

Romanian migrants' journeys as transformational entrepreneurs in London

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Abstract

Migrant entrepreneurship is recognized as an essential economic driver for host and home countries. However, Eastern European entrepreneurs' social initiatives and contributions are rarely acknowledged, shadowed by their image of precarity and economic survival in host countries. This Interpretative Phenomenological Study (IPA) challenges this paucity by investigating how 18 London-based Romanian migrant entrepreneurs interviewed (LRMEs) enable transformational entrepreneurial practices transcending their "individual subsistence to create jobs and income for others" (Schoar, 2010, p.5) and contributing positively to Britain's social fiber. Specifically, this interdisciplinary study draws on Berry's acculturation model (1997, 2003, 2005) and social learning and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1971, 1977). This article contributes to the nascent transformational entrepreneurship scholarship and practice (TE) and policy. Specifically, it demonstrates how these Romanian migrant entrepreneurs enable acculturative belonging for themselves and other stakeholders as they enact through their everyday transformational entrepreneurship practices of role modelling, encouraging other migrants to pursue a social-economic entrepreneurial path and acculturative mentoring, supporting them to become custodians of bicultural values and customs, empowered to address social injustice and discrimination.

Keywords: interpretative phenomenological analysis, migrant entrepreneurship, transformational leadership

Introduction

It is widely recognised that entrepreneurship, and consequently, migrant entrepreneurship, is a critical factor in socioeconomic development (Acs *et al.*, 2014; Vertovec, 2020). However, due to the sluggish transition away from the conventional universalist perspective and toward recognition of its varied diversity and its socioeconomic transformational potential embedded and exhibited via its everyday practices, migrant entrepreneurship's social effect and its transformational leadership potential have been devalued and delayed (Evansluong *et al.*, 2019; Rayburn and Ochieng, 2022; Vertovec, 2019; 2020).

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Over the past ten years, academics have adopted a more interdisciplinary approach, enabling the study of migrant entrepreneurship practices to go beyond its conventional, financial, and necessity-based boundaries. The potential for transformational leadership in migrant entrepreneurship was unlocked through transformational entrepreneurship practices of role-modelling, acculturative mentoring and transformational leadership that integrate social interactions, learning, and technology to serve as a catalyst for leading social change (Giraldo *et al.*, 2020; Rayburn and Ochieng, 2022; Marmer, 2012).

Addressing this knowledge gap which could unlock the transformative potential embedded in Romanian migrant entrepreneurship in superdiverse London, this IPA study launches an interdisciplinary inquiry into how these entrepreneurs' transformational entrepreneurial practices enable acculturative belonging for themselves and other stakeholders. Furthermore, to fulfil its aim, it draws on transformational entrepreneurship (Maas *et al.*, 2019) and Berry's acculturation model (1997, 2003, 2005) and social learning and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1971, 1977) to investigate how these migrant entrepreneurs' transformative entrepreneurship practices enable acculturative belonging for themselves and other stakeholders in London.

This study employs a qualitative IPA perspective, which aligns with the methodological tradition (Alase, 2018) of prioritizing and amplifying the voices of 18 Romanian migrant entrepreneurs who shared their experiences of acculturative belonging through their entrepreneurial practices in London, United Kingdom, during semi-structured interviews conducted between 2019-2020, averaging 50 minutes each.

Therefore, this interdisciplinary study contributes to the nascent transformational entrepreneurship scholarship and practice (TE) and social psychology literature (i.e. acculturative belonging) by examining this largely unexplored social everydayness lens embedded in migrant entrepreneurship practices (Evansluong *et al.*, 2019; Dheer, 2018). It showcases how transformational entrepreneurial practices of role modelling, acculturative mentoring and transformational leadership enable these migrant entrepreneurs' acculturative belonging and other stakeholders. Consequently, this interdisciplinary approach highlights TE's capacity to develop novel solutions to a range of societal problems as well as overcome anti-immigrant social stigma (Moroşanu, 2018) and the crucial part that entrepreneurial practices play in tackling global concerns (Dicuonzo *et al.*, 2021; Marmer, 2012; Maas *et al.*, 2019).

This paper has the following structure: section one presents an overview of the theoretical and empirical background relevant to the topic; section two justifies the IPA research methodology and method suitable for this study; section three presents the research findings and discusses

them in the light of previous empirical evidence; section four outlines this article's theoretical and practical contributions, in the light of its context and time-bound limitations and future research directions; finally section five succinctly presents the conclusion of this article.

1. Theoretical background and context

This study's interdisciplinarity resides at the intersection of transformational leadership, which anchors the nascent discipline of transformational entrepreneurship (TE) and social psychology, which supports the understanding of acculturative belonging through the lens of Berry's acculturation model (1997, 2003, 2005).

1.1. This study's context

Reasoning the contextual migrant entrepreneurship perspective promoted by renowned scholars (Baker and Welter, 2020; Welter *et al.*, 2019; Welter, 2020), this article also acknowledges the significance of context in understanding these migrant entrepreneurs' experiences of acculturative belonging. It is through this contextual lens that these migrant entrepreneurs' transformational practices have the potential to enable social change in a super-diverse London metropolis (Vertovec, 2020). Furthermore, according to the British Office of National Statistics (2019), Romanian entrepreneurs are members of the second-largest community of EU migrants in the UK and the youngest community of migrant entrepreneurs in the UK, according to the Centre for Entrepreneurs Report (2015).

1.2. Transformational entrepreneurs as transformational leaders

According to Bass (1990) and Burns (1998), transformational leaders inspire others to become role models and empower their followers to be creative and imaginative solutions to economic and social problems that align with organizational goals and vision. This beneficial influence transcends organizational borders to bring positive change in the immediate community and broader society. As a result, the transformative leader is said to engage in transformational entrepreneurship (Maas *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, as these migrant entrepreneurs become transformational leaders, they serve as community role models, motivating their staff and other stakeholders to pursue positive social change and thus replace their "winner-takes-all" mentality with one of "let's-grow-together" (Gunawan *et al.*,

2021). Furthermore, the CEO-entrepreneur becomes a transformative leader, enabling positive socioeconomic change, and eventually serves as an example for their society through this mindset that embraces and cares for the greater social good of the broader community, enabling the sustainable development of the migrant enterprise (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022).

Although the discipline of transformational entrepreneurship is still in its infancy (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022), more and more research has emerged in the last ten years showing how entrepreneurs engage in transformational leadership through encouraging positive organizational and social change, addressing social injustice and discriminatory practices (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022; Maas *et al.*, 2019).

However, there needs to be more understanding of transformational entrepreneurship practices, which enable social change without sacrificing business objectives. Their transformative leadership role modelling motivates other stakeholders to become change agents (Xu and Linlin, 2022). Increasing empirical evidence suggests that by fulfilling their role as transformational leaders, transformational entrepreneurs face several complex challenges in bringing about social change in a dynamic and ever-changing global context where various cultural, social, and economic goals are expected to converge to serve the greater good. However, they should not be held solely accountable for this challenging task (Maas *et al.*, 2019).

Against this theoretical and empirical landscape, this study challenges the image of precarity and necessity surrounding migrant entrepreneurship, specifically Eastern European migrant entrepreneurship (Shubin and Dickey, 2013; Gurau *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it proposes a fresh perspective on migrant entrepreneurship, launching an inquiry into its untapped transformational potential to understand how these migrant entrepreneurs' everyday practices enable acculturative belonging for these migrant entrepreneurs and other stakeholders by employing Berry's acculturative model (1997, 2003, 2005).

1.3. Berry's acculturation model

A growing body of research defines acculturation as a dynamic process of change, maintenance, and acquisition of identities, attitudes, values, and behaviors related to both the heritage culture and the host society culture (Harim and Hue, 2022)

However, Berry's acculturation model (1997, 2003, 2005) is considered for this study because it is one of the most frequently referenced models and considers immigrants' agency and acculturative changes. Following this theory, immigrants' acculturation is influenced by their involvement in both the culture of the host country and their own country of origin. As a result, immigrants may experience

assimilation (as they distance themselves from their own culture in favour of participating in that of their host nation), social inclusion (as they strike a balance between participating in the host culture and their own culture of origin); social segregation (as they participate in co-national enclaves), and marginalization (when they give up participating in any culture, estranging themselves from any social interaction).

Within this context, migrants' acculturative practices are modified through various levels of social contact, which serve as settings for social learning (Bandura, 1971), as well as possibilities for exposure to and engagement with their culture of origin and the host nation (Berry *et al.*, 2011). Although acculturation is a "...dual [bidirectional] process of cultural and psychological change resulting from contact between two or more cultural [sic] groups and their members," the contextual dynamics incorporated into Berry's model (1997, 2003, 2005) would not be sufficient if these immigrants have not been able to exercise his or her agency by enabling the context to change. It entails modifications to social structures, institutions, and cultural norms at the collective level. At the micro level, "it involves changes in a person's behavioural repertoire" (Berry, 2005, p. 698).

Within this study, acculturative belonging is used interchangeably and thus understood as social inclusion, assimilation and social segregation enabling practices of transformational migrant entrepreneurship. However, to understand how these transformational entrepreneurship practices enable acculturative belonging for London-based Romanian migrant entrepreneurs, this study draws on social learning and self-efficacy theories (Bandura, 1971, 1977) discussed in the following section of this paper.

1.4. Social learning theory and self-efficacy

Self-efficacy, rooted in social psychology, is crucial to entrepreneurship and the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971, 1977). It refers to one's confidence in their entrepreneurial qualities and capabilities, which makes one see their entrepreneurial identity as appropriate and credible in a specific context (Wennberg *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, entrepreneurial self-efficacy is seen to be formed by social role expectations (Qin and Estrin, 2015) and by entrepreneurial role models (Wyrwich *et al.*, 2016). As a result, it is a driver of entrepreneurs' behaviours and tactics (Barberis and Solano, 2018; Evansluong *et al.*, 2019).

Evidence suggests that low self-efficacy is more prevalent among women migrant entrepreneurs who are pursuing entrepreneurship from a disadvantageous position (Azmat, 2013), from countries with limited entrepreneurial traditions, such as Eastern Europe or where the "ideal"

entrepreneurial identity persists around masculinity (Villares-Varela and Essers, 2019). People with high self-efficacy are more aware of entrepreneurial role models and potential future successes, which is in line with the perspective of transformational entrepreneurship (Liu *et al.*, 2019). According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory, this bolsters the comprehension of why businesspeople with high levels of self-efficacy encourage and inspire others to effectuate positive social change, and by doing so, they make it possible for such transformational entrepreneurial practices to have an impact across contexts and stakeholders (Liu *et al.*, 2019). As a result, the transformative behaviours of these immigrants, which promote a sense of acculturative belonging for them, may also promote a sense of acculturative belonging for other stakeholders, including their employees and business partners.

This IPA study fills this knowledge gap by considering the theoretical and empirical foundation that highlights the significance of understanding the impact transformational entrepreneurship practices have in fostering positive social change in diverse societies like Britain and, more specifically, within the super-diverse London metropolis (Vertovec, 2020). This study contributes to the emerging transformational entrepreneurship scholarship, practice, and policy by examining how 18 London-based Romanian immigrant entrepreneurs (LRMEs) enable transformational entrepreneurial practices to build a legacy of socio-economic value benefiting the larger host society.

2. Research design

This study uses a phenomenological interpretative technique (IPA), continuing the tradition of earlier researchers who supported phenomenology because of its capacity to delve deeper into meaning (Alase, 2017). As a journey of "becoming," which has multiple meanings, the interpretive epistemological perspective prioritizes "understanding the social environment that individuals have produced and which they reproduce via their continued behaviors" (Blaikie, 2010, p. 124). (Alase, 2017). Inductive reasoning is considered more appropriate for this interpretative phenomenological philosophy than the "hypothetico-deductive" version, which concentrates on evaluating preexisting theory (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The research methodology that was appropriate for this IPA study comprised the characteristics of the iterative process of accessing and mixing classic and modern purposive sampling techniques, including derived rapport, time-space, snowball, and e-snowballing sampling via Facebook (Chitac and Knowles, 2019), to sample 18 Romanian immigrant business owners in London. This sample size is consistent with the IPA tradition (Alase, 2017). It has been justified as a point of empirical saturation, where no new emergent themes across interviews and within interviews were found after

conducting any additional interviews (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). Semi-structured interviews and field notes were used to collect data, then classified into emerging themes organized as open and collaborative codes and analysed using NVivo12.

Given that IPA is portrayed as “merely doing what human beings do. OK, it’s doing it in more detail, it’s doing it more steadfastly, but it’s an essential human process that is happening in the research’s endeavour” (Smith, 2019, p. 171), the thematic analysis has been launched across the interviews and within each of the interview (Braun and Clarke, 2020; 2021). The data analysis is structured into three stages. First, a descriptive analysis of the London-based Romanian entrepreneurs’ demographic profiles is presented. Secondly, a summary of the main research findings which align with this study’s aim is created, and interpretative discussions are embedded based on the critical assessment of how these research findings are relevant within the interdisciplinary debate on transformational entrepreneurship.

GDPR (2018) ethical research regulations were carefully considered, including participant information sheet and research briefing, participant consent and right to withdraw and their confidentiality and anonymity respected.

3. Research findings and discussion

This section presents and discusses the research findings aligned with the aim of this study of investigating how these migrant entrepreneurs’ transformative entrepreneurship practices of role modelling, acculturative mentoring and transformational leadership enable acculturative belonging for themselves and other stakeholders.

Following this methodological approach and the theoretical and empirical framework detailed above, this study’s research findings are organized into three transformative entrepreneurship practices, such as role modelling, transformational leadership and acculturative mentoring, portrayed as enablers of acculturative belonging for the migrant entrepreneurs interviewed as well and for other stakeholders.

3.1. Research participants’ demographics

Based on Table 1, an equal number of male and female Romanian immigrant business owners with headquarters in London, United Kingdom, and an average age of 39 make up the sample of research participants interviewed for this study. The majority began firms in the products and

services, construction, and real estate sectors after completing their higher education (a Bachelor's or Master's degree) in the EU. At the same time, the remaining minority started businesses in management consulting and healthcare. Additionally, they generated an average of 19 jobs, with only four Romanian immigrant business owners catering to their ethnic market. The rest of their products and services were aimed at the British market.

Table 1. Research participants' demographics

| Participants Coded Names | Age | Highest Level of Education | SIC Industries | No. of Employees | Market Served |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Radu | 37 | Bachelor Degree | Consumer goods & services | 3 | British Market |
| Claudiu | 47 | High School | Construction & Real Estate | 20 | British Market |
| Gabriel | 26 | Bachelor Degree | Consumer goods & services | 20 | British Market |
| Alexe | 33 | High School | Construction & Real Estate | 56 | British Market |
| Dan | 36 | Bachelor Degree | Construction & Real Estate | 60 | British Market |
| Codrut | 71 | High School | Consumer goods & services | 20 | British Market |
| Silviu | 36 | High School | Construction & Real Estate | 20 | British Market |
| Seba | 32 | Bachelor Degree | Construction & Real estate | 15 | British Market |
| Ionel | 45 | Bachelor Degree | Construction & Real estate | 100 | British Market |
| Diana | 23 | Master Degree | Consumer goods & services | 5 | British Market |
| Loredana | 40 | High School | Consumer goods & services | 15 | Ethnic Market |
| Veronica | 45 | Bachelor Degree | Management consultancy | 1 | Ethnic Market |
| Raluca | 38 | Bachelor Degree | Consumer goods & services | 4 | British Market |
| Iulia | 40 | Bachelor degree | Consumer goods & services | 1 | Ethnic Market |
| Andreea | 32 | Bachelor Degree | Consumer goods & services | 3 | Ethnic Market |
| Claudia | 34 | Master Degree | Management consultancy | 1 | British Market |
| Valentina | 41 | Bachelor degree | Consumer goods & services | 1 | British Market |
| Eca | 47 | Master Degree | Healthcare | 1 | British Market |

Source: Researcher's own

According to the Romanian migrant entrepreneurs included in this study, their transformational entrepreneurship practices reason with those of previous scholars (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022; Gunawan *et al.*, 2021; Maas *et al.*, 2019), such as role modelling as transformational leaders and acculturative mentoring.

3.2. Acculturative belonging through role modelling as transformational leaders

The London-based Romanian migrant entrepreneurs interviewed shared how entrepreneurship enabled them to reach beyond the economic motivation to address “anti-immigrant” social stigma

(Moroşanu, 2018) as they share what they are experiencing in British society due to their Romanian identity:

“When you say that you are Romanian, everyone thinks of you the worse, in all honesty, because the overall image of the Romanians here is not favourable. However, is it essential to put everybody in the same pot?” (...) (Entrepreneur Codrut)

Their feelings of injustice suffered because of the “unacceptable otherness” of these immigrants, emphasizing cherry-picked characteristics contradicting the host social normativity and expectations (Virgili, 2020) is one of the most heated debates in migrant entrepreneurship rooted in Eastern European migration, which fuelled the British anti-immigrant discourse (Moroşanu, 2018), resulting in a seven-year restricted access to Romanian on the British labour market, despite their EU citizenship (European Commission, 2016). To overcome these discriminatory practices, there are instances where they choose to lie by deceiving others and hiding behind other immigrant identities, regarded as “acceptable others” by the British, such as being a Cypriot. However, they never let go of their Romanian identity; instead, they showcase it when their success as entrepreneurs cannot be questioned or questionable *“I soon learned that potential business partners avoided collaborating with my company because I was Romanian. At first, I said that I was from Cyprus to avoid this label and to avoid losing business. However, when my business took off, and my business was appreciated, I started exposing my Romanian identity (...). (Entrepreneur Ionel)*

Within this context, entrepreneurship is transformed into a *transformative vehicle* for pursuing social justice and an opportunity to undo their Romanian identity and negotiate a new, superior identity, that of entrepreneur, according to these entrepreneurs: *“Entrepreneurship motivates you to become an achiever and to reach higher, to escape xenophobia. You have a different social status. As an entrepreneur, you are growing personally and professionally...you have the freedom to become what you want (...) (Entrepreneur Codrut)*

Emphasising the importance of addressing discriminatory practices, Entrepreneur 8 shares engaging in transformative practices to help his migrant workforce regain their dignity and social justice by recognizing the value of their work not as 2nd class citizens but as a competitive workforce:

“(...) the vast majority of the people we employ are Romanians. (...) Most of them came here without knowing the language and without having documents (...). I treat them with dignity and do not mock them or underpay them. For example, many of my guys who used to work for £ 50 a day,

for nothing, barely making ends meet, currently take home £ 120 because I want to maintain a certain standard to motivate them (...) (Entrepreneur Silviu)

Furthermore, they also share the financial and social reasons they engage in these transformational entrepreneurship practices: *“So I started from 0 (...). And although I started with only three clients, I was confident there was potential. Moreover, as the demand increased over time, I decided to rent an office (...). Moreover, now, I have 100 clients, and thus I have reached my business goal (...) Being a businesswoman influences my social interaction, mainly because I am now visible, invited to speak as a social model in schools for Romanian children, and a model of entrepreneur sharing to others my experience as an entrepreneur in the UK (...).”* (Entrepreneur Andreea)

Entrepreneur Andreea demonstrates how becoming an entrepreneur made her visible as a valuable community role model for the younger generation of Romanian immigrants and other first-generation immigrant entrepreneurs who would like to take on a redeemable journey of entrepreneurship. The confidence in socioeconomic success through entrepreneurship aligns with Bandura's (1971, 1977) self-efficacy theory and previous empirical evidence (Barberis and Solano, 2018; Evansluong *et al.*, 2019), showcasing that entrepreneurs with high self-efficacy, thus who believe highly in their abilities to succeed as entrepreneurs (*i.e.* *“started from 0 to become a social and entrepreneurial model”*) (Entrepreneur Andreea), are also likely to become community role model and transformational leaders, which enables their belonging *“Being a businessman in the UK has helped me feel included (...) I am interested to see my employees improving their careers, even if it means them leaving me.* (Entrepreneur Seba). As transformational leaders, they are very likely to inspire others, being these their employees, a future generation of migrant entrepreneurs and business partners, to become role models and enablers of transformational entrepreneurial practices, as Entrepreneur 8 shares: *“It is a common topic among Romanian entrepreneurs to transform our businesses into cultural and educational hubs, as we often discuss how migrants formed cities and how we lay the foundations of a better community.”* (Entrepreneur Valentina) Similarly, sharing the same perspective of entrepreneurship being an enabler for positive social change for others, Entrepreneur 1 reinforces that *“as an entrepreneur, it was more important for me to do something that brings value to the community (...). Luckily, London is a very diverse place, and they do not feel like I do not belong* (Entrepreneur Diana).

3.3. Acculturative belonging through acculturative mentoring

These illustrative examples also suggest that these Romanian migrants experience entrepreneurship as social learning, a journey described by many as “*dignifying*” (Entrepreneur 8), “*opportunity for personal and professional development and freedom to become what you want*” (Entrepreneur Codrut), “*visibility and recognition as a community and entrepreneurial role-model*” (Entrepreneur Andreea). As such, they enable social change as they become positive, transformational leaders enabling acculturative belonging for their employees and other business partners; as Entrepreneur Silviu shares: “*I hired a Romanian-English teacher to teach them English. I see this as an investment in my own company because if my employees get a decent salary and thus a good life, and they learn English, this will allow them to integrate into this society. This is how I make a difference as an entrepreneur. These are some of the wins I care about. (...) From my point of view, if you want to belong in this society, you have to learn how to do the right thing, not the Romanian way. Romanians usually get a bad reputation, but we, as a company, are here to prove them wrong (...) I teach them to adopt a different mindset and work style that focuses on finding solutions to current problems to be motivated to grow together as a company (...). In London, you are exposed to a world with different perceptions and cultures, and this multiculturalism has drawn me. And it motivated me to find my place in this society. I believe that this is a society that absorbs you and in which each one of us could find his place.*” (Entrepreneur Silviu)

Similarly, Entrepreneur Seba demonstrates a transformational entrepreneurial mindset which encourages a “let's-grow-together” attitude (Gunawan *et al.*, 2021), reaching way beyond the migrant enterprise: “*I know that my company offers few opportunities for promotion, but I encourage them to take professional courses and, when ready, apply for larger companies (...). This means to be human, a moral duty to encourage those with the potential for more when you cannot offer the support needed. It would be wrong to stop it (...). I often represent the Romanian community, and once a month, I meet with local representatives to mediate certain situations involving Romanians in this area (...).*” (Entrepreneur Seba)

These transformative entrepreneurship practices are learned and then shared to enable positive social change for others: “*Amongst the best compliments that I have ever received, I remember that one of my British clients, to whom I provided cleaning services for over 17 years, told me that she remembers that when I came to the UK I was a young girl with a ragged backpack and now I became a lorry because I now influence and lead people to improve and become better. (...) As for English society, I feel socially included. I lead a very diversified life in this society through my business, and*

through the charity work I do, I donate from my vegetable garden to the local hospital (...) I sponsor Romanian students to study here in the UK because I am confident that education would help us improve our image as Romanians (...). (Entrepreneur Loredana)

From these narrative accounts, it becomes clear that for the Romanian migrant entrepreneurs interviewed, acculturative belonging is an empowering journey of social learning and acculturative mentoring, which enables others' personal and professional improvement, overcoming the social stigma of having a bad reputation as Romanians and finding one's place in multicultural London.

These Romanian migrant entrepreneurs prove that they overcome social injustice and social stigma through entrepreneurship. They help others to do the same, and they become transformative leaders, paving the way for a better understanding of transformative entrepreneurship, which transcends enterprise borders and economic motivation to "*practice medicine to do good around me (...), and this social motivation is much more important to me (than its financial one)*". (Entrepreneur Eca)

These transformative leaders enable positive socioeconomic change as they care for the greater social good of the broader community (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022). Aligning with previous empirical evidence, the potential for transformational leadership in migrant entrepreneurship was unlocked through transformational entrepreneurship practices of role-modelling, acculturative mentoring and transformational leadership that integrate social interactions and learning to serve as a catalyst for leading social change (Giraldo *et al.*, 2020; Marmer, 2012; Rayburn and Ochieng, 2022) and acculturative belonging.

These migrant entrepreneurs' feelings of acculturative belonging are presented as feelings of social inclusion (Berry, 2019) as they create through their enterprises a supportive 'reservoir of social relations' (Snel *et al.*, 2020, p. 6), which further enables positive social change, as they help themselves and others to overcome social stigma and discrimination experienced as Romanians in the UK. (Moroşanu, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to understand that similar to Asian migrant entrepreneurs in the UK and Latin American entrepreneurs in Spain (Cederberg and Villares-Varela, 2019), entrepreneurship allows these migrant entrepreneurs to exercise their agency and thus enable them to capitalize on social resources for economic and social advantage (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022; Gurau *et al.*, 2020). It is almost paradoxical to see how these transformative entrepreneurial journeys significantly impact these entrepreneurs and others' acculturative belonging as they transform socio-economic disadvantages into competitive socio-economic advantages.

4. Contribution, limitations and future research directions

This interdisciplinary study contributes to the literature and practice of transformational migrant entrepreneurship by demonstrating how Romanian entrepreneurs, through their entrepreneurial practices of role-modelling and acculturative mentoring, transformed adverse effects that immigrant communities might experience in a less diverse or anti-immigrant environment by creating jobs and mentoring their workforce to adjust to the host country. Doing so enables themselves and other stakeholders to achieve different degrees of acculturative belonging, such as social inclusion or assimilation. The results of this study, when considered in the context of migration, are consistent with those of earlier studies (Berntsen *et al.*, 2022; Rafferty, 2019; Solano *et al.*, 2019). According to the Social learning and self-efficacy theories (Bandura 1971, 1977), these migrant entrepreneurs' transformative business activities result in beneficial socioeconomic change, which may encourage other migrants to engage in comparable business strategies. Additionally, these findings promote the importance of understanding the diversity embedded in migrant entrepreneurship and the possible practical and policy consequences that these findings bring are highlighted by this cascading impact.

However, in light of these theoretical, practical and potential policy-based contributions, this IPA study also has its limitations. These findings are context and time-bound, and thus, they cannot be generalized to other communities of migrant entrepreneurs, which creates the opportunity for further research to be expanded to other communities of migrant entrepreneurs in London or other maybe less diverse societies, like Scotland, for example. Although central to entrepreneurship studies, gender is portrayed as a way of doing business (Phillips and Knowles, 2012), its influence has not been explored. Thus, the perspective could be explored in future comparative research. Overall, this IPA study reveals how the influence of migrant entrepreneurship goes beyond its perception of precarity and its economic impact, bringing about good social change, such as overcoming anti-immigrant social stigma and discrimination. As a result, it aids immigrant entrepreneurs in developing into transformative leaders and role models who inspire and motivate their team members and business associates to take substantial steps toward acculturation.

Globalization and diversity emphasize the necessity of broadening our knowledge of immigrant entrepreneurs' potential beyond traditional economics and recognizing the significance of migrant entrepreneurs' diversity. With this strategy, it would be possible to move away from universalist and conviction-based entrepreneurial policies and programs and toward ones founded on evidence, which is critical.

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