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IMMIGRANTS' COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WELL-BEING

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The present work proposes looking into whether immigrants' community engagement has any relationship with their well-being measured with self-esteem and linguistic and cultural competences. Five hundred and ten young immigrants participated in the study (Range 19-29 years; *M* = 23.75, *SD* = 2.92), filling out a self-report questionnaire containing measures aimed at investigating their well-being. Of these, 59.4% claimed to be engaged in local organization. We compared the groups of engaged and not engaged immigrants — with similar sociodemographic characteristics — with three indicators of well-being (self-esteem, mastery of the language, and knowledge of the culture of the hosting country). The results highlight that, compared to the not engaged, the engaged report statistically higher means for all the indicators of well-being utilized. In addition, statistically significant differences emerged with respect to the types of activities in which the young immigrants were engaged. Community engagement can thus be considered related to immigrants' well-being. The operative results are discussed.

Key words: Well-being; Immigration; Community engagement; Participation; Youth; Self-esteem; Integration.

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The immigration experience often involves the loss of reference points as well as a certain cultural and relational disorientation. Once in the new country, people may face multiple challenges with integration, the reconstruction of their lives, and merging their previous identity with the experience of the new context (Giuliani, Olivari, & Alfieri, 2017; Paloma & Manzano-Arrondo, 2011). It is also true, however, that in the new context, people can find new opportunities for participation and new resources to live their lives. One of these opportunities can be offered through community engagement. Numerous studies on natives, in fact, demonstrate a link between engagement and well-being (Albanesi, Cicogani, & Zani, 2007; Alfieri, Saturni, & Marta, 2013; Di Napoli, Dolce, & Arcidiacono, 2019; Dulin, Gavala, Stephens, Kostick, & McDonald, 2012; Gilster, 2012; Helliwell, 2003; Marta, Pozzi, & Marzana, 2010; Marzana, Pozzi, Fasanelli, Mercuri, & Fattori, 2016; Mojza, Sonnentag, & Bornemann, 2011). To date, however, there are few known studies that propose investigating the relationship between engagement and well-being in immigrants. The few researches that exist show us that immigrants' commitment does act as a "catalyst for change," simultaneously contributing to the individual's development, raising the community's quality of life, and achieving a positive social change (Alfieri, Marzana, & Martinez Damia, in press; Marzana, Alfieri, & Marta, 2016; Paloma, García-Ramírez, De la Mata, & Association AMAL-Andaluza, 2010; Paloma & Manzano-Arrondo, 2011).

When speaking of community engagement — and immigrant engagement is no exception — the youth age group is especially important. We must keep in mind that the age of the transition to adulthood is a phase of the life cycle in which young people form and build habits, attitudes, and stable values that are fundamental for both present, but also future, social and political participation (for a review, see Sears & Levy, 2003). So, while community engagement in youth is a way to guarantee democracy and solidarity in society, on the other hand, many authors agree that social action achieves some benefits also on an individual psychological level (Alfieri, Marzana, Marta, & Vecina, 2017; Berkman & Glass, 2000; Kawachi & Berkman, 2000; Lundy, 2007; Schwartz, Meisenhelder, Ma, & Reed, 2003; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Vecina, Chacon, Marzana, & Marta, 2013). In the present work, we propose investigating, in explorative terms, whether community engagement may be a way to promote well-being in young engaged immigrants.

Well-being and Immigration

In the most recent literature, the concept of well-being has assumed new and multifaceted forms. By way of example, think of the rich debate between subjective well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being. Literature that focuses on the well-being in immigrants contextualizes well-being in even more complex and faceted terms (see for example Gallagher, Lopez, & Preacher, 2009). Still on the train of positive psychology, to give an example, Prilleltensky (2008) holds that "migrant well-being is a multi-level, interactive, and value dependent phenomenon" (p. 359). This approach suggests well-being is not to be understood exclusively on an individual level, nor static, nor monodimensional.

In line with Prilleltensky who affirms that "positive subjective well-being is self-esteem and a sense of control over life" (2008, p.361), in the present work we focused on these two aspects. First, because self-esteem is the most recognized form of positive subjective well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Neff, 2011).

However, we believed that it was appropriate to also consider two variables that well represent a dimension of sense of control regarding the hosting society: knowledge of the hosting country's language and culture. We will need to take into account these two variables that act in support or contrast with the possibility of maintaining well-being, both in terms of chance of development allowed by the context, as well as in terms of possibility to change the context in the direction of a greater individual well-being (Marzana, Alfieri, & Marta, 2016). Then, in this work we define well-being a composed concept that include self-esteem and cultural and linguistic competence in the new country.

Numerous researches have evidenced how immigrants, compared with the native population, report lower levels of health and well-being (Silveira, Skoog, Sundh, Allebeck, & Steen, 2002; Vieno, Santinello, Lenzi, Baldassari, & Mirandola, 2009) and self-esteem (Slonim-Nevo, Sharaga, Mirsky, Petrovsky, & Borodenko, 2006). The researches highlight that these differences are due to the fact that the immigrants have to cope with changes in many areas of their lives (family, work, finances, etc.), and that this could affect their levels of health and well-being. The literature has studied a wide number of variables, mostly sociodemographic, that can affect the health and well-being of immigrated people. In this paper, we take into consideration some of these, aware that there are still many others: gender; belonging to the first or second generation; education level; and social network.

Gender

The influence of gender in well-being has shown mixed findings. Some studies have reported that female immigrants may be more vulnerable to psychological distress than males (e.g., Aranda, Castaneda,

Lee, & Sobel, 2001; Carballo, 1994; Furnham & Shiekh, 1993; Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000; Naidoo, 1992). This may be because women generally tend to exhibit stronger ties to their heritage culture, have less contact with the host culture, and possess less host-culture specific skills; and these circumstances may further hinder their ability to function adequately in the host society (Liebkind, 1996). On the other hand, some studies reported no significant gender difference on psychological distress (e.g., Chou, 2007; Christopher & Kulig, 2000; Furnham & Tresize, 1981; Herrero, Fuente, & Gracia, 2011; Shin, Han, & Kim, 2007).

Generation

Numerous studies highlight how, in general, there is a negative correlation between age and well-being (Berry, 1997). That may probably be because children are more flexible and adaptable to change, have more opportunities to socialize and learn the new culture, tend to have better language skills, and are more ready to adapt to the norms and values of the new culture than are older immigrants (Berry, 1997; Liebkind, 1996; Marin, Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, & Perez-Stable, 1987). On the other hand, both adolescents and older people often experience substantial difficulties (Aronowitz, 1992; Sam & Berry, 1995). Besides being an issue linked to age, some studies (Alba, 2005) also demonstrate that the length of the immigrant's stay in the hosting country is positively correlated with the subject's level of integration and well-being; in fact, the longer the stay, the more the individual tends to be integrated into the hosting country and consider their permanence there satisfying. This argues in favor of a difference between the first and second immigrant generations; the second one, in fact, boast a lifetime in the country and a relative level of insertion there that correlates positively with perceived well-being.

Education

Education is also another important factor that is found to be associated with better adaptation and well-being (Beiser, 1988; Jayasuriya, Sang, & Fielding, 1992). This may be because education is also linked to other areas of social life, such as income, occupational status, culture specific knowledge, and skills (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). On the other hand, highly educated immigrants who have experienced loss of previously held status, or whose progress has been hindered because of their minority status, have been found to have higher psychological dysfunction (Aycan & Berry, 1996; Beiser, 1988; Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend, 1974). Lastly, further research has not found any relation (Christopher & Kulig, 2000; Herrero et al., 2011; Shin et al., 2007).

Network

Researchers have demonstrated that the presence in the new country of other people from the circle of family and friends can be important to facilitate the integration of the immigrants (Gurak & Caces, 1992; Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, & Spittel, 2001; Portes & Böröcz, 1989). The fact of having some contacts of one's own origin in the destination country creates two types of advantages. The first, being instrumental, offers the convenience of being able to easily acquire useful information, the attainment of a job, and so forth. The second is an emotional support generated from strong ties with one's own rela-

tives and friends (Hernández-Plaza, Pozo, & Alonso-Morillejo, 2004; Schweizer, Schnegg, & Berzborn, 1998). It is shown that such relationships contribute to the increase of the individual's well-being and improve their quality of life (Sonn, 2002). Literature highlights that immigrants tend to experience a loss of significant social ties when they leave their countries (Morrison, Laughlin, San Miguel, Smith, & Widaman, 1997; Schwarzer, Hahn, & Schröder, 1994; Vega, Kolody, Valle, & Weir, 1991) and, as a result, frequently have to rebuild their social networks and support sources. Herrero, Fuente, and Gracia (2011) point out how social support is an indicator of social well-being (SWB). Berry and colleagues postulated social support as one of the protective factors against potential stress of acculturation (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1997). Yeh and Inose (2003) revealed that social connectedness and social support network satisfaction contributed to 18.3% of the total variance of international students' acculturative stress. Kim (1999) also found that the size and satisfaction of the emotional and tangible social support network mediated the relation of ethnic attachment and loneliness in older Korean immigrants. A subjective factor that influences the decision to immigrate is the existence of supportive social networks in the host county (Amit & Riss 2007).

The Relationship between Well-being and Community Engagement

With the term community engagement, we are defining the process through which people (natives and immigrants) are engaged and actively participate in the life of their community (Fattori, Pozzi, Marzana, & Mannarini, 2015; Gele & Harsløf, 2012; Pozzi, Pistoni, & Alfieri, 2017). With this term it is possible to identify multiple forms of participation: those we can more generally label "civic engagement" (less structured and generically referring to the chance to take on a task for the community) and those more structured and confined to "volunteerism" (for a theoretical review on these constructs, see Marzana, 2011). In the present work, we prefer to use the term community engagement with a wide and inclusive meaning, inasmuch as the interests are centered on the possibility of taking responsibility for an individual and collective action for the benefit of the community (beyond one's own benefit), more than focusing on different ways in which this can be carried out. Immigrants' civic engagement in the hosting community is recognized in literature as an important protective factor of integration and well-being (Gilster, 2012; Marzana & Alfieri, 2015; Marzana, Alfieri, & Marta, 2016; Marzana, Damia, Alfieri & Marta, 2019; Stoll & Wong, 2007; Taurini, Paloma, García-Ramírez, Marzana, & Marta, 2017).

Besides strengthening the immigrants' social identity, community engagement likewise stimulates (Sonn, 2002) a positive self-view and the possibility for increasing one's self-efficacy (Pozzi, Meneghini, & Marta, 2019; Pozzi, Marta, Marzana, Gozzoli, & Ruggieri, 2014). A diverse set of research suggests that there are psychological and social benefits to community engagement, but also suggests that there are differences between forms of participation (Gilster, 2012).

When looking at how community engagement affects a person on individual level, it is interesting to consider what effects may be due to the type of community engagement, specifically, due to some aspects characterizing the type of activities carried out by participants within the associations. Sherrod, Flanagan, and Youniss (2002) point out the necessity of examining youth's engagement, in this regard, taking into account the various facets of the engagement in order to get beyond the usual categories of volunteer and political involvement, and considering general civic involvement with others in the community, as well. Literature does not offer explicit categorizations of the types of activities composing community engagement. In fact, any typology of these activities is even less studied when it comes to young immigrants.

We find one example of classification in a study by Stepick, Stepick, and Labissiere (2008), distinguishing four activity types: 1) political (i.e., registered to vote, engaging in political debates, joining demonstrations); 2) civic (i.e., assisting others alone or via organizations or programs); 3) expressive group membership (i.e., getting involved in athletic or ethnic organizations); and 4) social (i.e., going to church, socializing with peers, contributing and being of assistance within one's family). The aforementioned authors emphasize the urgency for research investigating the impact that these diverse activities have on immigrants, suggesting that the reason immigrants are less represented in the political arena may be linked to immigration status. Aside from identifying young immigrants' preferences regarding involvement, the choice of engagement could conceivably be related in other ways, for example, in connection with well-being. There are no empirical studies that compare different forms of community engagement. Therefore, the present work is on an exploratory plane regarding this presumed difference.

The Present Work

The present research project was born out of an interest for the specific outcome of community engagement among immigrant youth and was commissioned and granted by the National Youth Forum (Forum Nazionale dei Giovani, FNG).[1] In light of the theoretical overview presented, we propose in this work to explore well-being in young immigrants, with particular attention to the role of community engagement, through three aims: (a) to analyze differences between the engaged and not engaged as concerns well-being (in terms of self-esteem and knowledge of the hosting country's language and culture); (b) to verify whether community engagement is related to well-being, even when taking into account in the explicative model some variables that literature recognizes to be in relation with well-being, such as gender, education, generation, and network; (c) compare the different types of associations in which immigrants are involved, in order to verify potential differences in terms of well-being.

Method

Participants

The participants were 510 immigrant youth, aged from 19 to 29 years (M = 23.75, SD = 2.92), taking into consideration the age bracket defined by Arnett (2000, 2006) as constituting emerging adulthood (for details, please see Table 1).

The two groups of youth (engaged and not engaged) are comparable and do not present statistically significant differences in demographic variables. Recruitment was carried out by approaching over 100 Italian and ethnic associations in the Italian territory, as well as recreational sites, gymnasiums, work environments, universities, and so forth. We asked the young immigrant participants, both engaged and not engaged, for help recruiting others, explaining them what the research areas of inquiry were, and warranting confidentiality. The questionnaire was self-report and it was administrated in Italian language by two properly trained psychologists. We informed participants about privacy and data processing, and we made clear that participation was voluntary and unrewarded. Consent was requested from each participant in written form. None of the participants left the filling or showed signs of discomfort. The study protocol was approved by the Ethical Institutional Board of the FNG. Data was gathered for a period of time beginning in June 2015 until October 2016.

TABLE 1
Demographic information of the participants as a percentage

Demographic Variables	Engaged immigrants youth (59.4%)	Not engaged immigrants youth (41.6%)
Gender		
Females	51.2	54.3
Males	48.8	45.7
Marital status		
Single	90.0	74.9
In couple	10.0	25.1
Education level		
Elementary or middle school	20.4	23.9
High school	56.8	52.8
Bachelors	16.7	11.9
Specialized	6.1	11.4
Occupation		
Students	33.7	29.0
Employed students	40.6	26.7
Employed	25.7	44.3
Documents		
Residency permit	60.3	60.4
Work permit	3.1	8.1
Visa	3.1	2.5
Italian nationality	29.7	24.4
Not in the possession of any documents	3.8	4.6
Country of birth		
Africa	39.0	34.0
Europe	19.0	21.8
Asia	12.3	17.0
South America	7.7	9.7
Italy (second generation)	22.0	17.5
Type of association in which they are engaged		
Civic	54.9	
Expressive	21.8	
Social	18.4	
Political	4.9	

Measures

The participants were asked to complete a paper questionnaire composed of sociodemographic variables (gender, age, education level, occupation, marital status, country of birth, etc.) and the following measures:

Community engagement. To investigate the community engagement of participants, an item was created ad hoc — "Do you actively take part in some associations (such as social, cultural, sports, recreational, etc.?") — with a *yes/no*-type answer. In order to avoid confusion with those people who were on the receiving end of the activities promoted by the associations, but not themselves engaged there, we asked them to explain what exactly they do in that organization through an open-ended question ("Can you tell us what you do in the association in which you take part?"). We compared the answers to the two questions to verify the correctness of the information and to assign each person to one of the two groups (engaged or not engaged). Furthermore, we asked the people who claimed to be engaged in an organization the type of association in which they are involved, according to the classification utilized by Stepick et al. (2008) based on four categories (political, civic, expressive, and social).

Self-esteem. To investigate self-esteem, we utilized an Italian validation (Prezza, Trombaccia, & Armento, 1997) of Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965). This is an instrument aimed at measuring the adolescents' level of self-esteem, composed of 10 items (e.g., "I think I am worth at least as much as others") on a 5-step scale (from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*).

Knowledge of Italy culture. We investigated the perception of knowing the hosting country through three items created ad hoc. These measure how much people feel they know the culture, language, and laws of the hosting country (e.g., "How much do you feel you know Italian (values, traditions, history, etc.)?") through a 5-step Likert scale (from 1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *Very much*).

Knowledge of Italian language. The frequency of the use of the Italian language is investigated through four ad hoc items, in which the request is to indicate how often the latter is used in some daily contexts (at work, with the family, with friends, with institutions) on a 3-step Likert scale (from 1 = *Never* to 3 = *Always*) (e.g., "How often do you speak Italian with your friends?").

Network. Item ad hoc to measure if the participants have or not close relatives in the country of origin. This data permit to know if they can count of close relatives in the new country.

Data Analysis

To verify the null hypothesis that the two groups of immigrants (engaged vs. not engaged) were similar, we used the Bayesian factor (BF) to reach statistically significant evidence. To test such a hypothesis was possible by using the BF, which is a ratio between the likelihood of the data given null-hypothesis and that given to the alternative (Liang, Paulo, Molina, Clyde, & Berger, 2008; Masson, 2011; Nuzzo, 2014; Rouder, 2014). This technique is based on Bayes' theorem and, through this approach, uses a numerical value of the grade of credibility of a data hypothesis before observing the data, with the aim to associate a numeric value to the grade of credibility of that same hypothesis subsequent to the observation of the data (see for example Rouder, Speckman, Sun, Morey, & Iverson, 2009). This allows for the affirmation that the detectible differences in the two groups are not attributable to their varied sociodemographic characteristics. Figure 1 in fact indicates that the evidence is strong for the education and network variables, and between moderate to strong for gender and generation. Using BF, we can confirm that a model including similar group is more probable than a model including different groups, so that we can confirm that the two groups of immigrants (engaged vs. not engaged) are statistically similar with a significant BF.

In order to respond to the first objective, we calculated *t*-tests for independent samples, in which the independent variable (IV) is community engagement (belonging to the group of the engaged or not engaged). The dependent variables (DVs) are self-esteem, knowledge of Italy culture, and knowledge of Italian language.

To answer the second objective, we utilized the generalized linear model (for more information, see for example Coxe, West, & Aiken, 2013; Nelder, & Wedderburn, 1972). The generalized linear model is an extension of the classic general linear model. This model does not assume, necessarily, a normal distribution of variables and can accept a violation of sphericity (Agresti & Kateri, 2011). Using this model, the dependent variable may or may not be normally distributed. Predictors can also be a categorical variable, such as binary, defining two groups. Ordinal and scale variables are also allowed. In the present work, in fact, group, gender, generation, and network variables were, in our model, binary predictors. Education was an ordinal predictor, representing three increasing levels of education.

An offset term is considered the structural predictor corresponding to the highest level of an ordinal predictor, or to one of the two levels of a binary predictor. When the predictor is ordinal, a significance in the estimated positive coefficient of the levels of this variable means that lower levels of such a variable (eg., lower education) corresponds significantly to lower levels of a dependent variable. Also, in the case of a binary predictor, if significant, the sign of a beta coefficient drives the significance of being related to one group or the other. Finally, responding to the last objective, we calculated an analysis of variance (ANOVA) in which the IV is the type of association in which young immigrants are involved and the DVs are the outcomes of well-being previously listed.

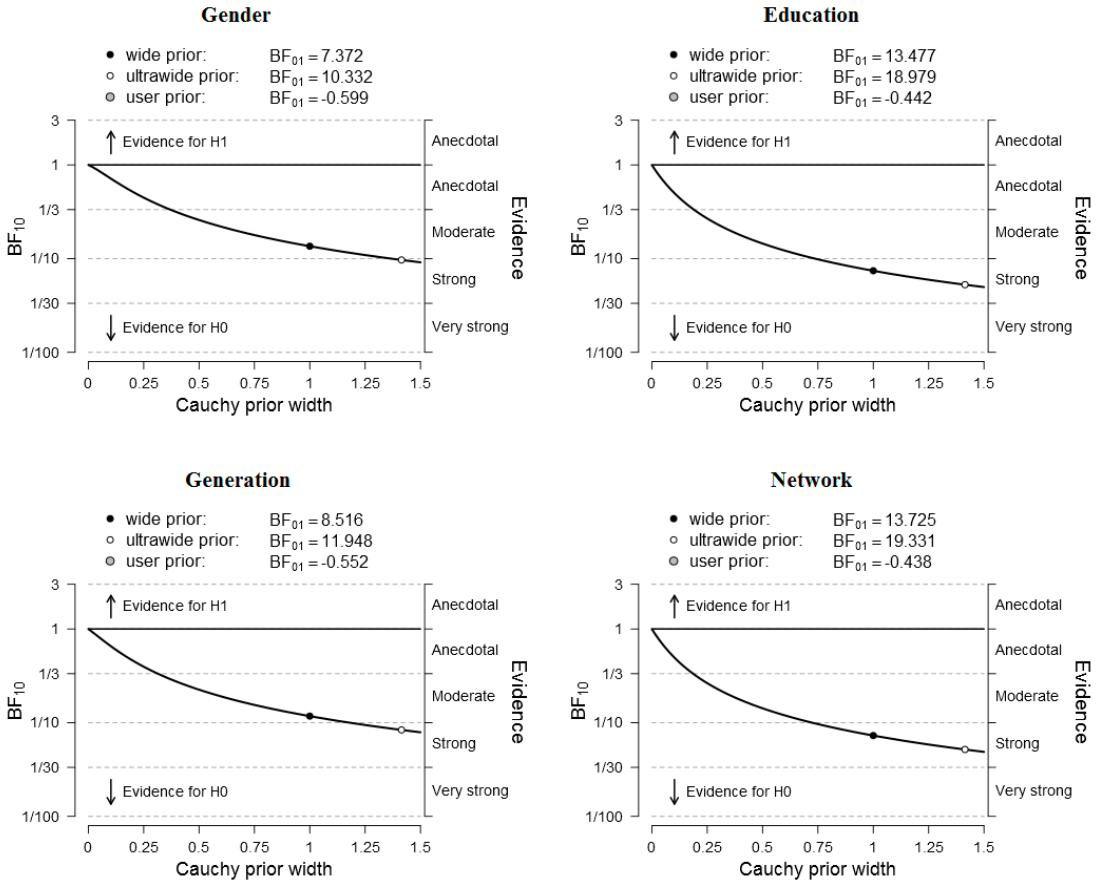

FIGURE 1
BF analyses and relative evidences.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents range, means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha, and correlations of DVs in the whole sample. Concerning the first aim, engaged young immigrants report higher means in a statistically significant way for all of the variables considered, respectively, self-esteem: $t(504) = -1.92$, $p < .05$; knowledge of Italy culture: $t(513) = -2.77$, $p < .05$; and knowledge of Italian language: $t(514) = -3.33$, $p < .001$. Figure 2 reports the means in the two groups for the variables considered. The greatest discrepancy in the two groups is found with respect to knowledge of Italy culture ($\Delta = .21$), followed by knowledge of Italian language ($\Delta = .12$), and finally self-esteem ($\Delta = .11$).

TABLE 2
Range, means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha,
and correlations of the variables utilized for the whole sample

	Min.	Max.	*M (SD)*	1	2	3
1. Self-esteem [a]	1.70	5.00	3.83 (0.69)	-	.21**	.21**
2. Knowledge of Italy culture [a]	1.00	5.00	3.64 (0.90)		-	.55**
3. Knowledge of Italian language [b]	1.00	3.00	2.61 (0.43)			-
Cronbach's α				.80	.77	.68

Note: [a] Range 1-5; [b] Range 1-3.
** $p < .01$

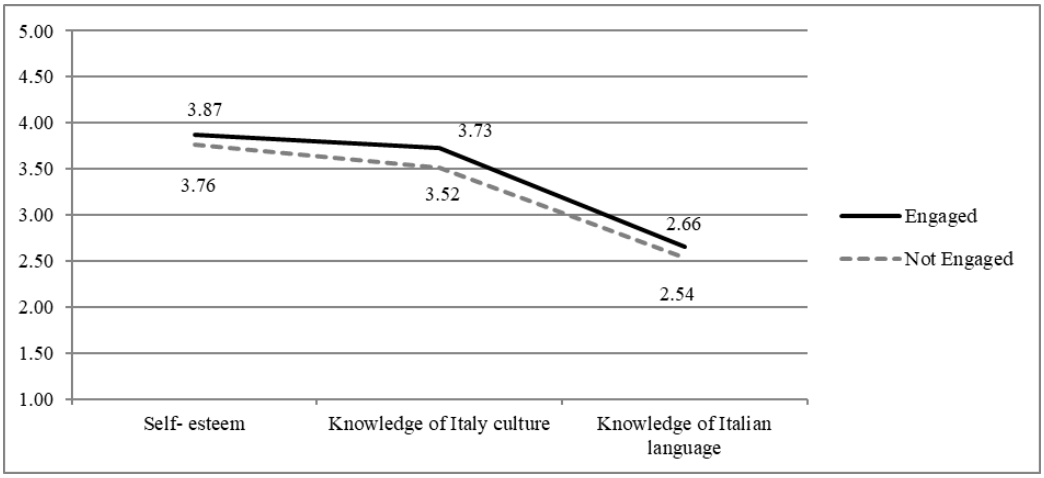

FIGURE 2
Difference in the means between the two groups for the variables considered.

Regarding the second aim, the generalized linear model demonstrates that the group of belonging (engaged vs. not engaged) is a statistically significant variable for all of the DVs considered (Table 3). In particular, regarding self-esteem, the levels of education also appear statistically significant (those having a middle or elementary school diploma demonstrate lower self-esteem compared to those having a bachelors), the generation (first generation immigrants report higher self-esteem compared with the second),

TABLE 3
Results of generalized linear model

	Self-esteem				Knowledge of Italy culture				Knowledge of Italian language			
	B	*SE*	Wald Chi square	*p*	*B*	*SE*	Wald Chi square	*p*	*B*	*SE*	Wald Chi square	*p*
(Intercept)	3.96	.10	1332.62	.000	4.54	.13	1146.95	.000	3.01	.06	2224.32	.000
[Group = 0]	–.13	.06	4.46	.035	–.18	.08	5.19	.023	–.11	.03	8.99	.003
[Group = 1]	0				0				0			
[Education = 1]	–.31	.09	10.10	.001	–.68	.12	32.34	.000	–.23	.05	16.28	.000
[Education = 2]	–.02	.08	.06	.800	–.23	.09	5.78	.016	–.02	.04	.28	.597
[Education = 3]	0				0				0			
[Gender = 1]	–.01	.06	.07	.787	–.06	.08	.65	.420	–.05	.03	1.73	.188
[Gender = 2]	0				0				0			
[Generation = 1]	.15	.08	3.80	.051	–.45	.10	20.69	.000	–.21	.04	19.71	.000
[Generation = 2]	0				0				0			
[Network = 1]	–.14	.07	4.17	.041	–.19	.08	4.55	.033	–.12	.04	8.59	.003
[Network = 2]	0				0				0			
(Scale)	.46	.03			.71	.04			.16	.01		

Note: *SE* = standard error.

and the network (those having close relatives in the country of origin report lower levels of self-esteem compared with those having all their relatives in the hosting country). Regarding the knowledge of Italy culture, statistic significances emerge also with respect to level of education (the lower it is, the less the immigrants feel to have knowledge of Italy culture), to the generations (the first report lower levels compared to the second), and to network (those with relatives in the country of origin report less Italian knowledge compared with those who do not). Finally, concerning the knowledge of Italian language, and also appearing to be statistically significant, is education level (those having completed elementary or middle school report lower self-esteem compared to those with a degree), generation (the first reports lower levels compared with the second), and network (those with relatives in the country of origin report less knowledge of the Italian language compared with those who do not). The complete results of the generalized linear model are shown in Table 3. Finally, as regards the third aim, which concerns the different types of associations investigated, statistically significant differences emerge for all of the dependent variables considered, with the exception of knowledge of the Italian language, specifically: self-esteem, $F(3, 287) = 2.97$, $p < .05$; knowledge of Italian language, $F(3, 291) = 0.94$, $p = ns$; knowledge of Italy culture, $F(3, 292) = 2.63$, $p < .05$. Figure 3 shows the mean for the dependent variables that are statistically significant.

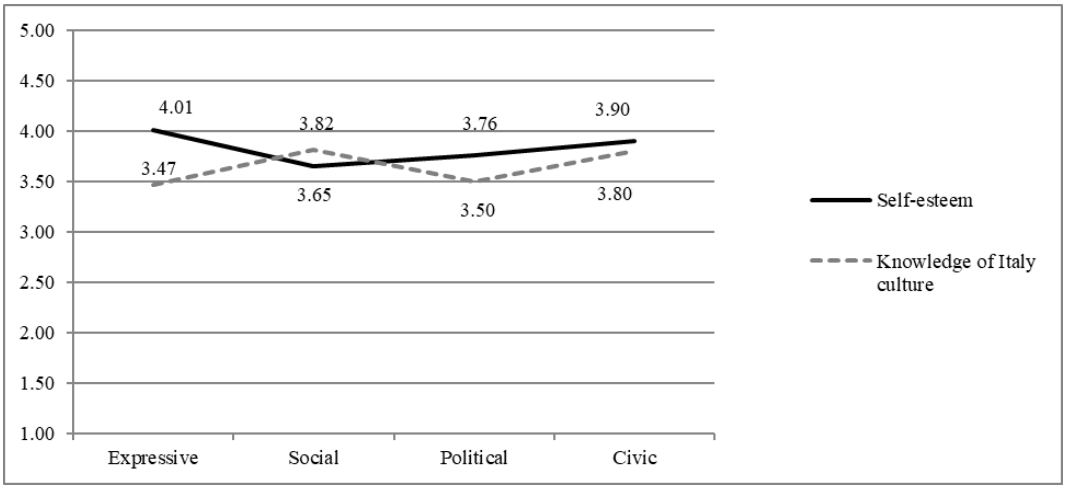

FIGURE 3
Difference in the means between the types of organizations in which young people are committed.

DISCUSSION

The present explorative research aimed to investigate the relationship between community engagement and well-being (measured in this work with self-esteem and linguistic and cultural competences) in a sample of young immigrants in Italy. In answer to the first aim of the present work, concerning the differences in the well-being of engaged and not engaged youth, the former group reports higher means in all the variables of well-being explored (self-esteem, knowing the language and culture of the hosting country). Furthermore, such differences remain even if put in relation with other variables related to well-being (gender, education level, generation, network). In concordance with the literature, being a first or second generation immigrant, educational qualification and network, such as the presence of their own familial network in the new country, appear to be positively related with well-being, in all dependent variables con-

sidered for the definition of well-being (Beiser, 1988; Hernández-Plaza, et al., 2004; Jayasuriya et al., 1992; Marzana, Alfieri, & Marta, 2016; Schweizer, et al., 1998). Gender, however, does not appear to be a statistically significant variable in our sampling. On the other hand, some studies reported no significant gender difference on psychological distress (e.g., Chou, 2007; Christopher, & Kulig, 2000; Furnham & Tresize, 1981; Herrero et al., 2011; Shin et al., 2007). It is particularly interesting to note that the more structural aspects (education level and belonging to the first or second generation) and more relational aspects (like the presence of familial relations in the hosting country) are similarly related to a well-being understood as a positive evaluation of oneself and one's own life, and simultaneously knowledge and competence in one's own life context. This perspective allows the sense of well-being to expand, introducing variables both of self-perception as well as one's competences and knowledge, and at the same time ,the factors connected with this refer both to the condition of birth and education, as well as relational dimensions with one's own primary network and with the larger society (in the case of community engagement). However, while not denying the importance of such statistically significant relations — which we will not discuss in detail because it is beyond the aims of this paper — our work overall highlights this last cited relation, that of community engagement and well-being.

If, in the literature on immigrants' well-being, there are some researches that consider the structural variables (belonging to the first or second generation and the role of education level) and relational variables (such as the presence in the new country of one's primary network), contributions are scarce regarding the function of immigrants within their own community of reference (for some exceptions, see Born, Marzana, Alfieri, & Gavray, 2015; Marzana, Alfieri, & Marta, 2016). The results of the present work open the door for the idea that community engagement, in a diverse range of associations, can in itself be a vehicle for protagonism, which supports so-called "active citizenship" in immigrants and thus the possibility of feeling better (Gilster, 2012; Stoll & Wong, 2007).

What is also interesting is the result concerning the different types of activities in which the young immigrants devote their time; inasmuch as the present work highlights how different type of associations support aspects linked to variation of well-being. The expressive activities, followed by the civic ones, mainly promote self-esteem. Regarding the former, these results are not surprising for two reasons: first, because they include ethnic organizations in the most varied forms of cultural promotion, and thus put the spotlights right on the immigrants' culture; secondly, because activities included within this type are linked to aspects such as physical performance (sports organizations are in fact included) or otherwise related personal skills or characteristics (eg. choir, arts organizations, etc.). In parallel, civic activities are appointed for helping others, including those who are in a fragile state or in great need, therefore, contributing to build the self-image of a "good" person, and thus worthy for positive behavior (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Finally, social organizations promote knowledge of Italian language and culture for the most part; such organizations are particularly those in which people can experience a greater sense of affiliation, as they include religious and self- and mutual- help organizations. These organizations, which are based on communication, are likely more capable than others in allowing young immigrants to experience the Italian language, specifically because of the relationships that are built in these contexts.

The present work has some important limitations. The first limit is the lack of a longitudinal research design. This would have allowed us to investigate the cause-effect connection between community engagement and well-being: whether immigrant youth tend to engage more, or, as supported in the present work, whether community engagement is a preferential way to produce well-being. A biunique relationship between engagement and well-being is not, however, to be excluded. Furthermore, although the sample was large, it did not fit representative sampling criteria. Therefore, caution is needed when generalizing our

findings to the whole population of Italian immigrants. Finally, only a self-report instrument was used. Despite the advantages of using this instrument — for example, to be able to monitor that the two groups (engaged vs. not engaged) are similar in terms of sociodemographic characteristics — it only gave us the respondents' own views and may, to various degrees, be susceptible to social desirability. Thus, the use of a multimethod approach should be germane.

In the future, the present work could be developed in a variety of ways. In the first place, we can take into consideration other aspects of well-being, especially those related to contextual or community well-being (Prilleltensky, 2008) or to generative well-being (e.g., Bertoni, Carrà, Iafrate, Zanchettin, & Parise, 2018; Parise, Pagani, Bertoni, & Iafrate, 2019). Furthermore, other sociodemographic variables could be taken into consideration that could be related to the considered outcomes, for example, the young immigrants' occupation, country of origin, and religion. It is conceivable that some social groups who have been in Italy longer (e.g., immigrants from North Africa) have implemented more organized strategies for receiving fellow countrymen than the populations of more recent immigrations (e.g., Eastern Europe). In addition, it is plausible that young immigrants who have the same religious affiliation in their country of origin and the host country find preferential channels of well-being compared to other young people with different faiths. Moreover, it would be important to consider the number of hours of weekly or monthly involvement and the number of associations in which the young immigrants participate. It is easily conceivable, in fact, that those who spend more time in this activity, and/or are involved in multiple associations or groups simultaneously, would also report higher levels of well-being. Also, given the importance of the family background in young adulthood in the Italian context (e.g., Alfieri, Barni, Rosnati, & Marta, 2014; Alfieri & Lanz, 2015; Alfieri, Rosina, Sironi, Marta, & Marzana, 2015; Alfieri et al., 2016; Barni, Alfieri, Marta, & Rosnati, 2013; Manzi, Parise, Iafrate, Sedikides, & Vignoles, 2015; Parise, Manzi, Donato, & Iafrate, 2017; Parise, Donato, Pagani, Ribeiro, & Manzi, 2015), future research could consider the role of family relations for young immigrants well-being. Another interesting development, related to the possibility of significantly increasing the number of participants, could be a generational analysis of the participants (youth vs. adult).

Conclusion

The present work, while being an exploratory study, shows and confirms the close relationship between community engagement and the construct of the personal conditions (self-esteem) and knowledge and skills (linguistic and contextual) that allow the promotion of well-being. The important applicative consequences of the present work are evident.

Well-being should be the principle objective of every country: to feel well means, in fact, to feel in harmony with oneself and with others. The fact that community engagement is connected to a difference in the perception of well-being, how it is highlighted in the present study, is of certain scientific and applicative interest. Firstly, because it puts well-being back into a dynamic position: it is in fact an effect linked to an action, the product of a construction, and not the fruit of pre-existing and fixed conditions, which are often identified in most economic and social opportunities (Prilleltensky, 2008). Secondly, because it underlines the biunique relation between the individual and the context: individual well-being passes from social engagement, and the community may, in a generative viewpoint, restore well-being in turn. The individual is thus the builder of their own well-being and positive self-evaluation, and also of the understandings that improve their level of life in a determined context, but it is closely linked with others in a process that mutually reinforces oneself and the other, oneself and the community.

We have to underline how community engagement is free and often informal (even where it shows up in an organized context). For the individual it has the characteristics of informality, in fact, most of the time not requiring bureaucratic recognition, and this means that anyone can engage and obtain, therefore, the hoped-for benefit for oneself and for others. Community engagement is thus configured as a democratic tool "within anyone's reach," in accordance with each person's possibility and ability, and lacking institutional constraints. In the immigrants' case, this element is anything but irrelevant if we think of the debate on the rights of formal citizenship, which is always open and highly complex.

The present research also highlights the importance of promoting community engagement among those who do not activate it within their community in any way. But it is also clearly crucial to promote the maintenance of such community engagement in those who have already undertaken some form of engagement, as Born and colleagues (2015) showed in a recent study. It is important that the experience of community engagement allows youth to experience their own agency, to have "the opportunity to see themselves as political agents in the making of history instead of defining themselves as decent but compliant citizens" (Youniss & Yates, 1997, p. 1). Literature on the topic highlights, in fact, that a negative engagement experience, which is disappointing, leaves a mark and a burden on one's personal life choices even more so than disengagement (Alfieri & Marta, 2011; Born et al., 2015; Marta et al., 2010; Marzana, 2011). The associations are called on, in this sense, to supervise the path of community engagement by paying attention to the needs of the individual — and in particular to young immigrants — along with the specific type of activities in which the young people prefer to become active.

Note

1. The National Youth Forum is the only National platform of Italian youth organizations, containing more than 75 organizations, and representing around 4 million young people. The National Youth Forum is a member of the European Youth Forum (YFJ) that represents the interests of European youth in international institutions.

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