connections for immigrants' psychological response to social exclusion

Besides the methodological challenges related to the study of the long-term impact of chronic social exclusion, another open question relates to the factors that intervene in protecting from such adverse outcomes or in aggravating their onset. Both the Temporal Need-Threat Model (Williams, 2009) and the Multimotive Model (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009) theorized the psychological withdrawal of the resignation stage and the behavioral ones of social avoidance, respectively, as the direct and inescapable outcomes of persistent social exclusion. Only recently emerging empirical studies have started addressing this issue. In a previous study conducted by Aureli *et al.* (2020), we found that support groups within prisons can protect inmates from the development of the resignation stage. Prisoners belonging to a support group had similar levels of resignation than free citizens and significant lower ones than inmates who did not attend the support groups. The result was mediated by enhanced psychological flexibility and perceived social support promoted by the groups (Aureli et al., 2020). However, besides this preliminary evidence, to my knowledge, no other empirical research has focused on the moderators of the resignation stage due to chronic social exclusion, even though related literature has addressed similar research questions. Researchers working on domains related to chronic social exclusion (e.g., perceived discrimination) found several individual and contextual moderators mitigating or worsening the negative impacts of social threats on disadvantaged social groups. Authors found that poverty and low socioeconomic status worsened the negative impact of perceived ethnic discrimination (Miller et al., 2013), whereas social (Cohen & Wills, 1985) and ethnic support (Noh & Kaspar, 2003) protected from its negative consequences. Individual factors, such as a pessimistic outlook on life (Kaiser et al., 2004) and emotion-focused coping strategies (Noh & Kaspar, 2003), increased the

negative consequences of exclusionary threats. In contrast, religious activities (Bierman, 2006) and problem-oriented coping strategies (Noh & Kaspar, 2003) were found to be protective factors.

Considering the work of Baumeister and Leary (1995) and early empirical findings (Aureli et al., 2020), another important factor that could moderate the relationship between experiences of social exclusion and their related negative consequences in immigrants is the quantity and quality of intergroup social connections with the national majority and other immigrant minority groups. According to the research traditions of social capital and intergroup contact related to intergroup connections in immigrants, the available picture is fuzzy. The research on *social capital* showed that individuals' social networks and the resources channeled in them are involved in different areas of societal development (Szreter & Woolcock, 2004). Putnam (2000) differentiated between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital. Bonding capital refers to relationships with *similar* ones (e.g., same social identities), and it provides strong ties (Granovetter, 1973) essential for the ingroup cohesion and support (Putnam & Goss, 2002; Walseth, 2008). Bridging capital refers to relationships with *dissimilar* others (e.g., people with different ethnic backgrounds), and it allows the group to access external resources necessary for integration into the wider society (Granovetter, 1973). If bonding permits the "getting by," bridging is crucial for "getting ahead" (Putnam, 2000, p. 23). Many authors agree that bridging capital is more important for integration into the wider society, given that it diminishes ingroup bias and fosters intergroup trust (Marschall & Stolle, 2004), whereas bonding capital carries the risk for minorities to close within their community at the expense of their wider social integration (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). The generally shared argument is that bridging is more likely to generate positive outcomes than bonding (Coffé & Geys, 2007). However, previous research underlined the importance of similar ethnic groups for asylum seekers and refugees' social integration (Duke et al., 1999; Hale, 1993) and health (Beiser, 1993). Ager and Strang (2008) found that both social bridges and bonds were fundamental means for refugees' integration. Others found that bonding and bridging capital were associated with better mental health (Poortinga, 2012), even if the effect of the bonding capital was reduced for ethnic minorities compared to White

people (Kim et al., 2006). Conversely, Mitchell and LaGory (2002) found that bonding capital among racially segregated communities was associated with higher psychological distress. At a socioeconomic level, Muller (1998) found that ethnic enclaves had positive effects on immigrants' employment. By contrast, Lancee (2012) found that immigrants' bridging capital was associated with positive labor indicators, whereas ethnic bonding showed a nonsignificant or even negative association with them. Overall the literature on the outcomes of bonding capital of minorities at risk of social exclusion appears conflicting: some argued that it could benefit immigrants with the expression of their identity and the maintenance of their cultural roots (Ager & Strang, 2008), whereas others stated that bonding connections—especially when bridging capital lacking (Villalonga-Olives & Kawachi, 2017)—can lock immigrants in ethnic niches that impede the access to societal resources, upward social mobility, and broader social integration (Portes, 1995; Ryan et al., 2008).

The literature based on the intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954) showed that different types of intergroup social connection could lead to conflicting outcomes for immigrants coping with exclusionary threats. In general, it has been shown that intergroup social contacts might positively affect minority groups' psychological well-being while facing social exclusion. Bagci and Turnuklu (2018) found that social contacts with majority members were associated with better psychological well-being among minorities. Others found that friendship with majority-group peers buffered minority students from the lack of belongingness and life satisfaction resulting from expected race-based rejection (Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008), and it reduced cortisol reactivity in people with high expectations of race-based rejection (Page-Gould et al., 2008). Cross-ethnic friendships served as a protective mechanism against the negative psychological consequences of negative contact (Paolini et al., 2014). Relatedly, several studies demonstrated that cross-group friendships and contact with majority-group members might benefit minority students with increased positive academic attitudes (Cardinali et al., 2016), skills (Saenz et al., 2007), and results (Shook & Fazio, 2008; Wölfer et al., 2019). In contrast with previous findings, Brenick *et al.* (2018) found that cross-ethnic friendships with majority-group peers exacerbated the negative consequences of perceived discrimination in ethnic minority students. They

also found that cross-ethnic friendships with other minorities, particularly when perceived support for interethnic connections in classrooms was low, worsened the negative consequences of perceived discrimination. Differently, other authors found that cross-ethnic friendships in multiethnic contexts protected from the negative consequences of perceived ethnic discrimination in South Asian British children, but they did not control for whether the cross-ethnic friendships were with majority or minority group members (Bagci et al., 2014). According to the literatures on social capital and intergroup contact (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Cardinali et al., 2016), although the benefits of social connections with the majority group seem to be well known, how social connections with other immigrant minorities can moderate immigrants' psychological responses to social exclusion is far from being clear.

Overview of the studies

The present studies aimed at investigating the long-term psychological impact of persistent social exclusion focusing on asylum-seekers and refugees who are likely exposed to persistent and pervasive exclusion due to their membership with their marginalized social group. Besides, the current research project seeks to overcome the critical issues related to the investigation of chronic social exclusion by using both self- and peer-reported methods for the assessment of social exclusion, and applying a longitudinal methodology. With these methodological approaches, the studies address the open literature questions concerning the identification of a temporal framework of the development of the long-term consequences of chronic exclusion, and the factors that can intervene in modulating its impact, specifically focusing on immigrants' intergroup social connections with the majority group and with other immigrant minorities. To answer these research questions, I conducted a longitudinal study – whose preliminary cross-sectional findings are presented in Study 1, and the conclusive longitudinal results in Study 3 and 4 –, secondary analyses on a large European dataset (Study 2), and an experimental (Study 5).

In details, Study 1 provides preliminary cross-sectional evidence of the link between chronic exclusion and resignation and on the moderating role of intergroup

social connections analyzing the first wave of data collection from the longitudinal research project on the long-term impact of chronic exclusion on adult, male asylum-seekers and refugees hosted within national reception centers in Northern Italy. Study 2 replicates and extends the findings from Study 1 by testing its research questions on a large existing dataset (CILS4EU; Kalter et al., 2016) that sampled first-generation adolescent immigrants – male and female – in the schools of four European Countries and adopted peer-nomination indices as objective indicators of social exclusion. Study 3 analyzed the three-wave longitudinal studies – from which Study 1 was derived – and focuses on the identification of the temporal onset of the perception of chronicity of social exclusion and the development of the resignation stage. Study 4 tests the longitudinal moderating role of intergroup social connections on the relationship between social exclusion and resignation on the same dataset of Study 3. Lastly, Study 5, using a within-subject experimental design, aims to further test the role of intergroup connections in moderating the immediate emotional impact of social exclusion, also considering the group-source of social exclusion (i.e., majority *vs.* other immigrant minorities) and the migration status of the participants (i.e., asylum-seekers and refugees forced migrants and non-forced voluntary migrants).

Chapter 4

THE EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Study 1¹ -

The role of intergroup connections for asylum-seekers' response to social exclusion: preliminary evidence

Study 1 can be considered among the few cross-sectional empirical studies testing the direct relationship between pervasive social exclusion and the resignation stage as theorized by Williams (2009), as well as the existence of potential intervening factors moderating the exclusion-resignation link. The study focused on asylum-seekers, a well-known population at risk of experiencing persistent exclusion. It investigated the role of social connections with the majority population (*i.e.*, Italians) and with other immigrants as moderators of the relationship between experiences of social exclusion and the resignation stage. The data for this study were derived from the first wave of the three-wave longitudinal study, whose main findings are reported in Study 3 and Study 4 of the present chapter. The study considered self-reported measures of the general perceptions of social exclusion, the resignation stage, and social connections with Italians and immigrants.

Based on the available literature, the first hypothesis of the study is that immigrants with higher social connections with majority-group members would show a reduced detrimental impact (*i.e.*, lower resignation) of their experiences of chronic social exclusion. Given the conflicting findings from the literature on social contact and capital, clear predictions on the moderating role of connections with other immigrant minorities could not be made; thus this consisted in a more exploratory research

¹ The study is an extract of Study 1 from Marinucci, M., & Riva, P. (2020a). How intergroup social connections shape immigrants' responses to social exclusion. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, Advanced Online Publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219894620>.

question. Finally, to account for simultaneous connections with both Italians and other immigrants, the study explored how the prevalence of social connections with native people over other immigrants influenced immigrants' psychological response to chronic exclusion.

Method

Participants

An a priori power analysis was conducted using the software G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) to estimate the minimum sample size required to reach an adequate level of statistical power in the analyses planned. With an alpha of .05, in a model with six total predictors (as the most extended model tested), the results recommended the recruitment of at least 55 participants to achieve a good power ($\beta = .80$) in detecting a medium effect size ($f^2 = .15$) for the single regression coefficient.

Within three welcoming centers (CAS – centers for extraordinary welcoming) in Northern Italy, 112 male immigrants ($M_{\text{age}} = 25.9$, $SD = 6.5$, $\text{range} = 18\text{--}59$; $M_{\text{education}} = 10.2$ school years, $SD = 4.1$, $\text{range} = 0\text{--}19$), took part at the study. Men only were involved because they represented the vast majority – if not the totality – of the users of the welcoming centers. The majority of the sample (86.9%) came from Western Africa (Nigeria, Gambia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Mali, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon, Benin, Liberia, Burkina Faso), 9% from Asia (Pakistan and Bangladesh), 2 participants came from Egypt, and one from Somalia (2 *unknown*). 41.1% of the participants were Christian, 55.4% were Muslim, and one was Jewish (3 *unknown*). Most of the participants were unmarried (75.9%), 15.2 % were married, and 7.2% separated, divorced, or widowed (2 *unknown*). Participants had been living in Italy for 15.1 months ($SD = 8.2$, $\text{range} = 4\text{--}48$); 94.6% were asylum seekers while 5.4% ($n = 6$) already held a status of international protection. These six participants were removed from the analysis so that we could focus only on asylum-seeking immigrants, controlling for the effect of the legal status.

Procedure

Three major hosting-center operators experienced in welcoming asylum seekers were consulted to obtain access to our sample. Participants were recruited within CAS. CAS were private corporations identified by the regional Prefectures as suitable to host

asylum-seekers waiting for their asylum claims to be processed, thus supplying hosting capacity to the overwhelmed National Reception System. Indeed, during 2017, CAS accounted for 78% of the national hosting capacity. The centers in which the data collection took place mainly consisted of large facilities collectively hosting from 30 to 100 asylum-seekers, even though CAS could also consist of networks of small apartments hosting 3-5 persons. Officially, CAS were supposed to host immigrants temporarily, covering the six months expected for the courts to evaluate the asylum claims. However, due to the overwhelming immigration emergency, the length of stay in CAS centers lasted up to two years (Villa, 2018). Within these centers, immigrants could freely interact with each other, with the social workers leading the facilities, and with the local community, even though they were subject to mobility restrictions (e.g., the obligation to return to the center by night). The services provided by the CAS aimed at meeting asylum-seekers' physical basic needs (e.g., food, shelter, and medical assistance), extending to more articulated integration programs depending on the corporations' resources (e.g., legal assistance, job placement, and educational programs). Data were collected through a paper-and-pencil self-reported questionnaire that was available in three languages: English, Italian, and French (native speakers reviewed the translations). The data collection process consisted of two phases. First, participants were reunited in collective meetings and briefed regarding the aims and methodology of the study. Then, those who agreed to participate were invited in group sessions for the questionnaire administration. Cultural-linguistic mediators supported the researchers. Mediators translated the researchers' explanation of the study procedure in the participants' native languages, and they intervened during the questionnaire administration in helping participants understand questionnaire items and translating researchers' clarifications. After signing the informed consent form, participants took approximately 60-90 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The research was approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Milano-Bicocca.

Measures

Predictors: Social exclusion. The *self-reported index of social exclusion* measured how rejected and ignored participants felt in their daily life. The score was computed

by averaging two items assessing the two main components of social exclusion (“I feel rejected,” “I feel ignored”). The index showed a good internal consistency ($r = .74, p < .001$), and it ranged from 1 to 5, with a higher score indicating a higher perception of exclusion.

Outcome: Resignation stage. The assessment considered the four outcomes associated with the resignation stage that were averaged into an *index of resignation stage*, including items that tapped into alienation, depression, unworthiness, and helplessness (for a similar procedure, see Riva et al., 2016). Items that tapped into alienation were derived from the social connectedness subscale of the Social Connectedness Scale (Lee & Robbins, 1995). Examples of adopted items are: “I felt disconnected from the world around me,” and “I felt so distant from people.” For depression, we included items of the Symptom checklist 90 (Revised) – Depression subscale (Derogatis & Unger, 2010). Examples of adopted items are: “I felt no interest in things” and “I felt that everything was an effort.” For unworthiness, we included items of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Examples of adopted items are: “On the whole, I was satisfied with my self” and “At times, I thought I was no good at all.” Finally, for helplessness, participants filled out some items of the Beck Hopelessness Scale (Beck, 1974). Examples of adopted items are: “My future seemed dark to me,” and “I had great faith in the future.” (see the complete list of items in Appendix). For all items, participants were asked to rate how much they felt or thought as stated in the items in the previous three months on a 5-point response scale (from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*). The resulting *index of resignation stage* showed good reliability (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$), with higher scores indicating higher levels of resignation.

Moderators: Social connections. Quality and quantity of social connections with Italians, asylum seekers’ national group members, and immigrants from other countries (in this order in the questionnaire) were measured, asking participants to list up to ten persons they had regularly interacted with during the previous three months. Participants also rated how close they felt to each person on a response scale ranging from 1 = *not close at all* to 5 = *extremely close*. At first, three indices of social connection were computed by averaging the responses on the closeness scale weighted by the

number of social connections listed (i.e., summing the closeness scores; see for a similar procedure Page-Gould, 2012). Then, the indices of social connections with immigrants' national group members and with immigrants from other Countries were averaged in a superordinate index of social connections with other immigrants. The Italian and immigrant connections indices ranged from 0 to 50, with higher scores indicating closer and more numerous social connections with the members of the two groups.

To consider the ratio between Italian and immigrants connections, an index representing the prevalence of social connections with Italians over other immigrants was also created. The index was computed by subtracting the *immigrants'* social connections from the *Italian* ones. The measure ranged from -37 to 40, with positive scores indicating a greater prevalence of Italian over immigrant connections and negative scores indicating greater connections with immigrants over Italians. A score of zero meant that participants had the same quantity and quality of social connections between Italian and immigrant people.

Socio-demographics. Participants to indicated their gender, education (in years of full-time education attended), nationality, marital status, religion, the status of their asylum claim, months of staying in Italy, and the way they reached Italy.

Results

Correlation and descriptive analyses

Correlations among variables of Study 1 are reported in Table 1. They showed that perceptions of chronic social exclusion were positively associated with the outcomes linked with the resignation stage. Also, the feelings of exclusion and resignation were higher in those immigrants who felt less connected with Italian people. Perceptions of social exclusion were not related to social connections with other immigrants, whereas increasing connections with Italians related to a lower perception of exclusion. The analysis showed that social connections with Italians and with other immigrants were positively associated, indicating that people more connected with one group were also more related to the other group. Finally, participants had closer and more numerous relationship with other immigrants compared to Italians ($|t|(187) = 2.57, p = .011$).

Table 1. Mean (standard deviation) and correlation for the variables of Study 1.

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Resignation stage	2.15 (0.55)	-			
2. Social exclusion	1.83 (1.24)	.56***	-		
3. Connections with Italians	11.93 (13.12)	-.24*	-.32***	-	
4. Connections with other immigrants	16.99 (14.26)	-.11	-.16	.65***	-
5. Delta score	-5.04 (11.49)	-.14	-.17	.33***	-.50***

* $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

Moderation analyses

A series of multiple moderated linear regression models were conducted to investigate 1) how social connections with Italian and with other immigrants, and 2) the prevalence of social connections with Italians over other immigrants moderated the relationship between perceptions of chronic social exclusion and the resignation stage. The variables were standardized prior to the specification of the models. The results, controlled for the length of stay in Italy, are presented in Table 2.

Model 1² showed significant interactions both for social connections with Italians and with other immigrants. Simple slopes analyses revealed that exclusion was more strongly associated with resignation for increasing connections with other immigrants (+1 SD: $\beta = 0.86$, SE = 0.17, $t = 4.97$, $p < .001$; mean: $\beta = 0.39$, SE = 0.11, $t = 3.63$, $p < .001$; -1 SD: $\beta = -0.08$, SE = 0.19, $t = -0.45$, $p = .65$). Oppositely, exclusion was less strongly associated with the resignation stage for increasing connections with Italians (+1 SD: $\beta = 0.09$, SE = 0.21, $t = 0.44$, $p = .66$; mean: $\beta = 0.38$, SE = 0.11, $t = 3.63$, $p < .001$; -1 SD: $\beta = 0.68$, SE = 0.12, $t = 5.59$, $p < .001$) (Figure 5). Jhonson-Neyman intervals analyses showed that the positive relation between social exclusion and resignation became increasingly significant for standardized values of social connections with other immigrants greater than -0.34 and connections with Italians lower than 0.42.

Model 2 showed a significant moderation effect of the *delta* score. Consistently with the effects of the moderators considered separately, simple slopes analysis showed that exclusion was no longer associated with resignation when the social

² Results did not vary if the indices of social connections with other immigrants and Italians and their interaction terms were progressively added one at a time in the regression model.

connections with Italian prevailed over the immigrant ones ($\beta = 0.06$, $SE = 0.16$, $t = 0.37$, $p = .71$). Oppositely, exclusion was increasingly associated with resignation when immigrant and Italian social connections were equal in terms of number and closeness ($\beta = 0.38$, $SE = 0.10$, $t = 3.94$, $p < .001$) and even more when immigrant connections prevailed over Italian ones ($\beta = 0.69$, $SE = 0.11$, $t = 6.58$, $p < .001$) Accordingly, analysis of Jhonson-Neyman interval showed that social exclusion increasingly predicted resignation for standardized values of the delta score lower than 0.43 (*i.e.*, when connections with other immigrants equaled or prevailed over those with Italians).

Table 2. Models tested in Study 1

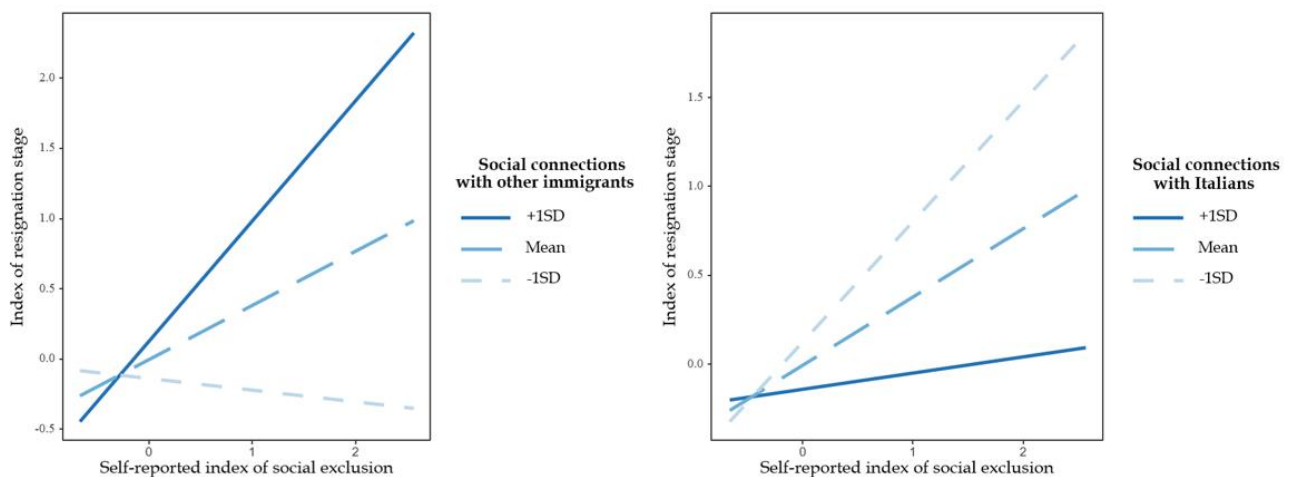
	Resignation stage		
	β	SE	η_p^2
Model 1			
Intercept	.00	.09	
Self-reported social exclusion	.39	.11***	.14
Social connections with Italians	-.14	.12	
Social connections with other immigrants	.13	.12	
Social exclusion x Social connections with Italians	-.29	.13*	.06
Social exclusion x Social connections with other immigrants	.47	.14**	.11
Length of stay in Italy	.17	.08*	.05
Adjusted R ²		.34	
F(df _n , df _d)		8.61 (6, 83)	***
Model 2			
Intercept	-.03	.08	
Self-reported social exclusion	.38	.10***	.15
Delta score	-.10	.09	
Social exclusion x Delta score	-.32	.09**	.11
Length of stay in Italy	.17	.08*	.05
Adjusted R ²		.34	
F(df _n , df _d)		12.64 (4, 85)	***

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

The present research investigated how social connections with the native Italian majority and other immigrant minorities moderated asylum-seekers psychological responses to perceived pervasive social exclusion. Results showed that social connections with Italians protected immigrants from the negative psychological consequences (*i.e.*, resignation) of chronic social exclusion. Conversely, social connections with other immigrants worsened the negative impact of exclusion. Consistently with this pattern of results, findings also showed that the prevalence of social connections with Italians over other immigrants protected from the negative outcomes of social exclusion that emerged when immigrants had stronger connections with other immigrants than with native people.

Figure 5. Intergroup social connections moderate the exclusion-resignation link



The contributions of these results to understand the scientific background on which the study draws are threefold. First, it confirmed the theoretical assumption (Williams, 2009) and the early evidence (Riva et al., 2017; Aureli et al., 2020) that marginalized social groups that are reasonably exposed to persistent episodes of social exclusion due to their social condition are likely to develop the outcomes of the resignation stage. Second, the results highlighted that the resignation stage is not the only imperative effects of chronic social exclusion and that modulating factors can intervene in aggravating or protecting from the development of the resignation. Third, this study advanced the knowledge of the particular case of asylum-seekers, of the

impact of social exclusion on their health, and the role that intergroup social connections can play in shaping the consequences of their experienced social exclusion. Indeed, the study pointed at asylum-seekers as a social group that is particularly exposed to pervasive social exclusion and vulnerable to its detrimental health impact. Finally, these findings innovatively informed about the potential fundamental role that the connections with the high-status majority can have in decreasing the perception of social exclusion and in limiting its consequences, whereas, oppositely, the segregation within minority groups can heighten the health toll of asylum-seekers daily exposed to social exclusion.

Besides these contributions, the study presented limitations that allowed to consider the findings as only preliminary evidence. At first, it focused on a subsample of immigrants (*i.e.*, male, adult, asylum-seekers) that prevent the generalization to the wider forced immigrant population. Then, the measures of the study were self-reported. This did not allow to disentangle the implication of objective episodes of exclusion for the perceived perceptions of being exclusion, even though the self-reported feelings of exclusion could easily be interpreted in light of the objective marginalized position asylum-seekers occupy in the society. Lastly – and perhaps most importantly – the study adopted a cross-sectional methodology that did not permit to clearly understand the causality of the processes. Indeed, an alternative explanation of the findings could be that prior level of resignation made participants more prone to perceive exclusion. The following studies aimed at further testing the moderating role of intergroup social connections on the relation between chronic exclusion and resignation, trying to overcome these limitations.

Study 2³ -

Secondary analyses on 2206 first-generation adolescents in four European countries from the CILS4EU project: a replication and beyond

Study 2 aimed at replicating and extending the early findings from Study 1, overcoming some of its critical limitations. To do so, I conducted secondary data analyses on the first wave of a longitudinal large-scale project sampling almost 20,000 students from four European countries (England, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden). The Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Project (CILS4EU; Kalter et al., 2016) was designed to study the integration in different life domains of adolescents with different migration backgrounds. The project surveyed 14 - 15 years-old students recruiting them in randomly selected classrooms from randomly selected schools across the four countries in order to draw a sample that was representative of all the school types and regions in each country (Kalter et al., 2013). One of the main advantages of the CILS4EU project consisted in the availability of different types of measures, including self-reported questionnaires assessing social and psychological indicators as well as peer-reported indices based on a nomination procedure to assess students' social network and integration within the classrooms. Thus, using the CILS4EU dataset, it was possible to re-test the hypotheses and replicate the findings of Study 1 in a large sample of immigrants. Moreover, Study 2 could extend Study 1 and its limitations in many ways. First, the participants had different sociodemographic characteristics: they were both male and female, adolescents, and not necessarily forced migrants, thus allowing for a generalization of the results across gender, age, and type of migration status. Second, social exclusion was measured using a peer-nomination procedure, meaning that it indicated the actual exclusionary behaviors that other classmates acted towards the participants, thus overcoming the limitation of

³ The study is an extract of Study 2 from Marinucci, M., & Riva, P. (2020a). How intergroup social connections shape immigrants' responses to social exclusion. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, Advanced Online Publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219894620>.

Study 1 related to the use of self-reported measures. Third, besides the outcomes tapping into the resignation stage, the dataset included a measure of life satisfaction that allowed to test the hypotheses of Study 1 on an additional related outcome, therefore strengthening the previous results with proof of conceptual and convergent validity.

Method

Participants and procedure

Participants were part of the “Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study in Four European Country” (CILS4EU; Kalter et al., 2016). The data presented in this study came from the 1st wave of data collection conducted in 2010/2011. From the whole sample (19,634 participants), we selected only 1st generation immigrant participants -- children who were born in a foreign country. The selected sample consisted of 2206 adolescents (50.3% male) who were, on average, 15.6 years old (SD=0.8; range = 14-18). A total of 28.1% of the participants were recruited in England, 24.7% in Germany, 14.5% in the Netherlands, and 32.7% in Sweden. On average, participants migrated to the survey country when they were 7.2 years old (SD=4.3, range = 0-18). Information on the country of origin of the participants was not available in the dataset due to an anonymization procedure. The data were collected in the regular national school setting with the support of trained research assistants using paper-and-pencil questionnaires. The research procedure was consistent with APA ethical standards. Participants answered questionnaires that focused on migration-specific characteristics, socio-cultural integration, psychological well-being and behavioral problems, weak and strong social connections with several ethnic groups, and social network data, among other topics. Full material is available at www.cils4.eu.

Measures

Predictor: Social Exclusion. The peer-reported index of social exclusion in the classroom was based on a peer-nomination measure. Participants were asked to write down the ID numbers of up to five classmates they would not sit by (“Who would you NOT want to sit by? Here, you may write down no more than five ID numbers”). From this question, the peer-reported index of social exclusion was computed by counting

how many times each participant was listed by other classmates. The score indicated the number of people who would not sit by each of the participants. The index ranged from 0 to 23, with higher scores indicating a more pervasive exclusion by participants' classmates.

Outcomes: Resignation stage. The questionnaires measured only two (depression and unworthiness) out of the four outcomes associated with the resignation stage (alienation and helplessness were not measured). However, res past research (Riva et al., 2016) showed that responses to the four outcomes are usually highly related. Therefore, an index of resignation stage was computed by averaging the available two single-items measuring depression and unworthiness ("I feel depressed"; "I feel worthless"). The index showed sufficient internal consistency ($r = .58, p < .001$) and higher scores indicated higher levels of resignation (range = 1-4).

Outcomes: Life satisfaction. An index of life satisfaction was measured with a single, self-reported item ("On a scale from 1 to 10 where 1 is very unsatisfied, and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with your life in general?"). The response scale ranged from 1 to 10, with a higher score indicating higher life satisfaction.

Moderators: Social connections. Participants responded to two series of items measuring the frequency of intergroup social connections in the school and the neighborhood. Participants rated how often they spent time with people from different ethnic groups, and the reference groups varied across the survey countries based on the ethnic composition of the survey societies⁴. The items were aggregated in two indices: (1) social connections with native people from the survey country and (2) social connections with other immigrants in the survey country. The two scales ranged from 1 to 5, and higher scores indicated more frequent connections with native and immigrant people. As in Study 1, a delta score assessing the prevalence of native social connections over immigrant social connections was computed subtracting the index of

⁴ English participants responded to eight questions (four for connections at school and the four for those in their neighborhoods), rating how often they spent time with people from Asian, Black, and White British backgrounds and general *other* ethnic backgrounds. Swedish participants responded to questions that referred to Swedish and foreign people. German participants responded to items that referred to people from German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Turkish, and *other* backgrounds. Finally, in the Netherlands, participants answered questions that referred to people from Dutch, Moroccan, Surinamese/Antillean, Turkish, and *other* backgrounds.

immigrant social connections from the index of native social connections. The delta score ranged from -4 to 4. Scores above zero indicated a higher prevalence of native over immigrant connections, whereas scores below zero indicated a higher prevalence of connections with immigrants. A score equal to zero indicated that participants' social connections with native people occurred with the same frequency as connections with other immigrants.

Results

Correlation analysis (Table 3) showed a negative association between life satisfaction and the resignation stage. As expected, levels of the peer-reported social exclusion were associated with lower levels of life satisfaction, and although only marginally, positively linked with the resignation stage. Also, those with higher connections with other immigrants were less rejected by other students, whereas those with prevailing connections with natives over other immigrants were more rejected by their classmates and presented higher resignation. Social connections, regardless of the group membership, were positively associated with life satisfaction, whereas exclusively social connections with other immigrants were associated with lower resignation. The mean of the delta score, social connections with the native population, and with other immigrants suggested that participants had more frequent social connections with the natives than with other immigrants ($|t|(3513) = 5.83, p < .001$).

Table 3. Mean (standard deviation) and correlation of the variables of Study 2.

Variables	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Resignation stage	1.85 (0.78)					
2. Life satisfaction	7.62 (2.17)	-.45***	-			
3. Peer-reported social exclusion	2.41 (2.84)	.05 ⁺	-.07**	-		
4. Social connections with natives	3.47 (1.19)	.01	.06**	.03	-	
5. Social connections with immigrants	3.24 (1.15)	-.09***	.09***	-.06*	.12***	-
6. Delta score	0.23 (1.55)	.07***	-.02	.06*	.68***	-.65***

⁺ $p = .08$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Moderation analyses

Two series of multiple moderated regression models aimed at investigating: (1) how social connections with the native population and with other immigrants moderated the relationship between peer-reported social exclusion and (a) the self-reported resignation stage, and (b) life satisfaction; (2) how the prevalence of social connections with the native population over other immigrants moderated the associations between exclusion and (a) resignation, and (b) life satisfaction. Table 4 reports the regression models controlling for the effect of the countries, gender, age, length of stay in the country.

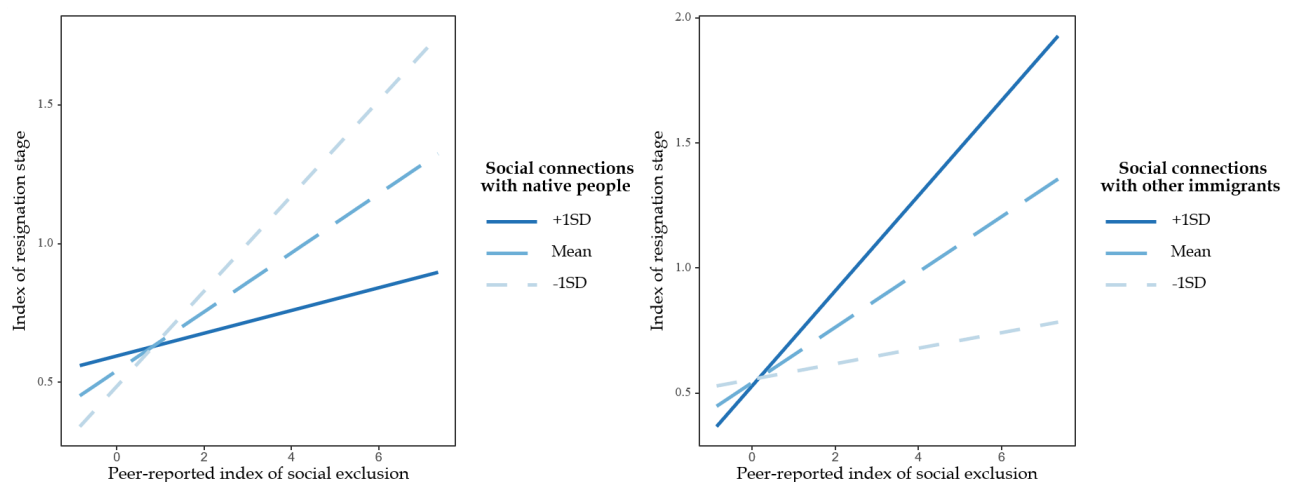
Table 4. How intergroup social connections moderate the relationship between perceived social exclusion and a) the resignation stage and b) life satisfaction

	a) Resignation stage			b) Life satisfaction		
	β	<i>se</i>	η_p^2	β	<i>se</i>	η_p^2
Model 1						
Intercept	.66	.56		-1.14	.55*	
Peer-reported social exclusion	.11	.03***	.013	-.12	.03***	.015
Social connections with native people	.05	.03		.01	.03	
Social connections with other immigrants	-.01	.03		.02	.03	
Social exclusion x social connections with native people	-.07	.03*	.004	.05	.03	
Social exclusion x social connections with other immigrants	.08	.03**	.11	-.06	.03*	.003
Length of stay in the country	-.06	.03*	.003	.02	.03	
Gender (male)	-.46	.05***	.056	.35	.05***	.035
Age	-.01	.04		.02	.04	
Country - Germany	-.09	.08		.12	.08	
Country - Netherlands	-.46	.09***	.05	.37	.09***	.033
Country - Sweden	-.54	.08***		.46	.08***	
Adjusted R ²		.11			.07	
F(<i>dfn</i> , <i>dfd</i>)		14.46 (11, 1249) ***			9.89 (11, 1245)***	
Model 2						
Intercept	.66	.56		-1.15	.55*	
Peer-reported social exclusion	.11	.03***	.013	-.12	.03***	.015
Delta score	.05	.03		.00	.03	
Social exclusion x Delta score	-.10	.03***	.012	.07	.03**	.007
Length of stay in the country	-.06	.03*	.003	.05	.03	
Gender (male)	-.46	.05***	.055	.36	.05***	.036
Age	-.01	.08		.05	.04	
Country - Germany	-.09	.08		.13	.08	
Country - Netherlands	-.46	.09***	.048	.36	.09***	.037
Country - Sweden	-.51	.08***		.49	.08***	
Adjusted R ²		.11			.07	
F(<i>dfn</i> , <i>dfd</i>)		17.55 (9, 1251) ***			12.01 (9, 1247) ***	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

In the model (1a), social connections with the native population and with other immigrants significantly moderated the relation between exclusion and resignation, in the same direction as in Study 1. Simple slopes analysis showed that for increasing social connections with natives, participants presented a decreasing association between exclusion and resignation (+1 SD: $\beta = 0.04$, SE = 0.04, $t = 1.15$, $p = .25$; mean: $\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.03, $t = 3.85$, $p < .001$; -1 SD: $\beta = 0.17$, SE = 0.04, $t = 4.04$, $p < .001$). By contrast, increasing connections with other immigrants led to a stronger exclusion-resignation association (+1 SD: $\beta = 0.19$, SE = 0.04, $t = 4.50$, $p < .001$; mean: $\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.03, $t = 3.99$, $p < .001$; -1 SD: $\beta = 0.03$, SE = 0.04, $t = 0.88$, $p = .38$) (Figure 6). Jhonson-Neyman interval showed that the effect of exclusion on resignation became significant for standardized values of connections with the natives below 0.70, and connections with other immigrants above -0.65.

Figure 6. Intergroup connections moderate the relationship between peer-reported exclusion and resignation

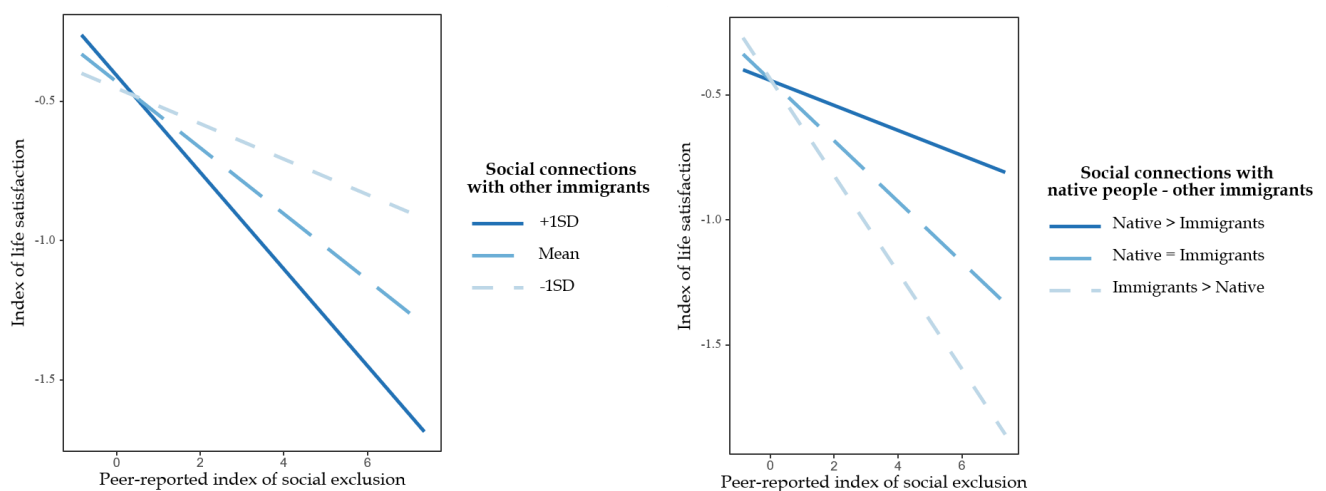


The model (2a) showed a significant effect of the *delta* moderator. Simple slopes analysis confirmed that when the social connections with natives prevailed over social connections with other immigrants, exclusion was no longer associated with resignation ($\beta = 0.02$, SE = 0.03, $t = 0.50$, $p = .62$). By contrast, when social connections with other immigrants occurred with the same frequency of social connections with the native population ($\beta = 0.11$, SE = 0.03, $t = 4.00$, $p < .001$) exclusion was increasingly associated with resignation. This relationship became even stronger when social

connections with other immigrants prevailed over social connections with the native population ($\beta = 0.21$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = 4.95$, $p < .001$). The Jhonson-Neyman interval supported that the exclusion predicted resignation when the delta score was lower than 0.59 (*i.e.*, when connections with other immigrants equaled or prevailed those with the natives).

The model testing the influences of native and immigrant social connections on the link between peer-reported exclusion and self-reported life satisfaction (1b) showed that only the social connections with other immigrants moderate the link between exclusion and life-satisfaction. The effect of connections with the native population, even if in the expected direction, was only marginally significant ($p = .055$). Simple slopes analysis revealed that more excluded participants presented greater score on resignation for increasing social connection with other immigrants (+1 SD: $\beta = -0.17$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = -4.16$, $p < .001$; mean: $\beta = -0.12$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = -4.29$, $p < .001$; -1 SD: $\beta = -0.06$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = -1.78$, $p = .07$). Finally, the model 2b showed a significant moderation effect of the delta score (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Connections with other immigrants and the delta score moderated the relationship between peer-reported exclusion and life satisfaction



Simple slopes analysis showed a negative and significant relationship between exclusion and life satisfaction for those participants whose social connections with other immigrants were as frequent as those with the native population ($\beta = -0.12$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = -4.39$, $p < .001$). The strength of this relationship increased when social

connections with other immigrants prevailed over those with natives ($\beta = -0.19$, $SE = 0.04$, $t = -4.71$, $p < .001$). By contrast, life satisfaction was no longer affected by social exclusion when participants' social connections were more frequent with native people than with other immigrants ($\beta = -0.05$, $SE = 0.03$, $t = -1.51$, $p = .13$). Indeed, the negative effect of social exclusion on life satisfaction was significant for standardized values of the delta score below 0.85 (*i.e.*, when social connections with other immigrants equaled or prevailed over the natives).

Discussion

Study 2 replicated and extended the findings of the first study presented. The findings confirmed the pattern of preliminary results discovered in Study 1, showing that social connections with native people protected mental health from the negative consequences of social exclusion, whereas, oppositely, social connections with other ethnic minorities aggravated the health repercussions of exclusion. The pattern on results were not only replicated but also extended and pushed further given that they were confirmed in a much larger sample, with different demographics characteristics, on two different concurrent health indicators (*i.e.*, resignation and life satisfaction) and using a peer-reported indicator of social exclusion, therefore overcoming the conceptual and methodological limitation of the overlap between perceived and objective social exclusion.

Following Sakaluk's (2016) "exploring small, confirming big" approach to replicable psychological science, the replication of the results in two different immigrant populations conferred additional conceptual strength and methodological reliability to the pattern of results preliminary found in Study 1. Given the diverse demographic characteristics of the samples, the findings could suggest that immigrants' intergroup connections could moderate the impact of social exclusion, also considering different types of exclusionary threats. Indeed, asylum seekers might primarily experience social exclusion due to the relocation stressors such as the exclusionary threat derived from the pending of their legal condition (Ager & Strang, 2008), the multiple losses (Bennett et al., 1997) that, besides the employment and financial difficulties (Lipson, 1991), can contribute to creating a sense of exclusion and uprootedness. Differently, immigrant adolescents in the school settings are more likely

to experience social exclusion related to victimization and bullying by their peers (Vieno et al., 2009) and isolation due to low social integration (Zeitlin-Ophir et al., 2004).

While confirming and strengthening the results on the moderating role of intergroup connections, Study 2 presented some limitations that need to be addressed in future studies. Even though it was reasonable to assume that peer-exclusion occurred persistently in time and pervasively in different situations, nor the peer-reported index used or the cross-sectional methodology could directly inform about the long-term impact of chronic social exclusion. Moreover, despite the peer-reported index, the cross-sectional methodology did not consent to rule out the alternative explanation of the findings that those who presented prior levels of resignation were most likely to be excluded by their peers. The following Study 3 and 4 of this chapter, adopting a longitudinal methodology aimed at directly addressing these issues.

Study 3⁵-

Identifying the temporal framework of the chronicity of social exclusion and its long-term health implications

The two studies presented so far provided early evidence reasonably suggesting that chronic social exclusion could reasonably induce the resignation stage in the long-term. Study 1 showed that daily feelings of social exclusion in chronically marginalized social groups (*i.e.*, asylum-seekers) were positively associated with the outcomes of the resignation stage. Convergingly, in Study 2, the objective exclusion in the school context, as reported by the excluding classmates, had a negative health impact on first-generation immigrant adolescents, victims of their peers' exclusion. If, on the one hand, these findings provide strong empirical support of Williams' (2009) theoretical assumption that chronic exclusion leads to the resignation stage, on the other, the two studies presented cross-sectional results. The cross-sectional methodology did not allow to claim for causal evidence that chronic social exclusion provoked resignation without ruling out the opposite alternative explanation that participants with baseline resignation were more likely to feel excluded in their lives or be excluded by their peers. In addition, the cross-sectional methodology did not allow the investigation of the time interval required for persistent exclusion to be perceived as chronic or to display its long-term health implication. Therefore, clear evidence of the univocal causal role of chronic social exclusion in provoking the resignation stage and insights about the temporal framework of the chronicity of social exclusion and of its long-term impact are still lacking. Study 3 aimed at filling this gap.

The present study tested the causal assertion that the chronicity of social exclusion leads to the resignation stage (Williams, 2009). To do so, it applied a three-wave longitudinal design with a three-month interval between each wave that allowed studying the reciprocal relationships between social exclusion and the resignation stage for an overall time interval of six months. In details, conducting a series of cross-

⁵ The study is an extract of Marinucci, M., & Riva, P. (2020b). Surrendering to social emptiness: Chronic social exclusion longitudinally predicts resignation in asylum seekers. *British Journal of Social Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12410>.

lagged panel models, the study aimed to 1) test the causal prediction that perceived chronic social exclusion leads to resignation over time (controlling for the potential reciprocal effect that resignation could exert on the later perception of social exclusion) and 2) study the time onset of the resignation stage.

The three-waves longitudinal study built on Study 1, which was based on the first wave of the longitudinal project.

Method

Participants

The participants at the first wave of data collections were the same as those described in the participant section of Study 1, presented above (p. 59). Each of the waves of data collection occurred approximately after a three-month interval ($\text{lag}_{\text{Wave1-2}}=100.66$ days, $SD=9.79$, $\text{lag}_{\text{Wave2-3}}=102.16$ days, $SD=6.75$). In all, of the 112 participants at Wave 1, 89 (79.46%) participated at Wave 2, and 70 (62.5%) at Wave 3. Different from Study 1, participants who already hold the status of international protection were not excluded, given that their exclusion would lead to a severe decline in the participants' number across the waves that would also compromise the sensitivity and reliability of the statistical analyses. Indeed, in wave 2, participants with international protection were 25.3% of the sample ($n = 22$), and in wave 3 the 17.1% ($n = 12$). Therefore, the study overall considered the social group of asylum-seekers and refugees.

Measures

The study considered the same measure of self-reported social exclusion and the resignation stage, as well as the same sociodemographic indicators described in the measures of Study 1 (pp. 60-61). Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables and the correlations between them across the waves.

Statistical analyses

I conducted a series of Cross-Lagged Panel Models (CLPMs) within a SEM approach that allowed the comparison of the different models using *RStudio* (RStudio Team, 2016) and the package “lavaan” (Rosseel, 2012). Missing data were handled using the *full-information maximum likelihood* estimation that provides a more reliable estimation than traditional approaches (Schafer & Graham, 2002). No data were

excluded from the analyses. Because of non-normality, robust “Huber-White” standard error was used (Freedman, 2006).

Table 5. Mean (standard deviation) and correlations of the variables.

Variables	<i>M (SD)</i>	Reliability	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Wave 1</i>							
1. Exclusion	1.86 (1.27)	$r = .75^*$	-				
2. Resignation	2.16 (0.55)	$\alpha = .82$	.58*	-			
<i>Wave 2</i>							
3. Exclusion	1.57 (0.85)	$r = .57^*$	.08	.40*	-		
4. Resignation	1.66 (1.05)	$\alpha = .87$	.11	.49*	.55*	-	
<i>Wave 3</i>							
5. Exclusion	1.66 (1.05)	$r = .73^*$	.21	.17	.49*	.39*	-
6. Resignation	1.96 (0.52)	$\alpha = .88$	.40*	.52*	.51*	.68*	.66*

Note. * $p < .01$. α = Cronbach’s alpha; r = Pearson’s correlation coefficients.

CLPM is a widely used statistical technique that can “lend support to a causal claim” because of the temporal order of the variables considered. (Selig & Little, 2012, p. 271). The CLPMs allowed testing the effect from previous perceived social exclusion to future resignation while considering a) the reverse paths from previous levels of resignation to future perceptions of chronic exclusion, b) the autoregressive paths, and c) covariation between exclusion and resignation (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). The autoregressive paths, the forward, and the reciprocal causation cross-lagged paths were specified between Wave1 and Wave2/Wave3 and between Wave2 and Wave3 (Finkel, 1995; Reitz et al., 2016; Reitz et al., 2015). This full specification of the model allowed comprehensively studying the development of the relationship between exclusion and resignation, focusing both on the short- and long-term cross-lagged effects (Hawkey et al., 2010; see also Konradt & Eckardt, 2016). I started performing a) a baseline model specifying the autoregressive and correlation paths, then proceeded to compare the baseline model with larger models additionally estimating b) the forward causation paths (i.e., perceived exclusion predicts future resignation), c) the reverse causation paths (i.e., resignation predicts future perceived exclusion), and d) the reciprocal causation paths. After the identification of the best fitting model,

progressively nested models with equality constraints were tested to identify the best fitting and most parsimonious model. Model fit was assessed comparing the RMSEA (acceptable below 0.08), the CFI (acceptable above 0.90), the SRMR (acceptable below 0.07), and the chi-square difference test (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh et al., 2005). Finally, to ensure an adequate sample size – categorized as *medium* by Kline’s (2005) $N \geq 100$ guideline –, the final statistical model selected met the rule-of-thumb setting the minimum ratio observations/parameters to 5 (Bentler & Chou, 1987; Kline, 2011).

Results

Table 6 shows the goodness of fit of the CLPMs tested and the model comparison. Overall, the forward (b) and the reverse causation (c) models showed a better fit than the baseline model (a), and the just-identified reciprocal causation model (d) had the best fit. These results indicated that the perception of chronic social exclusion and resignation reciprocally influenced each other over time. From model (d), we tested additional models progressively adding equality constraints to identify the most parsimonious and best-fitting model. Results led to the identification of model (i) that showed a good fit according to all the indicators. In model (i), non-significant paths were constrained to zero, and the autoregressive resignation paths, as well as the exclusion-causation paths, were constrained to be equal (Figure 8).

The final model highlighted a complex relationship between perceived chronic exclusion and the resignation stage, whose reciprocal influence over time varied across the two time-lags. The two constructs also differed in their stationarity. As highlighted in the model comparison (f vs. e), the resignation stage was stable in both the time-lags. Differently, social exclusion became stable in the long-run. Exclusion at six months (Wave 3) was predicted by exclusion at the first measurement (Wave 1) and after three months (Wave 2), whereas exclusion at the first measurement (Wave 1) did not influence the perception of exclusion at three months (Wave 2). These results suggest that the most appropriate time frame to consider chronic experiences of social exclusion is six months. According to our data, six months seems to be the time interval required for recurring episodes of ostracism and rejection to be perceived as chronic and stable over time. Considering that exclusion at Wave 1 did not predict exclusion at Wave 2, a time-frame of three months did not seem to be sufficiently long for

individuals to perceive the occurring social exclusion as stable – hence chronic – over time.

Table 6. Goodness of fit of the tested models and comparisons

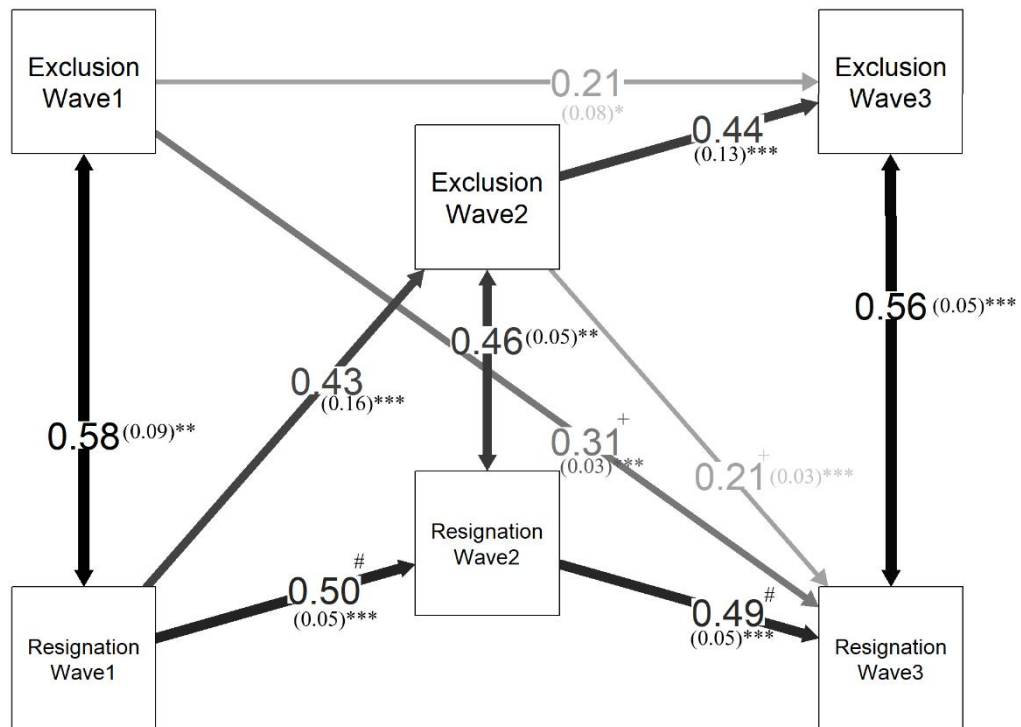
	χ^2	<i>df</i> (nfp)	CFI	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI	SRMR	Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$ (Δdf)
a) baseline model	25.62***	6 (21)	0.88	0.17	[0.11, 0.23]	0.16	-	-
b) forward causation	16.37***	3 (24)	0.92	0.20	[0.12, 0.29]	0.12	a vs. b	9.72* (3)
c) reverse causation	10.79**	3 (24)	0.95	0.15	[0.07, 0.24]	0.05	a vs. c	14.85** (3)
d) reciprocal causation ¹	0	0 (27)	1.00	0	-	0	a vs. d	25.62** * (3)
							b vs. d	16.37** * (3)
							c vs. d	10.79** (3)
e) reciprocal causation ²	7.88	5 (22)	0.98	0.07	[0.00, 0.15]	0.05	e vs. d	7.88 (5)
f) reciprocal causation ³	8.89	6 (21)	0.98	0.07	[0.00, 0.14]	0.04	f vs. e	0.67 (1)
g) reciprocal causation ⁴	14.19*	7 (20)	0.96	0.10	[0.02, 0.16]	0.08	g vs. f	5.34* (1)
h) reciprocal causation ⁵	16.84*	8 (19)	0.95	0.10	[0.04, 0.16]	0.10	h vs. f	7.19* (2)
i) reciprocal causation ⁶	8.58	7 (20)	0.99	0.05	[0.00, 0.12]	0.05	i vs. f	0.23 (1)

Note. *** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$. Letters in bold indicate the better fitting models. ¹ Just-identified model. ² Non-significant paths constrained to zero. ³ Resignation autoregressive paths constrained to be equal. ⁴ Exclusion autoregressive paths constrained to be equal. ⁵ Correlation (Wave1) and residuals covariance (Wave2/Wave3) constrained to be equal. ⁶ Exclusion forwards causation paths constrained to be equal.

This pattern of results is similar to the cross-lagged paths highlighting the relation between early exclusion on later resignation. After controlling for autoregressive paths, exclusion at the first measurement (Wave 1) and after three

months (Wave 2) predicted resignation at six months (Wave 3), whereas resignation at three months (Wave 2) was not influenced by previous exclusion (Wave 1).

Figure 8. Standardized coefficients (standard errors) of the cross-lagged panel model (i) analyzing the longitudinal relationship between perceived chronic exclusion and resignation stage.



Note. *** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05. Coefficients with identical superscripts indicate equality constraints. Non-significant paths constrained to zero are not depicted.

These results can indicate that the development of the resignation stage originated from persistent social exclusion occurred in a six-month interval. Accordingly, the non-significant path from baseline exclusion to three-month resignation would indicate that an initial time-lag of three months may be insufficient for the negative consequences of social exclusion to stably develop. Instead, social exclusion would influence the development of the resignation stage in six months, when the final resignation level (Wave 3) would depend on the exclusion perceived during the previous three and six months.

Regarding the reverse causation path (from the previous resignation to the future perception of exclusion), results showed that only the baseline levels of resignation influenced in the short-term (in the three months between Wave 1 and Wave 2) the perception of social exclusion, whereas the perception of social exclusion

at six months was predicted neither by baseline nor by three-months preceding resignation. These results can indicate that, at three months, baseline resignation can still influence the perception of social exclusion; differently, when at six months the perception of social exclusion had become chronic, it mainly derived from previous perceptions of exclusion whereas the influence of early resignation becomes no more detectable.

To sum up, results indicated a reciprocal predictive influence between perceived social exclusion and resignation, but, whereas the reverse effect of resignation on the future perception of exclusion occurred in the first three-month lag – as a short-term cross-lagged effect –, the impact of exclusion on future resignation as well as the perception of chronicity of the exclusion developed in six months as a long-term effect.

Discussion

The first main contribution of the present findings is that those can be considered as the very first clear, empirical, and causal evidence supporting the so far only theoretical assumption that chronic social exclusion leads to resignation (Williams, 2009). Indeed, previous studies have only spoken about the long-lasting sting of acute rejection episodes (e.g., Martin et al., 2018). Although, as recommended by Selig and Little (2012), arguments favoring causal relationships based on cross-lagged panel analyses should be drawn with care, the present findings are strengthened and supported by their conjunction with a) converging and independent theoretical predictions from the main psychosocial models on interpersonal devaluation—pointing at psychological and behavioral withdrawal as the direct outcome of chronic exclusion (Williams, 2009; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009)—b) qualitative (Zadro, 2004), and quasi-experimental (Riva et al., 2017; Aureli et al., 2020) preliminary evidence of the exclusion-resignation link, and c) converging results coming from conceptually related scientific fields. Relatedly, Van Zalk and Smith (2019), surveying a group of long-term homeless people, found that perceived ostracism was associated with Williams' (2009) need-threat. Additionally, the sociometric literature on school-aged children and adolescents showed that chronic peer rejection longitudinally predicted depressive symptoms, social withdrawal, and

anxiety in later stages of life (e.g., Prinstein & Aikins, 2004; Ollendick et al., 1992). Also, the literature from discrimination highlighted the negative long-term implications for psychological health and well-being that these instances of relational devaluation can have in different contexts (Schmitt et al., 2014; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009), such as gender-based workplace discrimination (Pavalko et al., 2003), the stigma experiences of people with mental illness (Ilic et al., 2013), ethnic-based discrimination in school (Benner & Kim, 2009), and everyday personal discrimination in an urban context (Schulz et al., 2006). Thus, although the present findings do not allow us to make a conclusive claim of causal evidence, their alignment with theoretical models, preliminary evidence, and convergent results from related fields support the argument in favor of a causal exclusion-resignation link.

The second point of strength is that the present findings identified six months as the interval that persistent episodes of social exclusion require to be perceived as chronic and to influence the onset of the resignation stage. To date, this is the first study that has tried to investigate the temporal development of the chronicity of social exclusion, setting the criterion defining how long instances of social exclusion must last to be perceived as chronic and stable and to display their negative implications on individuals' psychological well-being as six months. However, these results must be considered with care, and further studies are needed to confirm or challenge the timeframe identified. Indeed, the six-month criterion proposed as the temporal development of the resignation stage and the perception of chronicity of social exclusion may be specific for the life condition and experience of asylum-seeking immigrants, and future research should test whether the causal exclusion-resignation link and its temporal development can be replicated in the general population as well as in other marginalized social groups. From these findings and limitations, future studies should try to identify the individual, social, and situational variables that can moderate the time-frame of the development of the resignation stage, focusing on both protective factors counteracting the development of the resignation stage and risk factors accelerating its onset. The following Study 4 moves towards this future direction.

Study 4 -

Intergroup social connections longitudinally moderate the long-term development of the resignation stage

Study 4 aimed at testing the role of social connections with the majority group and with other immigrant minorities in moderating over time the longitudinal relationship between social exclusion and resignation. The objectives of this study importantly built on the findings presented so far. Indeed, Study 1 preliminary showed the crucial role that intergroup connections can have in influencing the development of the resignation stage, and Study 2 replicated the results in a larger and more diverse sample using objective indicators of social exclusion. Also, Study 3 showed that social exclusion causally predicted the resignation stage over a timeframe of six months. However, the evidence on the moderating role of intergroup connections provided was only cross-sectional, and the question regarding their causal influence on the longitudinal development of the resignation stage due to chronic exclusion remains still unanswered.

Taking into account all these considerations, the present Study 4 longitudinally tested how the development over time of intergroup social connections affected the causal influence of social exclusion on the onset of the resignation stage in a temporal interval of six months. In detail, the hypotheses tested were that an increasing development over time of social connections with Italians would protect from the long-term onset of resignation as longitudinally predicted by social exclusion. Conversely, increasing connections with other immigrants would exacerbate the longitudinal development of resignation due to persistent exclusion. To account for simultaneous connections with Italians and other immigrants, the study further tested how the prevalence of increasing connections over time with Italians over other immigrants moderated the longitudinal exclusion-resignation prediction. The same longitudinal dataset of Study 3 was used to answer the research questions.

Method

Participants

See the participants section of Study 3 (p. 77).

Measures

Predictor. The self-reported index of social exclusion was used as main predictor of the study. In addition, to control for the auto-regressive effect of resignation from Time 1 to 3, the self-reported index of resignation from Study 1 was used (see the measures section of Study 1 for details on the variables; p. 60-61)

Outcome. The self-reported index of Resignation at Time 3 was used as the outcome of the study (see table 5 and the measures section of Study 3; p. 77).

Moderators. Social connections with Italians and other immigrants measured at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3 were the moderators of the study. Additional information on how the variables were measured can be found in the measures section of Study 1 (p. 60-61). The same measuring procedure was applied in all the time points, for both social connections with Italians (Wave1: $M=12.41$, $SD=13.49$; Wave2: $M=14.32$, $SD=13.61$; Wave3: $M=17.58$, $SD=13.74$) and with other immigrants (Wave1: $M=17.88$, $SD=14.78$; Wave2: $M=20.57$, $SD=14.81$; Wave3: $M=23.79$, $SD=14.27$). Higher scores on the indices indicated more numerous and closer connections with the two groups. Table 7 reports correlations between the measures.

Table 7. Correlations between measures of Study 4.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Social exclusion (time 1)	-							
2. Resignation (time 1)	.584***	-						
3. Connections with Italians (time 1)	-.190	-.144	-					
4. Connections with migrants (time 1)	-.064	-.032	.639***	-				
5. Connections with Italians (time 2)	-.066	-.226*	.512***	.486***	-			
6. Connections with migrants (time 2)	-.073	-.316**	.424***	.452***	.689***	-		
7. Connections with Italians (time 3)	-.272*	-.249*	.461***	.410**	.587***	.396**	-	
8. Connections with migrants (time 3)	-.123	-.275*	.335**	.394**	.374**	.567***	.628***	-
9. Resignation (time 3)	.397***	.518***	-.178	-.186	-.338**	-.262*	-.307*	-.067

Note. * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Statistical Analyses

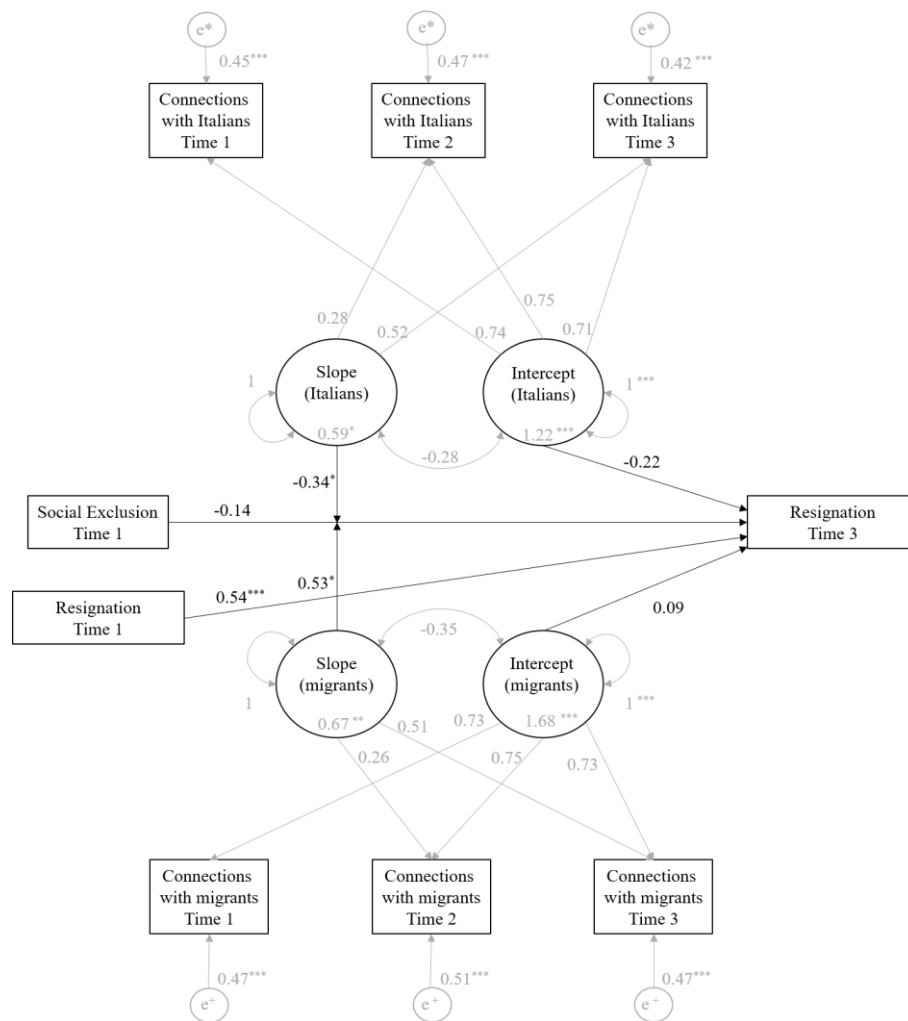
The statistical analyses were conducted within the SEM approach. The *full information maximum likelihood* estimation was applied to compensate for missingness in the data due to participants' drop out over time (Schafer & Graham, 2002). At first, I performed two latent-growth curve models (LGCMs) separately assessing the developmental growth rate of social connections with Italians and other immigrants. Then, I conducted two path-analyses assessing the moderating role of a) the growth rate of connections with Italians and other immigrants, and b) the increasing prevalence of connections with Italians *over* other immigrants on the longitudinal relation between time 1 exclusion and time 3 resignation. Based on the findings from Study 3 identifying the time frame of the chronicity of social exclusion and of its long-term impact in six months, the measures of social exclusion and resignation from Time 2 were omitted in the present analyses. Model-fit was assessed using the RMSEA (acceptable below 0.08), the TLI and CFI (acceptable above 0.90), and the SRMR (acceptable below 0.07). To ensure adequate statistical power, the described models were conducted separately. In doing so, I could present statistical models whose ratio observation/parameters were never below the less restrictive cut off of 5 (LGCs = 18.3; path models = 11, 7), thus meeting the recommended rule-of-thumb (Kline, 2011; Bentler & Chou, 1987). The statistical analyses were conducted with the package "lavaan" (Rosseel, 2012) using RStudio (RStudio Team, 2016).

Results

At first, two latent-growth curve models were separately estimated to assess the longitudinal trajectory of social connections with Italians and other immigrants. In both the LGCMs, the latent intercept (the loadings of the variables at each time-point were fixed at 1), the latent linear slope (the three variables for the three time-points were fixed at 0, 1, and 2, respectively), their related means and variances, and the correlation between the latent factors were specified. Error variances were constrained to be equal across time. Both the models showed excellent fit (Connections with Italians: $N = 112$; $\chi^2(3)=0.82$, $p = 0.84$; RMSEA = 0.00, 90%CI[0.00 0.09]; SRMR = 0.03; CFI =1.00, TLI = 1.04; Connections with other immigrants: $N = 112$; $\chi^2(3)=1.78$, $p = 0.62$; RMSEA = 0.00, 90%CI[0.00 0.13]; SRMR = 0.04; CFI =1.00, TLI = 1.03). Results showed

that on average social connections with Italians at time 1 differed from zero and significantly varied between participants (unstandardized coefficients: $M_{\text{intercept}} = 12.12, p < .001$; $\sigma^2_{\text{intercept}} = 98.11, p < .001$). Social connections with Italians significantly increased over time with the growth rate being constant between participants (unstandardized coefficients: $M_{\text{slope}} = 2.12, p = 0.01$; $\sigma^2_{\text{slope}} = 13.10, p = .279$). LGC analysis on social connections with other immigrants yielded similar results. On average, immigrants' social connections at time 1 significantly different from zero and between participants (unstandardized coefficients: $M_{\text{intercept}} = 18.00, p < .001$; $\sigma^2_{\text{intercept}} = 114.54, p < .001$), and they increased over time with a stable growth rate across participants (unstandardized coefficients: $M_{\text{slope}} = 2.50, p < 0.01$; $\sigma^2_{\text{slope}} = 13.86, p = .321$).

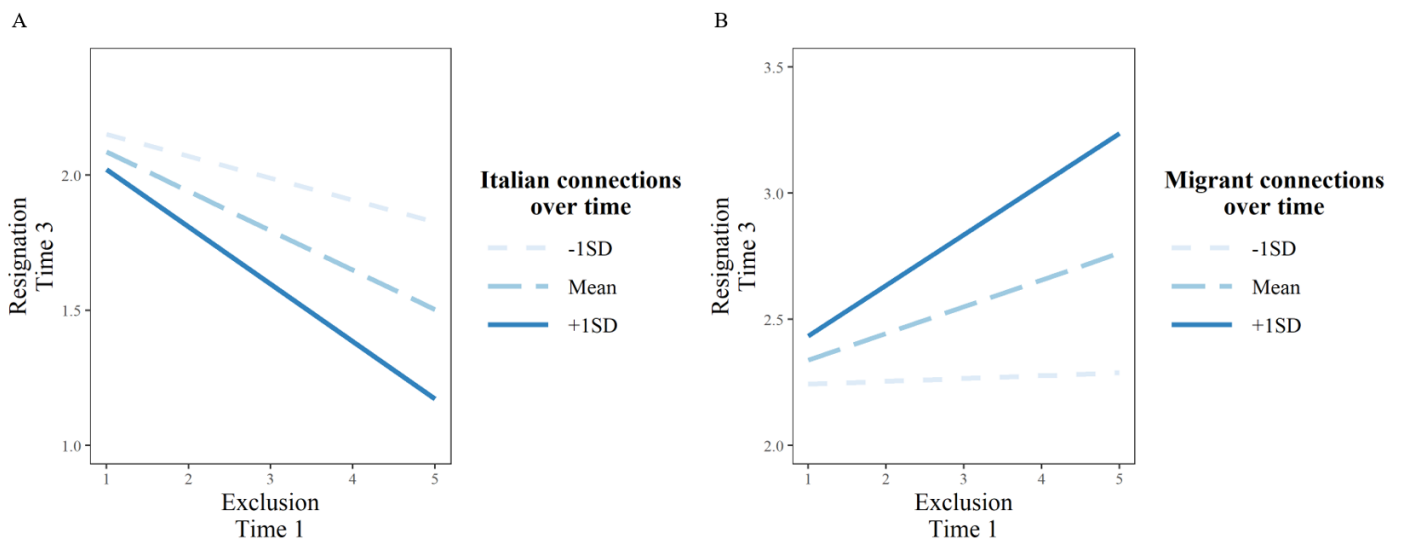
Figure 9. Aggregated representation of the LGCMs and model (a)



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Standardized coefficients. Identical superscripts indicate equality constraints.

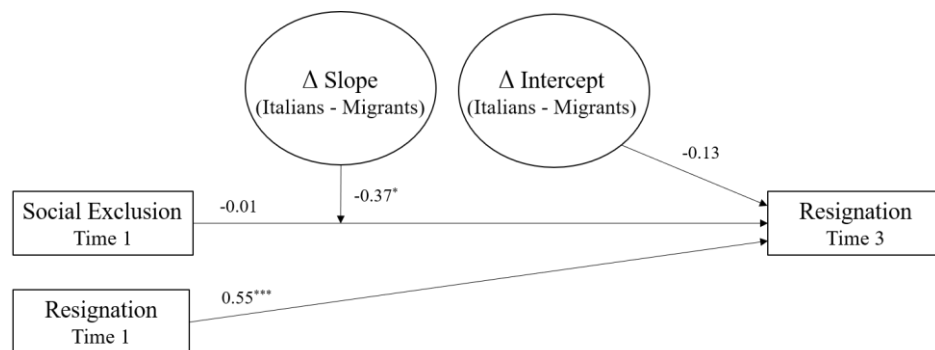
Then, a path analysis (model a) estimated the effects of exclusion at time 1, the two latent linear slopes of the trajectories of connections with Italians and other immigrants and their interaction terms with exclusion on resignation at time 3, controlling for the time 1 baseline levels of resignation and connections with Italian and other immigrants (latent intercepts of the LGCMs). Figure 9 depicts the aggregated LGCMs and model (a) reporting the standardized coefficients. The model explained 41.2% of the variance of resignation at time 3, and the moderation of both the trajectories of connections with Italians ($\beta = -.34, p = .044$) and with other immigrants ($\beta = .53, p = .013$) on the longitudinal relation between exclusion and resignation were statistically significant. Simple slope analyses revealed that social exclusion at time 1 decreasingly predicted resignation at time 3 for increasing growth rate over time of social connections with Italians (+1SD = 3.63: $b = -0.212, 95\%CI[-0.408 -0.016], p = .034$; Mean = 2.12: $b = -0.146, 95\%CI[-0.310 0.017], p = .079$; -1SD = 0.61: $b = -0.081, 95\%CI[-0.234 0.072], p = .300$; see Figure 10A). Oppositely, social exclusion at time 1 more strongly predicted resignation at time 3 for increasing growth rate of connections with other immigrants (+1SD = 3.99: $b = 0.201, 95\%CI[0.061 0.342], p = .005$; Mean = 2.50: $b = 0.106, 95\%CI[-0.004 0.216], p = .058$; -1SD = 1.01: $b = 0.011, 95\%CI[-0.113 0.135], p = .865$; see Figure 10B).

Figure 10. Intergroup connections over time moderated the longitudinal relation between exclusion and resignation



To test the role of the prevalence over time of connections with Italians *over* other immigrants, I computed two delta scores. The delta score of the slope factors was computed by subtracting the growth rate of connections with other immigrants from the growth rate of connections with Italians. In this way, scores on the delta slope greater than zero indicated that participants connections with Italians prevailed over time on those with other immigrants; scores lower than zero indicated that the development of connections with other immigrants prevailed over those with Italians; scores equal to zero indicated an equal developmental rate of connections with Italians and other immigrants ($M_{\Delta Slope} = -0.38$; $SD_{\Delta Slope} = 1.52$). Similarly, I computed a delta intercept score measuring the prevalence of connections with Italians over other immigrants at time 1 ($M_{\Delta Intercept} = -5.88$; $SD_{\Delta Intercept} = 6.30$). Lastly, I conducted an additional path analysis (model b) considering the $\Delta Slope$ as moderator of the relationship between exclusion at time 1 and resignation at time 3, controlling for resignation at time 1 and the $\Delta Intercept$ (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Model (b)

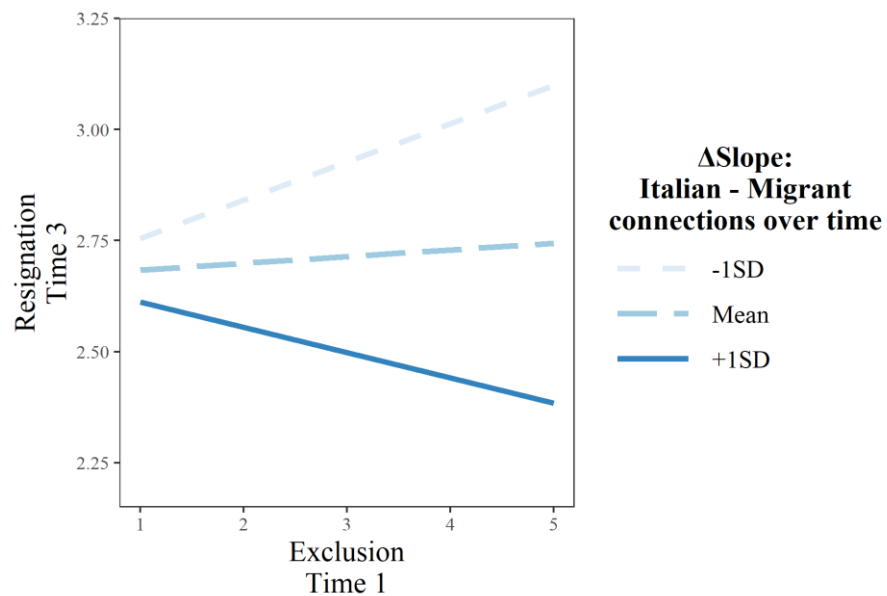


Note. * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$. Standardized coefficients.

The model (b) explained 38.8% of time 3 resignation variance, showing a significant moderation effect of the $\Delta Slope$ ($\beta = -0.37$, $p = .013$). Simple slope analysis showed that social exclusion tended to positively predict resignation over time for immigrants whose connections with other immigrants prevailed over time over those with Italians ($-1SD = -1.90$: $b = 0.09$, $95\%CI[-0.01 \ 0.18]$, $p = .078$), and for those with an equal growth rate of connections with Italians and immigrants (Mean = -0.38 : $b = 0.02$, $95\%CI[-0.08 \ 0.11]$, $p = .756$). Oppositely, social exclusion tended to negatively predict

resignation at time 3 for those with increasing prevalence of connections with Italians over other immigrants (+1SD = 1.14: $b = -0.06$, 95%CI[-0.18 0.06], $p = .354$; see figure 12).

Figure 12. The prevalence of Italian over immigrant connections over time moderated the longitudinal relation between exclusion and resignation



Discussion

Study 4 provided longitudinal evidence that the onset of the resignation stage, theoretically considered as the sole and inescapable consequence of persistent social exclusion (Williams, 2009), can be prevented or aggravated by intervening factors. The findings of Study 4 showed that intergroup social connections with the Italian national majority and with other immigrant minorities play a crucial role in determining the long-term psychological health cost of social exclusion in forced immigrants'. Results showed that immigrants' social connections with both Italians and other immigrants increased over six months. However, whereas the growth of social connections with Italians over time resiliently promoted mental health after six months for those who were mostly excluded at time 1, the increasing connections with other immigrants aggravated the long-term burden of social exclusion. At a closer inspection, the fact that social exclusion was associated with better mental health over time for those with increasing quantity and quality of social connections with Italians may indicate that

the connections with the majority could be not only a protective factor – preventing the resignation stage – but even a *growth* or *resilient* factor, that boosted mental health in those who were mostly struggling with social exclusion at time 1. This pattern of results was robust when considering the connections with Italians and other immigrants simultaneously. Results showed that the prevalence over time of connections with Italians over other immigrants tended to buffer the impact of social exclusion on resignation; oppositely, when participants were connected more closely with other immigrants than Italians, social exclusion tended to predict resignation positively.

The main limitation of this study is that the results were found on the same dataset and variables that were partially used to generate the hypotheses. Thus, future studies are needed to conceptually and methodologically replicate the findings on a different population, to rule out the possibility that the effects were occasionally occurring on the specific sample recruited in the study. Another limitation concerns the source of social exclusion: in this study, as well as in the previous studies presented, the index of social exclusion referred to the subjective and objective experience of social exclusion regardless of the group membership of the actors of the exclusion. Therefore future studies should also deepen the investigation of the implication of the excluders' group membership on the impact of social exclusion. However, besides this issue, the findings here provided, in conjunction with those coming from the other three studies presented so far, can be considered as conclusive evidence regarding the a) the role of chronic exclusion in causing the development of the resignation stage, and b) on the moderating role that intergroup connections play.

Study 5 –

Experimental evidence further extending the moderating role of intergroup connections to the immediate emotional impact of social exclusion

The literature on social exclusion has largely focused on the factors and coping strategies that intervene in modulating the immediate impact of exclusionary experiences. As detailed in Chapter 1, previous studies investigated the role that individual differences such as trait self-esteem (Ford & Collins, 2013), psychological flexibility (Tyndall et al., 2018), the situated construals of the excluding situation (Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Tuscherer et al., 2016), and the type of cognitive mindset (Pfundmair et al., 2015b) displayed in buffering from the immediate distress of social exclusion. Moreover, focusing on social factors, Teng and Cheng (2012) found that the physical presence of a close one protected from the need-threat of ostracism.

Given the influence that intergroup connections displayed in moderating the long-term development of the resignation stage, the current study investigated the intervening role that intergroup social connections could have in protecting immigrants also from the immediate emotional distress caused by the experiences of social exclusion. In detail, the hypotheses of Study 5 are that social connections with Italians mitigate the anticipated emotional burden from an experimental exposure to episodes of social exclusion. In contrast, connections with other immigrants would worsen it. To investigate the moderating role of intergroup connections in different immigrant groups and in relation to different sources of social exclusion, Study 5 further tested how the hypothesized effects differed for a) recently immigrated asylum seekers and refugees and long-standing non-forced immigrants, and b) different sources of social exclusion (Italian *vs.* other immigrants). Study 5 further tested how the prevalence of social connections with Italians over other immigrants moderated the relation between exclusion and the outcomes.

Method

Participants

The initial sample consisted of 288 participants. From that sample, 11 people did not provide information regarding their migration status; therefore, they were not considered in the analyses. The final sample consisted of 277 participants, divided into two groups of short-term forced immigrants (*i.e.*, asylum-seekers and refugees) and long-term non-forced immigrants.

Asylum-seekers and refugees. A convenience sample of two-hundred six asylum-seekers and refugees (female = 28, male = 173) were recruited into several governmental hosting centers (CAS and SPRAR – *centers for protection of asylum-seekers and refugees*) in Northern Italy. Participants were on average 26.75 years old ($SD = 6.60$), they had undertaken on average 9.58 years of full-time education ($SD = 5.40$), and they had been staying in Italy for 32.73 months ($SD = 5.40$). Most of them were single (70.4%), 23.4% were married (11.7% of them living apart from their partner), 3% were divorced or separated (3.4% unknown), 66.5% of them were unemployed, and 30.1% were employed (3.4% unknown). The great majority of them (72.9%) came from English- and French-speaking Western Africa (*e.g.*, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea, Cameroon), whereas 27.1% came from other countries (*e.g.*, Egypt, Syria, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo). Approximately half of them (49.5%) were asylum-seekers waiting for the evaluation of their asylum claim, 47.1% were refugees with granted international protection, and seven had their asylum claim rejected and were under court appeal.

Non-forced long-standing migrants. A convenience sample of seventy-one voluntary immigrants (female = 44, male = 27) was recruited in the metropolitan area of Milan via snowball sampling. They were on average 42.26 years old ($SD = 11.96$), they underwent 12.48 years of full-time education ($SD = 4.06$), and they had been staying in Italy for 185.58 months (approximately 15 years; $SD = 160.61$). 32.4% of them were single, 47.9% were married (12.7% of them living apart from their partner), 11.2% were divorced or separated, 66.2% of them were employed, and 32.4% were unemployed (1 unknown). 16.9% of them came from El Salvador, 16.9% from Ukraine, 11.3% from Peru, and the remaining others came from other countries worldwide (*e.g.*,

Russia, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, India, Lebanon). None of them had ever asked for asylum in Italy or any other country.

Procedure

Following approval of the Ethical Committee of the University of Milano-Bicocca, participants completed a self-reported questionnaire lasting approximately 1 hour. At first, participants answered background questions about their socio-demographic information and their social connections with Italians and other immigrants. Then, following a within-subject 2 (condition: inclusion *vs.* exclusion) × 2 (source: Italians *vs.* migrants) experimental design, they were presented with eight vignettes (two per condition) in a randomized order depicting ostensible real-life episodes of exclusion or inclusion by Italians or other immigrants (see the Appendix for the stimuli). They were asked to rate the emotions they would feel in each of the depicted situations. Questionnaires were translated by bilingual native speakers in three languages (*i.e.*, Italian, French, and English), allowing participants to choose the language version they felt more proficient in, based on their native language or their proficiency in Italian. For asylum-seekers and refugees in CASs and SPRARs, researchers organized two group-meetings in the hosting institutions. In the first one, they presented the research aims and procedure, promoting people's participation in the study. In the second one, they collected the data in group sessions, supported, when available by cultural-linguistic mediators operating within the institutions. Differently, voluntary migrants were asked to participate in the study within cultural and sportive associations. Participants freely took part in the study after signing informed consent; no refund was applied.

Measures

Besides socio-demographic information – as reported in the description of the samples – participants answered a self-reported questionnaire providing the following background information before being presented with the experimental scenarios.

Quantity and quality of social connections with Italians and other migrants.

A listing procedure similar to the one used in Study 1 was adopted to assess participants' quantity of intergroup social connections. However, differently from Study 1, the measure did not simultaneously account for both the quantity and quality

of social connections but merely focused on the quantity and frequency of social connections. Participants were asked to list the initials of up to ten Italian people and other migrants they had regularly interacted with during the previous three months. They were also asked to rate how often they interacted with each of the person listed on a 5-point Likert scale (*i.e.*, the frequency scale; 1 = less than once a month; 2 = Less than once every two weeks; 3 = less than once a week; 4 = Less than once a day; 5 = Once a day or more). Then, two aggregated indices of quantity of social connections with Italians and other migrants were computed by averaging the scores on the frequency scale weighted by the number of the persons listed (*i.e.*, summing the frequency scores). Participants who intentionally did not name any initials received a score of zero. The scores on the indices ranged from 0 to 50.

After measuring the quantity of intergroup social connections, the questionnaire measured the quality of group connections with Italians and other migrants. Using an adjusted version of the Inclusion of Other in the Self graphic scale (Aron et al., 1992), participants answered two questions asking how close they felt to Italians and other migrants. They answered by selecting one picture in a series of 7 images depicting two increasingly overlapping circles. In the first question, the circle on the left represented the participant (it was labeled with “you”), and the circle on the right the Italians (label = “Italians”). In the second question, the circle on the right represented other migrants (label = “other migrants”). Participants were instructed that closer circles indicated more closeness with Italians/other migrants; the scores ranged from 1 to 7.

From the indices of quality and quantity of intergroup connections, two final indices were computed: a) *quantity and quality of social connections with Italians* was obtained by multiplying the index of quantity of connections with Italians by the closeness scores with Italians ($M = 89.71$, $SD = 86.18$), and b) *quantity and quality of social connections with other migrants* was obtained by multiplying the index of quantity of connections with other migrants by the closeness scores with other migrants ($M = 125.25$, $SD = 95.02$). Higher scores on the indices indicated closer, more frequent, and more numerous connections with the groups.

We observed that forced migrants ($M = 130.61$, $SD = 100.00$) had closer and more frequent connections with other immigrants than voluntary migrants ($M = 108.35$, $SD = 71.99$; $t(174.2) = |1.98|$, $p < .05$). Oppositely, voluntary migrants ($M = 113.44$, $SD = 94.02$) had stronger connections with Italians than forced migrants ($M = 81.46$, $SD = 81.90$; $t(111.58) = |2.53|$, $p < .05$).

To account for simultaneous connections with the two groups, a delta score was computed by subtracting the final index of connections with other migrants from the Italian one ($M = -35.73$, $SD = 104.48$, range = $-298.27 - 385.73$). Scores above zero indicated prevailing connections with Italians; scores below zero prevailing connections with other immigrants.

Emotions related to the vignettes. Following the presentation of each of the eight scenarios, participants were asked to rate on a bipolar 7-point Likert scale (range: $-3 = \textit{very negative emotions}$ – $3 = \textit{very positive emotions}$) the emotions that they would feel if they would experience the situations presented. The four couples of emotions considered (sad-happy, guilt-innocence, weakness-strength, anger-calm) were computed into composite indices of emotions within each condition. Initially, the scores on the same couples of emotions from the vignettes tapping into the same conditions were averaged together. Then, the indices separately measuring each of the four couples of emotions were averaged together within each condition, obtaining four overall indices of emotions (*i.e.*, one per condition). Table 8 reports mean, standard deviations, and reliability of the four indices.

As a manipulation check, participants rated after each vignette the extent to which they would feel excluded *vs.* included on a bipolar single item with the same 7-point Likert response scale of the items measuring emotions. At first, the manipulation check items from the two vignettes of the same condition were averaged. Then, the obtained scores were aggregated in two indices: one for the inclusion and the other for the exclusion condition.

Results

A Welch two-sample t-test tested whether the vignettes were effective in inducing feelings of exclusion *vs.* inclusion. Results confirmed that the vignettes of the

exclusion condition ($M = 0.11$, $SD = 0.31$) made participants feel more excluded than those of the inclusion condition ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 1.11$; $t(988.6) = 19.83$, $p < .001$).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of emotions across conditions

	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Exclusion by Italians	0.17	1.44	.77
Inclusion by Italians	1.71	1.25	.87
Exclusion by migrants	0.60	1.41	.77
Inclusion by migrants	1.81	1.17	.87

A series of hierarchical mixed-models investigated the role of the manipulated conditions (Inclusion *vs.* Exclusion and Italians *vs.* Migrants), and of the moderators (background connections with Italians and other migrants; stable voluntary *vs.* unstable forced migrants) on the emotional impact of the vignettes. Analyses were conducted using RStudio software (RStudio Team, 2016) and the package *lme4* (Bates et al., 2015) with Satterthwaite's approximation of degrees of freedom for F-test of the estimates (package *lmerTest*; Kuznetsova et al., 2017). The models were estimated using not-restricted maximum likelihood given that the model comparison and selection was based on the differences in the Chi-square value via the *ANOVA* R function. The hierarchical models are presented in Table 9.

The first baseline null-model only included a random intercept clustered by subjects to account for interindividual variability in the emotional reactions to the vignettes (model 1). Then, I proceeded including the condition as fixed effect (model 2). The goodness-of-fit of the model significantly increased compared to the null-model and the emotions in the inclusion condition were significantly more positive than the emotion of the exclusion condition ($M_{\text{Inclusion}} = 1.76$, $SE_{\text{Inclusion}} = 0.07$; $M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 0.09$, $SE_{\text{Exclusion}} = 0.07$; $p_{\text{Inclusion} - \text{Exclusion}} < .001$). In model 3, the group-source of the interaction in the vignettes was added as fixed effect, as well as the interaction Source by Condition. The addition of the predictors did not improve the model fit, and the effects of the source and of the interaction were not significant, meaning that the

emotional impact of exclusion did not differ for the source of exclusion/inclusion. Therefore, the next models did not include the source of the interaction as a predictor.

Table 9. Estimates and comparisons of the mixed-models tested in Study 5.

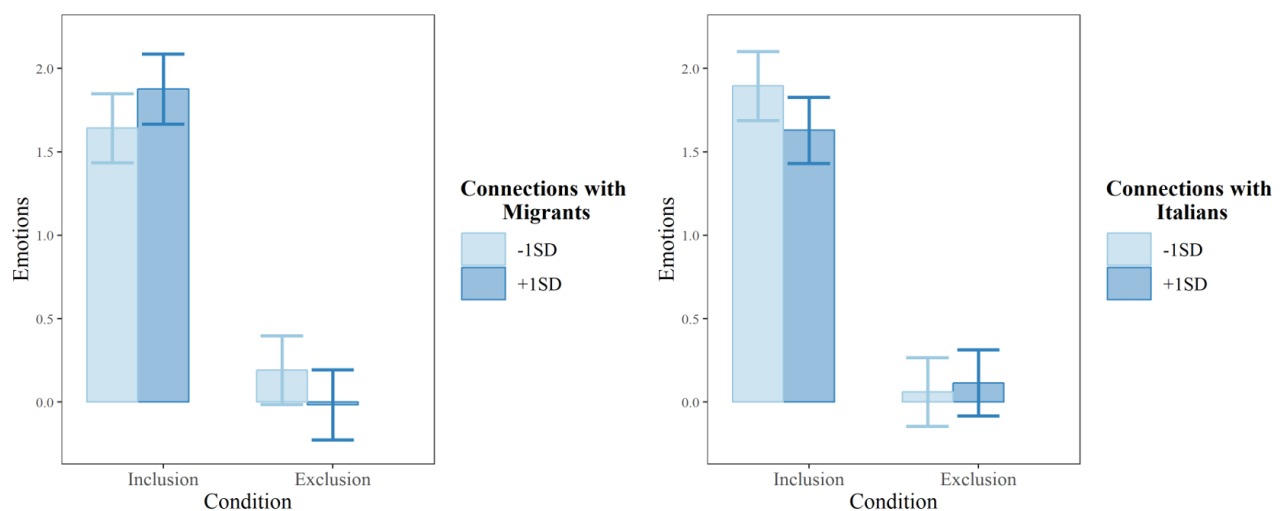
	Individual – level variance	Nakagawa's R ² Conditional	F(df _N ,df _D)	p-value	Model selection	Δχ ² (Δdf)
Model 1	0.36 ^{***}	0.15	-	-	-	-
Model 2 Condition	0.59 ^{**}	0.53	553.40 _(1,677.01)	< .001 ^{***}	1 vs. 2	404.76 ^{***} (1)
Model 3 Condition	0.59 ^{***}	0.53	553.85 _(1,677.01)	< .001 ^{***}	2 vs. 3	1.74 (2)
Source			0.56 _(1,677.19)	0.455		
Condition*Source			1.68 _(1,677.19)	0.195		
Model 4 Condition	0.59 ^{**}	0.54	567.15 _(1,676.97)	< .001 ^{***}	2 vs. 4	10.24* (4)
Connections _{Italians}			3.19 _(1,381.50)	.074		
Connections _{Migrants}			2.23 _(1,381.59)	.136		
Condition*Connections _{Italians}			4.77 _(1,676.88)	.029*		
Condition*Connections _{Migrants}			8.11 _(1,676.90)	.005 ^{**}		
Model 5 Condition	0.55 ^{***}	0.54	447.02 _(1,676.78)	< .001 ^{***}	4 vs. 5	20.50 ^{**} (6)
Connections _{Italians}			1.29 _(1,388.14)	.257		
Connections _{Migrants}			0.78 _(1,388.14)	.378		
Group			6.99 _(1,388.33)	.009 ^{**}		
Condition*Connections _{Italians}			3.50 _(1,676.74)	.062		
Condition*Connections _{Migrants}			8.28 _(1,676.74)	.004 ^{**}		
Condition*Group			0.28 _(1,676.78)	.595		
Group*Connections _{Italians}			0.57 _(1,388.14)	.449		
Group*Connections _{Migrants}			0.07 _(1,388.14)	.784		
Condition*Connections _{Italian} * Group			7.42 _(1,676.74)	.007 ^{**}		
Condition*Connections _{Migrants} * Group			0.10 _(1,676.74)	.754		
Model 6 Condition	0.55 ^{***}	0.54	414.72 _(1,676.80)	< .001 ^{***}	-	-
ΔScore			0.02 _(1,225.51)	0.878		
Group			12.44 _(1,225.60)	< .001 ^{***}		
Condition*ΔScore			7.25 _(1,676.71)	.007 ^{**}		
Condition*Group			1.31 _(1,676.80)	.253		
ΔScore*Group			0.26 _(1,225.51)	.609		
Condition*ΔScore*Group			4.49 _(1,676.71)	.034*		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Letters in bold indicated the better models.

Model 4 tested the effect of the social connections with Italians and other migrants as level-2 predictors, also considering their interaction with the level-1 predictor of the condition. The two indices of social connections were centered. The fit of the model significantly improved compared to model 2, and both the interactions of the connections with Italians and other migrants by Condition were statistically significant. Simple slopes analyses confirmed our predictions and showed that the

drop of the emotional levels in the exclusion (*vs.* inclusion) condition was higher for those with less frequent and close connections with Italians (-1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.83$ ($\beta = 0.59$), $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$) than for those with stronger ones (+1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.50$ ($\beta = 0.48$), $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$). Oppositely, the emotional drop was higher for participants with stronger connections with other migrants (+1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.88$ ($\beta = 0.61$), $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$) than for those with weaker ones (-1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.45$ ($\beta = 0.47$), $SE = 0.10$, $p < .001$) (Figure 13).

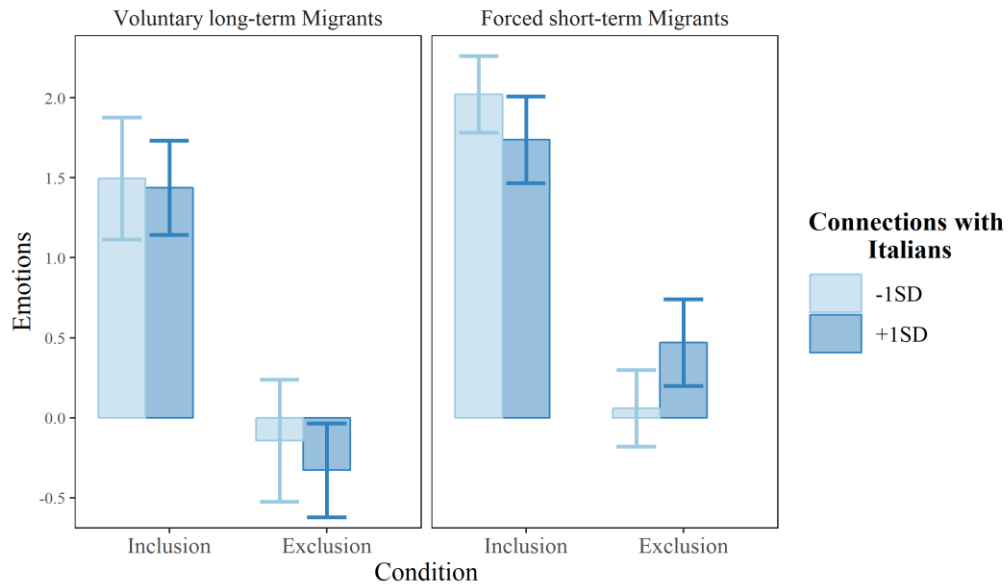
Figure 13. Intergroup connections moderated the anticipated emotional impact of social exclusion



In model 5, the group of the participants (short-term forced migrants *vs.* voluntary long-term migrants) was added as an additional moderator to explore if the moderating effects of connections with Italians and other migrants found in model 4 varied across participants' groups. The model fit significantly improved compared to model 4. Results showed that the moderating effect of the connections with other migrants held as in model 4 and did not vary for the two groups of participants, whereas the moderation of the connections with Italians did. In details (see Figure 14), the emotional impact of exclusion was lower for asylum seekers and refugees more (*vs.* less) tightly connected with Italians (+1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.24$ ($\beta = 0.40$), $SE = 0.14$, $p < .001$; -1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.96$ ($\beta = 0.63$), $SE = 0.12$, $p < .001$), whereas the level of connections with Italians did not show a significant protective effect from the emotional impact of exclusion for voluntary long-term migrants (+1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} -$

$M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.77$ ($\beta = 0.57$), $SE = 0.16$, $p < .001$; $-1SD$: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.64$ ($\beta = 0.53$), $SE = 0.20$, $p < .001$).

Figure 14. Connections with Italians protected only forced migrants from the impact of exclusion



Lastly, to investigate the role of the prevalence of the connections with Italians over other immigrants in moderating the anticipated emotional impact of social exclusion, I conducted an additional model entering the delta score as moderator of the effect of the condition on the emotions. After centering the variable, the additional mixed-model (model 6) tested if the prevalence of connections with Italians over other migrants moderated the impact of social exclusion and if the moderation differed for forced short-term and voluntary long-term migrants. The results aligned with those from model 5. Indeed, the three-way interaction was statistically significant, and it showed that in asylum seekers and refugees the emotional impact of social exclusion was lower for those with prevailing connections with Italians ($+1SD$: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.25$ ($\beta = 0.40$), $SE = 0.14$, $p < .001$) than for those with prevailing connections with other migrants ($-1SD$: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.96$ ($\beta = 0.63$), $SE = 0.12$, $p < .001$). Differently, the prevalence of connections with Italians over other migrants did not affect the emotional impact of social exclusion for voluntary migrants ($+1SD$: $M_{\text{Inclusion}}$

- $M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.65$ ($\beta = 0.53$), $SE = 0.15$, $p < .001$; -1SD: $M_{\text{Inclusion}} - M_{\text{Exclusion}} = 1.74$ ($\beta = 0.56$), $SE = 0.20$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

Study 5 showed that intergroup social connections could influence even the early stages of coping with the exclusionary threat. Indeed, the study showed that existing social connections with the Italian majority protected immigrants' from the anticipated emotional burden caused by the exposition to social exclusion. Oppositely, as expected, social connections with other minorities aggravated the immediate emotional impact of the exclusion. The study also showed that these effects occurred regardless of the group source of social exclusion, aligning with the existing literature showing the harmful impact of social exclusion regardless of the group membership of the actors (*e.g.*, Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007).

These findings enriched the existing literature on the factors influencing the immediate responses to social exclusion by identifying a novel moderating social factor (*i.e.*, intergroup connections). It could be further investigated by research attempting to discover the coping strategies and key variables most effectively tackling the cost of social exclusion.

Moreover, the role of intergroup connections in moderating the immediate emotional burden of episodes of social exclusion could help to explain the long-term implication of persistent social exclusion. Indeed, the daily emotional burden caused by the frequent episodes of social exclusion could additively accumulate day-by-day, ending up in the long-term development of the resignation stage. Study 5 allowed to detail the overall effects identified in the previous studies of this dissertation, pointing at the immediate emotional impact of acutes episode of social exclusion as a potential mechanism that would cumulatively lead to more severe long-term consequences for the psychological health. James *et al.* (2019) found that emotional distress mediated the longitudinal association between post-migration stressors and general health. Similarly, future studies could test the hypothesis that the immediate emotional distress following exclusionary episodes could cumulate over time, ultimately leading to the long-term development of the resignation stage.

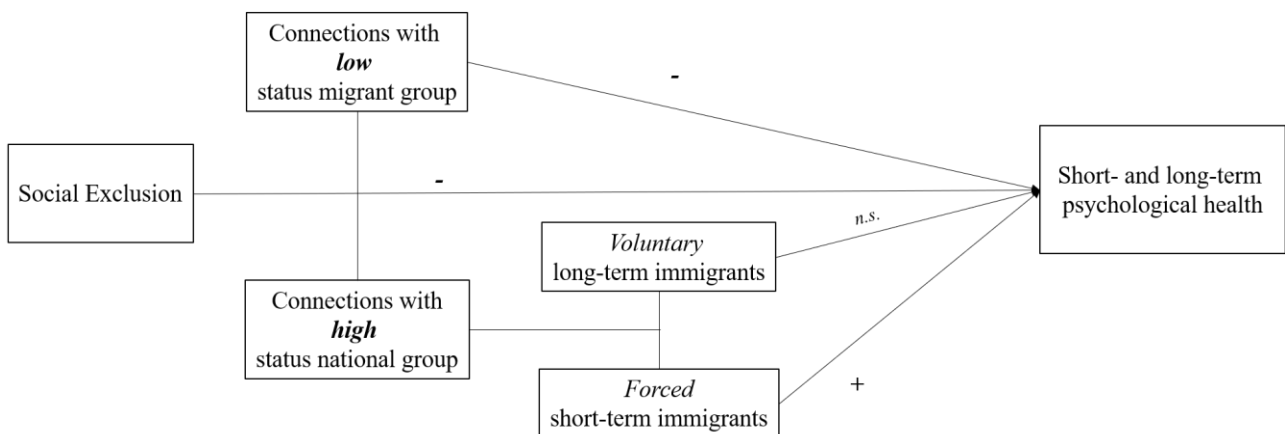
Focusing on both short-term forced migrants (*i.e.*, asylum-seekers and refugees) and on long-term voluntary migrants, the study contributed to a more refined understanding of the moderating role of intergroup connections. On the one hand, the findings showed that the emotional cost of social exclusion is more severe for immigrant minorities – regardless of their migration background – who are predominantly connected with and segregated within other immigrant minorities. On the other, the buffering effect of social connections with the national majority occurred only for the forced immigrants who had been staying in Italy for a largely shorter period. This dissociation opens to further theoretical speculations and calls for future studies on the relevance, in response to social threats, of not only the social status of the groups one is connected with but also of one's own social position and the sociostructural facets of the group people belong to. In this sense, the perceived *stability of the status* of one's social group – defined as the degree to which an alternative status position for the group can be achieved (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) – can play a crucial role.

For *low stable* groups such as asylum-seekers and refugees (whose low stability could be due to their uncertain legal condition, their short permanence and low integration in the host country), the *bridging* connections with the high-status majority could convey hope for future inclusion, in turn buffering from the impact of social exclusion. This interpretation aligns with existing literature showing that low stability about one's group status was associated with increased cognitive alternatives of the group status (*i.e.*, hope for social change), which in turn predicted self-esteem (Reicher & Haslam, 2012; Zhang et al., 2013).

Differently, for *high stable* groups such as long-standing voluntary migrants, the connections with the high-status majority would not be seen as a possible resource to become more included in the broad society, in light of the perception of their minority position as fixed and permanent. Therefore, social connections with the majority would lose their protective effect. In the model below, I summarized these interpretations jointly with the results from the other studies of the research project (figure 15).

In its upper part, the figure shows that social connections with other immigrant minorities aggravated the short- and long-term consequences of social exclusion regardless of the status of the immigrant groups, based on the findings provided by Study 1, 2, 4, and 5 of this research project. The lower part of the model emphasizes the experimental findings from the present Study 5. It shows that social connections with the high-status national group protect from the impact of social exclusion only for the *forced* immigrant group. In contrast, they did not show any moderating effect for the *voluntary* immigrants.

Figure 15. A status-based model of the impact of social exclusion



The major challenge in completing the definition of the model is in identifying the crucial variables responsible for the diverging effect of connections with the majority for the two different groups of immigrants. As I highlighted, based on the social-structural facets of group membership from the social identity theory (Bettencourt et al., 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it can be the perceived stability of the social status. However, only additional research could test if the status-based model of the impact of social exclusion would meet empirical support, identifying whether the sociostructural facet of group membership, baseline need satisfaction, or other unconsidered factors could drive the different role of intergroup connections with the majority had for different immigrant groups.

These arguments should be taken with care considering some methodological limitations of these findings. At first, the findings regarding the different role of

connections with Italians for these different immigrant groups are novel and not replicated, and future studies need to confront them. Moreover, the two groups of immigrants were not balanced on sociodemographic characteristics such as age, gender, employment status, and country of origin. This made it impossible to disentangle the effect of the group from possible sociodemographic confounders.

Research should also investigate alternative explanations for the moderating role of the migration status. In this regard, the participants' degree of dependence on the system could elucidate the finding. For short-term forced immigrants – who are highly dependent on the services provided by the national institutions for the satisfaction of their basic needs – social connections with Italians could be the fundamental and unique means to access instrumental and emotional support fostering their social integration and their ability to cope with social exclusion. Differently, for long-term voluntary migrants – who are better integrated and broad society and less dependent on institutional care – social connections with Italians could be only one among other available sources of support. Therefore they would lose their critical supporting effect. Relatedly, baseline levels of basic need satisfaction could explain the effect: forced migrants likely more severely threatened than voluntary migrants in their basic needs would benefit more from belonging to the majority group, being it a highly effective source of support (see Eck et al., 2017).

In addition, the manipulated vignettes could induce only anticipated social exclusion/inclusion, rather than actual episodes, and, similarly, the emotions measured were only anticipated emotional reactions rather than real-life occurring psychological responses. Lastly, the study measured a short array of potential emotions in response to social exclusion, and future studies should more extensively consider the wider board of negative emotions that exclusion is likely to provoke. However, despite these limitations, this last study of the present dissertation contributed to understanding the role of intergroup connections in moderating the short-term impact of social exclusion and to further generating questions for future research.

Chapter 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The current research project sought to investigate the psychological impact of social exclusion in immigrants. It addressed the research questions related to a) the development of the long-term consequences of persistent social exclusion and b) the role of intergroup social connections with the national group and other immigrants in moderating the detrimental impact of chronic exclusion.

The research questions aimed at filling two important literature gaps. The first one concerns the lack of empirical findings supporting the theoretical knowledge on the impact of chronic social exclusion. The existing theoretical accounts predicted that the chronicity of social exclusion would lead individuals into the psychological withdrawal of the resignation stage – characterized by feelings of depression, alienation, unworthiness, and helplessness (Williams, 2009) – and the behavioral withdrawal of social avoidance (Smart-Richman & Leary, 2009). However, to date, only preliminary evidence has supported these predictions (*e.g.*, Riva et al., 2016; Aureli et al., 2020), and literature lacked firm empirical findings of the causal chronic exclusion-resignation link, as well as of the temporal onset of the resignation stage. Second, the existing theoretical frameworks only assumed an inescapable, direct link between chronic exclusion and its long-term consequences. The existence of potential moderators of this direct relation remained unexplored.

The current research project focused on immigrants, particularly asylum-seekers and refugees, as individuals belonging to a marginalized social group at risk of being exposed to recurrent and chronic instances of social exclusion on multiple levels of analysis (see Chapter 2). The empirical studies presented tested the

hypotheses regarding the causal chronic exclusion-resignation link (Study 1-3), the temporal framework of the development of the resignation stage (Study 3), and the role of immigrants' social connections with the native majority members and other immigrants as moderators of the long-term psychological impact of social exclusion (Study 1, 2, and 4), also testing their moderating role on the immediate emotional impact of social exclusion (Study 5).

Using multiple methodologies and also considering peer-reported (Study 2) and experimentally-induced (Study 5) social exclusion besides the self-reported perception of exclusion (Study 1, 3, 4), the studies advanced the current literature in three ways. Firstly, they provided replicated cross-sectional and longitudinal support that social exclusion in persistently excluded groups like immigrants causes the development of the resignation stage. Secondly, they showed that the resignation stage arises in a temporal arch of six months. Lastly, they established that the resignation stage is not the only and inevitable outcome of chronic exclusion. Group membership can influence the psychological health toll of exclusion for individuals from marginalized social groups to a different extent. The findings showed that, whereas social connections with the native majority buffer from the immediate emotional cost of social exclusion and the long-term development of resignation, social connections with other immigrant minorities aggravate the expected immediate and distant consequences of social exclusion.

The role of social connections with the national majority group

The result that social connections with the native majority protected from the negative psychological consequences of social exclusion is consistent with existing theories regarding the beneficial power of social connections (Baumeister & Leary, 1995), the advantages of the bridging social capital (e.g., Marschall & Stolle, 2004), and the positive outcomes of intergroup social contact (e.g., Bagci & Turnuklu, 2018). Similarly, experimental evidence on the general population showed that belonging to a numeric majority buffered against the need-threat of social exclusion (Eck et al., 2017). Social connections with majority groups may promote a sense of belonging, self-

esteem, control, and recognition, as well as integration, and acceptance by the larger society, thus protecting devalued minorities from the negative consequences of social exclusion (Bagci et al., 2018a, 2018b; Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008). Group identification promoted by frequent and close social connections (see Reimer et al., 2017) could be a possible mechanism conveying such positive psychological resources.

Drawing from a social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the social cure research examines the benefits and pitfalls of ingroup ties for physical and psychological health (Haslam et al., 2018; Jetten et al., 2012). The social cure research agenda posits that individuals' membership and identification with multiple social groups have beneficial effects on psychological and physical health. The social cure effect has been found in numerous social contexts and populations. Several studies showed that group membership and identification protected the mental health of people with multiple sclerosis (Wakefield et al., 2013), prevented post-partum depression in new mothers (Seymour-Smith et al., 2017), predicted well-being in people recovering from a stroke (Haslam et al., 2008), reduced the risk of death in retired adults (Steffens et al., 2016), increased self-esteem in people with autism (Cooper et al., 2017), and increased refugees and immigrants' well-being (Bobowik et al., 2017). The central assumption of the *social cure* approach is that group memberships provide people with self-esteem, meaning, relatedness, a sense of purpose and efficacy in life - informing individuals about who they are and the norms and behaviors to follow -, which in turn promote well-being (Jetten et al., 2017).

In light of this evidence, the protective effect of connections with the majority can be explained considering the psychological resources that could be channeled in such group membership, helping immigrants facing adversities like social exclusion.

However, according to the findings of Study 4, the implications of the protective role of connections with the majority can be pushed further. The results showed that, for strongly increasing connections with Italians, higher baseline feelings of exclusion predicted lower resignation (*i.e.*, *better* health). This effect could be explained with the concept of *post-traumatic growth*, defined as the positive psychological change that occurs after highly challenging life circumstances (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The positive psychological changes concern the enhancement in the sense of belonging in

relationships, personal strength and self-worthiness, faith and hope, and appreciation of life (Lindstrom et al., 2013) – dimensions that mirror the feelings of alienation, unworthiness, helplessness, and depression of the resignation stage (Williams, 2009). Post-traumatic growth was documented in a wide board of stressful life conditions, ranging from war, disaster, and illness, to bereavement and divorce (Schaefer & Moss, 1998), and in numerous populations, including Central African refugees (Ssenyonga et al., 2013). Post-traumatic growth in refugees and asylum-seekers can be unrelated to actual stress-related disorders, pointing out that the psychological growth could occur in the aftermath of highly stressful events (Sleijpen et al., 2016), such as in the struggle for adaptation in the host society following the migration journey.

In the theoretical framework of the social cure, social connections with the native majority, rather than being only a *protective* factor preventing the development of the resignation, could be a *curative* factor. The connections with the majority allowed psychological improvements over time in asylum-seekers and refugees who were mostly struggling with post-migration stressors like social isolation, exclusion, discrimination, family separation, and loss of ties with former communities (Hynie, 2018; Li et al., 2016). The growing connections with the majority group could enhance immigrants' identification with the national group, fostering their sense of belonging, inclusion, and acceptance from the host society where they are struggling to integrate. The sense of societal acceptance conveyed by identification with the native majority would constitute a fundamental resource against social exclusion, leading to long-term positive psychological changes.

Besides group identification, alternative explanations linked to the specific contextual condition of immigrants could explain why social connections benefited immigrants facing social exclusion. For instance, connections with the national group may promote access to instrumental resources external to the hosting institutions, facilitating immigrants' integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Moreover, interactions (but also identification) with the host nationals underpins the sociocultural adaptation of immigrants (Searle & Ward, 1990), which can help deal with social exclusion. Lastly, higher connections with the national group could be a proxy of a higher amount of time spent outside the welcoming centers, as well as a better language proficiency e,

which could increase immigrants' social skills acquisition, culture learning, and behavioral competence in the host society (Ward & Kennedy, 1999), in turn protecting from social exclusion.

However, among the considered explanations, the social cure literature provides a theoretical framework comprehensively interpreting both the benefits of connections with the national group and the harm of those with other migrants for immigrants coping with social exclusion.

The role of social connections with other immigrant minorities

The finding that immigrants' connections with other minorities worsened the expected negative psychological of chronic social exclusion suggested that being connected with others is not always beneficial for excluded minorities.

The literature on social cure can also contribute to explaining the findings of the present research project. Specific conditions could exist that would dramatically affect the beneficial implications of group connectedness and identification, transforming the social cure into a *social curse* with detrimental impacts on health and well-being (Kellezi & Reicher, 2012). Social curse can happen when close group membership, rather than being a source of strength and support, become a source of additional burden and concern (Wakefield et al., 2019). Kellezi and colleagues (2019), interviewing immigrants detained in removal centers, found that such concerns can consist in the feeling of burdening close ones and anticipating shame and blame from them due to perceived responsibility of one's own disgraceful fate. These negative feelings and perceptions would lead them not to seek precious social support to help them cope with their situation. Additionally, scholars also found that people can reflexively suffer from the emotional pain experienced and communicated by other close group members (see also Johnstone et al., 2016). Again, the social curse can happen when people belong to stigmatized, low-status groups or when the group they belong to promotes unhealthy norms and behaviors (Jetten et al., 2017).

Social connections with other immigrants could increase participants' belongingness and identification with a stigmatized group, leading minority-group

members to be even more vulnerable to social exclusion. Several research showed that individuals with strong identification with their minority low-status ingroup could become more sensitive to and highly affected by the daily episodes of discrimination and prejudice they are likely exposed to (McCoy & Major, 2003; Begeny & Huo, 2017; Bagci et al., 2018b; Eccleston & Major, 2006; Major et al., 2003; Noh et al., 1999; Yoo & Lee, 2008). Goodwin *et al.* (2010) found that African Americans who attributed ostracism to group-status characteristics (i.e., race) had a slower recovery from social exclusion. The authors argued that memberships in derogated groups might aggravate the sting of social exclusion. Begeny and Huo (2017) found that minority group members with greater group identity centrality perceived more discrimination and social threats, which negatively affected their psychological health. Similar findings were found by Rubin and Stuart (2008), who focused on low-class individuals. Cruwys and Gunaseelan (2016) found that identification as depressed individuals magnified the negative relation between stigma and well-being, as also made the identification with disabled people (Bagci et al., 2018a). Wirth and Williams (2009) found that when participants' group identification was a permanent and salient feature of the self, they recovered less from ostracism.

The regard that people have for the groups they belong to can determine whether cure or curse processes will unfold. DeMarco and Newheiser (2019) experimentally found that membership in low-esteemed groups undermined well-being via decreased need satisfaction. Group identification with the low-status immigrant group could invalidate the group membership benefits due to the stigma attached to the group (Korkmaz & Cingöz-Ulu, 2020). Indeed, the positive implications of belonging to one's minority group are likely when the group is characterized by positive rather than negative attributes (Simon & Hamilton, 1994).

Furthermore, it could be that the minority group might not convey a sufficient sense of belonging protecting from social exclusion (Eck et al., 2017).

The social curse effect and the other studies reviewed could suggest that identification with the low-status group could explain why social exclusion affected more the psychological condition of those immigrants who were mostly connected with other immigrants.

Nevertheless, the present findings appear to conflict with the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999), according to which members of a devalued group could cope with the sting of social rejection by identifying with their minority group: the derived feelings of relatedness, similarity, and support would protect them from the negative impact of discrimination (Neblett et al., 2012). However, it must be noted that this theoretical model received mixed empirical support (for meta-analytic findings, see Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). If some studies focusing on immigrants have supported it (e.g., Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007), many have not (see Bobowik et al., 2017; Çelebi et al., 2017). Moreover, the conflicting findings could originate when not taking into account one's evaluation of the ingroup, given that a negative consideration of the group – as it could occur for stigmatized or disregarded groups – can impede the benefits of group membership (DeMarco & Newheiser, 2019; Korkmaz & Cingöz-Ulu, 2020).

As a concluding remark, the focus on intergroup social connections allowed a nuanced understanding of the pervasive and persistent episodes of social exclusion immigrants experience in their daily lives. Indeed, the objective social exclusion immigrants are exposed to due to their marginalized condition at a broader social level can intersect with interpersonal and situational factors that could shape the implications of social exclusion. For example, immigrants could be victims of racist aggression – whether in its extreme or subtle forms (i.e., microaggression; Sue et al., 2007) – and broader discrimination from the local communities (Hersch, 2011; Pereira et al., 2010). However, at the same time, they can be hosted in welcoming environments and encounter people that care about them and seek to promote their well-being and their civil and social integration (Nash et al., 2006). As found in this research project, while struggling with post-migration stressors (James et al., 2019), immigrants can develop supporting relations with members of the host majority that counteract the negative consequences of the broader social exclusion they experience. Oppositely, they can be stuck among other immigrant minority groups, with the negative repercussion on psychological wellbeing and health that the present project found.

The findings of the research project suggested that even within an objective condition of social exclusion and marginalization, interpersonal relationships might

still occur. Indeed, the contextual interpersonal and intergroup dynamics must be considered as potentially aggravating or protecting from the psychological impact of persistent and pervasive social exclusion (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002).

Limitations and future research

The validity of the pattern of findings regarding the moderating role of social connections provided by the set of studies is strengthened by the replication across different types of immigrant samples, indicators of social exclusion, and research methodologies. However, there are some critical limitations to the current set of studies that need to be addressed.

The measurement of social exclusion. The first limitation concerns the use of self-report indices of social exclusion. Indeed, besides Study 2 and Study 5 that considered a peer-reported index and an experimental manipulation of social exclusion, the other studies relied only on the self-reported perception of daily exclusion, which can be biased by unconsidered variables such as personality traits (*e.g.*, trait loneliness; Russell, 1996). Moreover, as detailed in the introduction, asylum-seekers can experience social exclusion for many reasons (*e.g.*, the disruption of existing connections, linguistic exclusion, societal discrimination). A two-item self-reported index might fail to capture the overall pervasive and persistent experience of immigrants' exclusion. As a general consideration, the assessment of daily and persistent social exclusion is to date still an open methodological issue. Indeed, the investigation of pervasive social exclusion in real-life ecological settings mainly relies on self-reported measures. A validated scale exists for measuring pervasive ostracism in adolescents and the general population (see Gilman et al., 2013); however, future research should develop an appropriate measure of persistent rejection and ostracism suitable for marginalized people.

The need for replication. Two key messages provided by the present research need further researchers attention: the six-months temporal framework for the onset of resignation (Study 3) and the role of the migration status in moderating the influence

of the connections with the majority group on the emotional impact of social exclusion (Study 5).

Study 3 was the first study ever conducted, to my knowledge, that sought to establish the temporal onset of the resignation stage and of the perception of chronicity of social exclusion. The longitudinal methodology and the statistical analyses conducted allowed to claim that six months are the time frame necessary for the resignation onset and the perception of chronic exclusion. Still, those results can only be considered as early evidence of such a temporal framework, given that the results are novel and yet to be replicated. Indeed, future research could test the harder hypothesis that six months is the *minimum* time interval required for resignation to develop and for social exclusion to be perceived as chronic and stable.

Perhaps more importantly, they have been found on a particular sample of people exposed to persistent exclusion: asylum-seekers and refugees. On the one hand, the fact that the sample consisted of a non-WEIRD population ('Western, educated, industrialized, rich and democratic'; Henrich et al., 2010a, p. 29), increased the value of the findings, supporting the validity of Williams' (2009) model in a social group that is rarely considered by the vast majority of social psychological researches. On the other side, the specific condition of the population considered prevent a large-scale generalization of the six-months temporal framework, and future study should confront it on different, marginalized or stigmatized groups such as homeless people, sexual and religious minorities, people with mental illness, older people, ex-detainees, and to other social groups at risk of marginalization from the broader society. Among these groups, other WEIRD populations could be suitable for studying the temporal framework of chronic exclusion and its long-term impact: stateless people. Stateless people - those who are not recognized as citizens by any state - can be a particularly vulnerable group. Not being recognized by any country could constitute further risk factors aggravating the need-threat of social exclusion. The stateless condition puts people under the severe psychological threat of not having a legal identity, which adds to the heightened risk of being victims of human rights violations (Lewa, 2009; Riley et al., 2017). Future research could focus on the resignation stage as a negative health

outcome potentially harming stateless people, also investigating if the lack of recognized citizenship would reduce the onset of resignation.

The role of intervening factors. Future studies should account for potential unconsidered confounders that may have influenced the results of the empirical studies. For example, existing post-traumatic symptomatology and other mental disorders – commonly observed among asylum seekers and refugees (Fazel et al., 2005) – could heighten the perception and sensitivity to social exclusion (Jankowski et al., 2018; Jobst et al., 2015). Oppositely, factors such as resilient personality traits, adaptive coping strategies, protective sociodemographic conditions, and supportive relations could reduce the perception of exclusion and the development of the resignation stage (Lavie-Ajayi & Slonim-Nevo, 2017; Waldeck et al., 2015). In addition, confounding variables such as language proficiency and the time spent outside the hosting institution could be confounders of the moderating effect of intergroup connections with the national group, and future research should control for these factors.

Similarly, the finding from Study 5 on the moderating role of the migration status (forced short-term *vs.* voluntary long-term) on the influence of connections with the majority on the emotional impact of social exclusion could be explained by other intervening factors. Indeed, the lack of existing similar findings in literature with which compare the results underlines the need to confirm them through replication and to test several potential explanations of the phenomenon. As in Eck *et al.* (2017), this effect can be driven by baseline differences in the need to belong or other basic needs. It can be that forced immigrants, highly dependent on institutional care and whose basic needs could be more threatened than voluntary migrants (Echterhoff et al., 2020), would strongly benefit from the connections with the majority group. Differently, connections with the majority would not impact voluntary immigrants who are in less need of inclusion, control, or uniqueness. Therefore, future studies should assess how baseline need satisfaction could moderate intergroup connections' influence on the responses to social exclusion.

Future studies should also test the alternative explanation that the perceived socio-structural facets of the different immigrant groups could moderate the influence of connections with the high-status majority on the impact of social exclusion (*e.g.*,

Bettencourt et al., 2001). In this sense, the perceived stability of one's group's social status could influence the benefits of social connections with the national group. As discussed in Study 5, it could be that, in low-stable short-term forced immigrants, connections with the national group would promote hope for future inclusion, in turn protecting from the impact of social exclusion. Oppositely, the high-stable, fixed condition of long-term voluntary immigrants would prevent connections with the majority from conveying expectations for a better inclusionary status in the society, extinguishing its protective effect.

CONCLUSION

The present research showed that the social status of the people with whom immigrants connect could moderate the detrimental impact of social exclusion. This research project showed that being connected with the high-status national group can protect immigrants' health and well-being during their daily struggle against post-migration stressors. Conversely, being connected with other low-status immigrant groups can further aggravate the negative consequences of social exclusion. For immigrants who daily and persistently endure the experience of being excluded and who strive for being accepted into the broader society, the connections with native people fostered their feelings of belonging into the new host society, with positive implications for their health. Conversely, the social connections with other immigrants exacerbated immigrants' sense of isolation and inaccessibility to the host society, aggravating their helpless surrender to societal devaluation. Being segregated within their marginalized group can oppose immigrants' movement up the social ladder through social bonds that constrain rather than facilitate social integration, leading them to a reluctant acceptance and resignation to their condition of social exclusion.

This research project calls for future research to explore further the detrimental impact of chronic exclusion and design inclusive interventions to foster immigrants' wellbeing within host societies.

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APPENDIX

Measures of Study 1.

(a) Outcomes associated with the resignation stage

Instruction:

Thinking about the last THREE MONTHS, read the following statements and indicate with an X on the numbers how much the events described happened (5-point likert scale from 'not at all' to 'extremely').

Alienation (Social Connectedness scale – connectedness subscale - Lee & Robbins, 1995)

1. I felt disconnected from the world around me.
2. Even around people I knew, I didn't feel that I really belonged.
3. I felt so distant from people.
4. I had no sense of togetherness with my peers.
5. I didn't feel related to anyone.
6. I caught myself losing all sense of connectedness with society.
7. Even among my friends, there was no sense of brother/sisterhood.
8. I didn't feel I participated with anyone or any group.

Depression (items adopted from the Symptom checklist 90 (Revised) – Depression subscale- Derogatis & Unger, 2010)

1. I lost sexual interest or pleasure.
2. I felt low in energy or slowed down.
3. I had thoughts of ending my life.
4. I cried easily.
5. I had feelings of being trapped or caught.
6. I blamed myself for things.
7. I felt lonely.
8. I felt blue.
9. I worried too much about things.
10. I felt no interest in things.

11. I felt that everything is an effort

Unworthiness (items adopted from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale - Rosenberg, 1965)

1. (R) On the whole, I was satisfied with myself.
2. At times, I thought I was no good at all.
3. (R) I felt that I had a number of good qualities
4. (R) I was able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I felt I did not have much to be proud of

Helplessness (items adopted from the Beck Hopelessness Scale - Beck, 1974)

1. The future seemed vague and uncertain to me.
2. My future seemed dark to me.
3. (R) I had great faith in the future.
4. (R) I looked forward to the future with hope and joy.

(b) Self-reported index of social exclusion

Instruction:

Thinking about YOUR CURRENT DAILY LIFE, read the following statements and indicate how much you feel in the described way.

1. I feel rejected.
2. I feel ignored.

(c) Social connections

Social connections with Italians

How many **Italian** people have you regularly interacted with (e.g., once a week) in the last THREE MONTHS? List the first letter of their name below and indicate how close you felt to each one. It is not required to fill-in all the lines and you may also leave it empty if you didn't interact with anybody (up to 10 nominations).

Social connections with participants' national group

How many people **from your own nationality** have you regularly interacted with (e.g., once a week) in the last THREE MONTHS? List the first letter of their name below

and indicate how close you felt to each one. It is not required to fill-in all the lines and you may also leave it empty if you didn't interact with anybody (up to 10 nominations).

Social connections with other immigrants

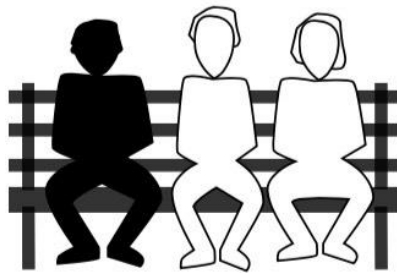
How many people **among the other refugees and asylum seekers** have you regularly interacted with (e.g., once a week) **in the last THREE MONTHS**? List the first letter of their name below and indicate how close you felt to each one. It is not required to fill-in all the lines and you may also leave it empty if you didn't interact with anybody (up to 10 nominations).

Materials of Study 5

Inclusion by Italians, stimulus 1

*You're at the station waiting for the train sitting on a bench. There are many **Italians** around you. Some of them come to sit on the available space by your side on the bench.*

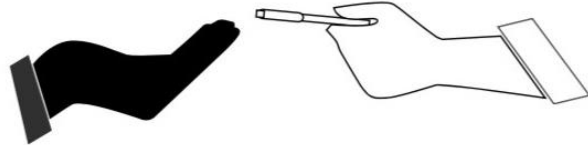
II1



Inclusion by Italians, stimulus 2

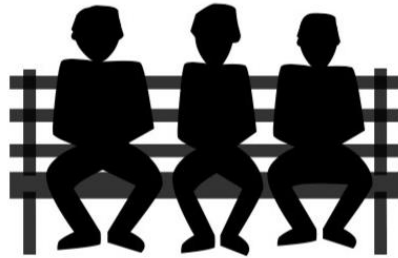
*You're in the post office and you realize you need a pen to fill out a form. You ask some **Italians** in line with you and one of them immediately lends you his pen.*

II2



Inclusion by immigrants, stimulus 1

*You're at the station waiting for the train sitting on a bench. There are many **migrants** around you. Some of them come to sit on the available space by your side on the bench.*



IM1

Inclusion by immigrants, stimulus 2

*You're in the post office and you realize you need a pen to fill out a form. You ask some **migrants** in line with you and one of them immediately lends you his pen.*

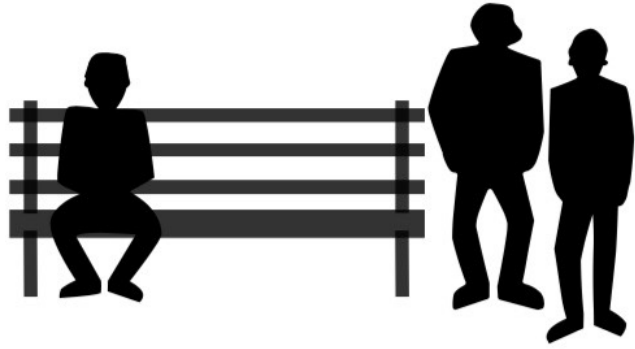


IM2

Exclusion by immigrants, stimulus 1

*You are sitting on a crowded bus of **migrants** returning from work. At your side there are two empty seats, however, although there are many people standing, nobody comes to sit next to you.*

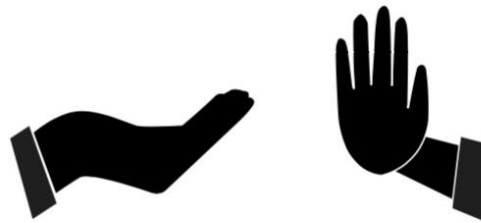
EM1



Exclusion by immigrants, stimulus 2

*You're walking down the street and you have to go to a place but you can not find it. You meet some **migrants** and ask them for information; but they do not listen to you and continue on their way, ignoring you.*

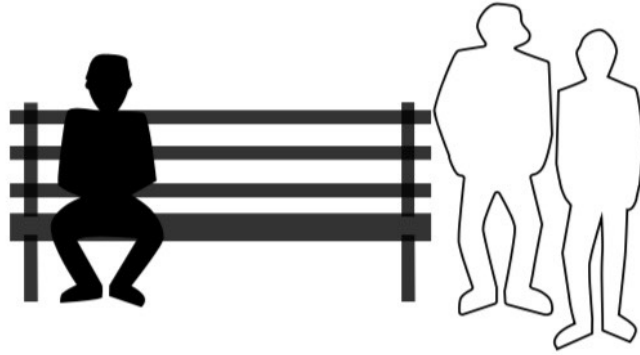
EM2



Exclusion by Italians, stimulus 1

*You are sitting on a crowded bus of **Italians** returning from work. At your side there are two empty seats, however, although there are many people standing, nobody comes to sit next to you.*

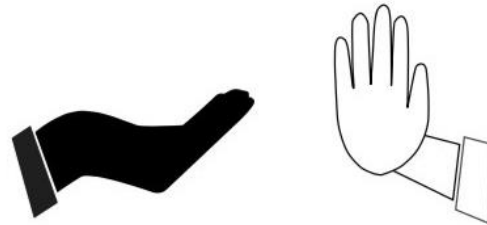
EI1



Exclusion by Italians, stimulus 2

*You're walking down the street and you have to go to a place but you can not find it. You meet some **Italians** and ask them for information; but they do not listen to you and continue on their way, ignoring you.*

EI2



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