



ENGAGE Project

Using Contact Interventions to Promote Engagement and Mobilisation for Social Change

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WP3

Report of Experiments

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Executive Summary

- Based on experimental studies in Hungary and Spain we identified that believing that non-Roma allies can contribute to social change by coordinated efforts increases political participation intentions for defending Roma rights.
- When people believe in their capacity to bring about change in society, it leads to higher mobilization because it increases hopefulness.
- There is a danger of believing that the efficacy of a group for achieving social justice and equality is low, because this belief can decrease willingness to engage in pro-Roma actions.
- Meritocratic beliefs can buffer social mobilisation, which should be considered in interventions aimed to promote participation in social change movements.
- Recognizing and making visible the existing socio-economic inequality and discrimination of the Roma plays an important role in social change tendencies.





Introduction and Aim of Experiments

In the ENGAGE project social psychologists, sociologists, and social intervention professionals from three European countries with large populations of Roma people (Hungary, Slovakia, and Spain) aim to understand the factors underlying low sociopolitical participation of Roma and non-Roma people, and to examine the positive and negative effects of contact experiences between Roma and non-Roma people on their civic engagement.

Using randomised controlled experiments, in this work package we identified effective interventions and psychological conditions for increasing mobilisation among non-Roma people regarding support for Roma equality. In particular, we focused on the role of group efficacy—how successful a group of people can be in achieving their goals—in increasing collective action of the non-Roma allies (i.e. coordinated action to fight injustice and improve the situation of a group).

There are several examples from the Roma rights movements that point out the importance of group efficacy to achieve social change. The most prominent example is the achievement of recognition of anti-Gypsyism as a specific form of racism and one of the root causes of the social exclusion and inequality at the EU level. Another example is "Samuel's question" campaign that led to a movement denouncing the invisibility of Roma culture and history in the Spanish school curriculum, and generated a public debate in the national political sphere (https://www.gitanos.org/actualidad/archivo/119495.html.en).

Since it is important to design interventions based on scientific evidence, as well as to evaluate the effects of potential interventions to reduce anti-Gypsyism, we used experimental method to check the effect of group efficacy among non-Roma allies². Group efficacy refers to when people believe their group can achieve its goals, for

¹ European Commission (2018). Antigypsyism: Increasing its Recognition to Better Understand and Address its Manifestations. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=55652

² Allies are not members of the disadvantaged group who are informed about and engage in actions that challenge existing systems of inequality and support the disadvantaged group. See: Brown, K. T., & Ostrove, J. M. (2013). What does it mean to be an ally?: The perception of allies from the perspective of people of color. Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 43(11), 2211-2222. https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12172





example to increase their political participation or to have an egalitarian access to educational resources, through joint action. That is, when people think "we" can change the situation through collective action.³ In the opposite direction, the dangers of perceiving that Roma (or non-Roma people who support the equality of the Roma) have low efficacy in achieving their goals of social justice—a common narrative in countries where trust in politics and a positive outlook on the social political situation is low—can further decrease willingness to engage in pro-Roma actions. In these studies we also explored the role of (1) meritocratic beliefs and (2) perceived discrimination in increasing or decreasing mobilization.

Group efficacy beliefs have been associated with the motivation to engage in collective action in connection with various disadvantaged groups.⁴ However, the study of group efficacy beliefs remains unexplored in the context of combating anti-Gypsyism. Relatedly, the feeling of hope plays an important role in engagement in collective action.^{1,5} Based on these previous studies, we presumed that presenting egalitarian social change as possible would lead to feeling more hopeful, which in turn would increase mobilization.

Furthermore, theoretical models of collective action have pointed out that awareness of injustice and discrimination are essential for mobilizing people to confront inequalities.³ Recognising discrimination may be hampered by various myths and ideologies. For example, meritocratic beliefs defend the idea that equal opportunities exist for all, allowing individuals to change their economic and social circumstances if they put enough effort in it. To believe in meritocracy means that economic and social success is determined by internal factors, such as hard work, ability and individual responsibility, and not by existent power relations of differential

³ Cohen-Chen, S., & Van Zomeren, M. (2018). Yes we can? Group efficacy beliefs predict collective action, but only when hope is high. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 77, 50–59. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2018.03.016

⁴ Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, *134*, 504–535.

⁵ Thomas, E. F., McGarty, C., & Mavor, K. I. (2009). Aligning identities, emotions, and beliefs to create commitment to sustainable social and political action. Personality and Social Psychology Review, 13, 194–218.





access to opportunities and resources.⁶ The more individuals believe that meritocracy exists, the more likely they are to deny economic inequalities and discrimination⁷ or less they support egalitarian policies.⁸

Building on previous studies and theoretical considerations, we conducted experimental studies investigating the role of group efficacy of non-Roma allies in increasing collective action participation in favour of Roma people, as well as the role of ideological variables and hope in the effects of group efficacy. Experimental studies allow to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention. Although no study is likely on its own to prove causality, randomization reduces bias and provides a rigorous tool to examine cause-effect relationships between an intervention (i.e. increasing group efficacy) and the outcome (collective action participation).

In line with open science requirements, all studies were preregistered and data was made available on the website of Open Science Framework (OSF) (see the accessible links on the Appendix).

Method

Samples

In Hungary 397 participants (108 men, 285 women, and 4 other) composed the final sample. Participants' average age was 22 years, ranging from 19 to 48, and they were all university students.

In Spain 339 participants (129 men, 206 women, and 4 other) composed the final sample. Participants' average age was 33 years, ranging from 18 to 72, one third of the sample was university students (33.9%) and two thirds of participants were not (66.1%).

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⁶ Madeira, A. F., Costa-Lopes, R., Dovidio, J. F., Freitas, G., & Mascarenhas, M. F. (2019). Primes and Consequences: A Systematic Review of Meritocracy in Intergroup Relations. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 2007. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02007

⁷ Knowles, E. D., and Lowery, B. S. (2012). Meritocracy, self-concerns, and whites denial of racial inequity. *Self Identity 11*, 202–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2010.542015

⁸ Garcia, D., Branscombe, N., Desmarais, S., and Gee, S. (2005). *Attitudes toward redistributive social policies: the effects of social comparisons and policy experience* in Social Comparison and Social Psychology: Understanding Cognition, Intergroup Relations, and Culture, ed S. Guimond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 151–173.





Design and Procedure

We followed a common experimental design and procedure, using an online questionnaire, following the ethical guidelines for psychology. After responding to demographic questions, participants responded to the measures of meritocratic beliefs, perceived Roma people discrimination, quantity and quality of contact with the Roma, and prejudice toward the Roma (details about these measures can be found in the Appendix, at the end of this document).

After that, participants were randomly assigned to one of two possible conditions. In the *high group efficacy* condition participants read an alleged press release—created by the researchers for the purpose of the study—which emphasised that, by working together, non-Roma allies were able to achieve real and positive social changes in favour of Roma's rights. By contrast, in the *low group efficacy* condition participants read an alleged press release emphasising that, despite the effort of non-Roma allies, they were not able to achieve real and positive social changes in favour of Roma's rights. Both press releases were identical in format and wording; they only differed in the specific content about non-Roma allies' ability (high group efficacy) or inability (low group efficacy) to achieve social change in favour of Roma equality (see Figure 1).

After being exposed to this experimental manipulation, participants answered the final questions: perceived efficacy of non-Roma allies, emotions toward Roma people and their situation, and two measures of participation in collective action in favour of Roma equality (see Appendix).

At the end of the experiment we provided a detailed debriefing about the objective of the study to participants and information disconfirming the veracity of the information presented in the news used for the manipulation and in the measure of the petition.





Figure 1Example of the Fictitious Press Release Used for Manipulating Group Efficacy in Spanish



Note. This is the press release used in the high group efficacy condition in the study in Spain. In Hungary, we follow the same style of manipulation and the same picture, but we adapted the materials to another national newspaper format.





Results of Experiments

Hungary

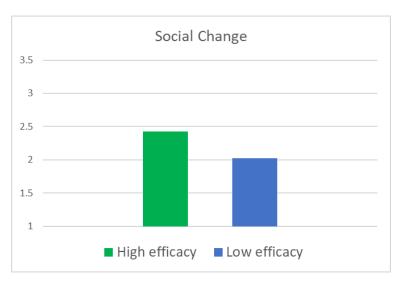
Effect of Group Efficacy on Participants Support for Roma Equality. The results in Hungary showed that perceiving high group efficacy of the non-Roma in achieving social changes benefiting the Roma increased participants' intentions to engage in pro-Roma activities supporting their rights and equality in the future. Specifically, compared to participants randomly assigned to the low group efficacy condition, participants in the high group efficacy condition scored significantly higher on the social change scale (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Differences in Intentions to Participate in Activities for Social Change Benefiting Roma

Equality Between Participants Assigned to the High or Low Group Efficacy Conditions in

Hungary



Note. F (1, 395) = 19.65, p < .001, $\eta^2_p = .047$.

While perceiving non-Roma allies' high efficacy considerably increased future intentions to mobilise in favour of the Roma, results regarding the support of Roma rights in the present appeared to be weak. Namely, the majority of the Hungarian participants did not want to sign the petition in favour of Roma equality. Nevertheless, the effect of group

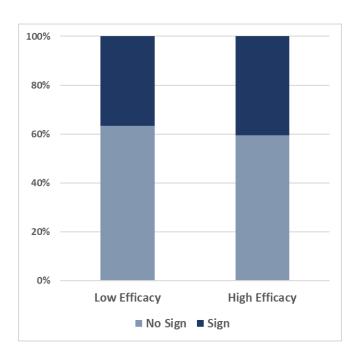




efficacy on the tendency to support the Roma was similar to the results found in Spain (which are detailed below): participants assigned to the high group efficacy condition tended to sign the petition benefiting the Roma to a somewhat greater extent than participants assigned to the low group efficacy condition (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Differences Between Participants Assigned to the High Versus Low Group Efficacy Conditions as Regards their Tendency to Support Roma Equality (i.e., Signing the Petition in Change.org)



Influence of Meritocratic Beliefs. Contrary to what we expected, the effect of group efficacy on the support for Roma equality was not influenced by participants' meritocratic beliefs, i.e., by their beliefs that the socioeconomic situation of Roma people depends on their efforts and motivation. However, we observed that meritocratic beliefs had effects on both (1) participants' intentions to engage in activities supporting Roma rights in the future and (2) their current support for Roma equality by signing the petition, but these effects were





independent of the efficacy of non-Roma allies. In both cases, the level of support for Roma equality decreased with the higher level of meritocratic beliefs.⁹

Influence of Perceived Discrimination. Our results showed that perceived discrimination was also strongly related to both measures of collective action. First, the stronger the perception that Roma people are discriminated against, the higher the intention to participate in collective actions for social change benefiting the Roma. Second, the higher the level of perceived discrimination, the higher the tendency to sign the petition in favour of Roma rights. However, the effect of group efficacy on participants' support for Roma equality was idependent of whether participants perceived the discrimination against the Roma or not, suggesting that the effects of group efficacy and perceived discrimination on collective action were not related.

Underlying Psychological Processes for the Effect of Group Efficacy on Support for Roma Equality: The Role of Hope. We tested the role of hope as an important explanatory mechanism for the effect of group efficacy on participants' support for the rights of the Roma. We found that participants assigned to the high group efficacy condition expressed a higher level of hope towards the situation of the Roma, and the higher level of hope was associated with higher intentions to participate in activities supporting the Roma in the future. In addition, the findings of the Hungarian study showed the same mediational pattern for the behavioural measure of support for Roma equality: high group efficacy was associated with a higher level of hope and the higher level of hope was related to a higher probability of signing the online petition supporting Roma equality.

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⁹ Relationship between meritocratic beliefs and intentions to participate in activities in favour of Roma equality: b = -0.33, SE = .09, p < .001. Relationship between meritocratic beliefs and signing the petition in favour of Roma equality: b = -.64, SE = .22, p = .003.

¹⁰ Relationship between perceived discrimination and intentions to participate in activities in favour of Roma equality: b = .33, SE = .07, p < .001. Relationship between perceived discrimination and signing the petition in favour of Roma equality: b = .64, SE = .19, p < .001.

Statistics for the effect of the group efficacy condition (X) on participants' intentions to participate in activities supporting the Roma in the future (Y) through the increase in hope (M). Coefficient for the effect of X on M: b = .34, p < .001; coefficient for the effect of X on Y: b = .30, p < .001; coefficient for the direct effect of X on Y: b = .30, p < .001; indirect effect of X on Y through X through

¹² Statistics for the effect of the group efficacy condition (X) on participants' tendency to sign the petition supporting the Roma in the present (Y) through the increase in hope (M). Coefficient for the effect of X on M: b = .34, p < .001; coefficient for the effect of X on Y: b = .01, p > .05; indirect effect of X on Y through X t





Spain

Effect of Group Efficacy on Participants Support for Roma Equality. Our results in Spain, as we found in Hungary, showed that perceiving that the non-Roma allies can achieve important social changes in benefit of the Roma (high group efficacy) increased participants' intentions to engage in activities supporting Roma's rights and equality. Specifically, participants in the high group efficacy condition scored higher in the social change scale than participants assigned to the low group efficacy condition (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Differences in Intentions to Participate in Activities for a Social Change in Favour of Roma

Equality Between Participants Assigned to the High and Low Group Efficacy Conditions



Note. F(1, 337) = 4.23, p = .041, $\eta^2_p = .012$.

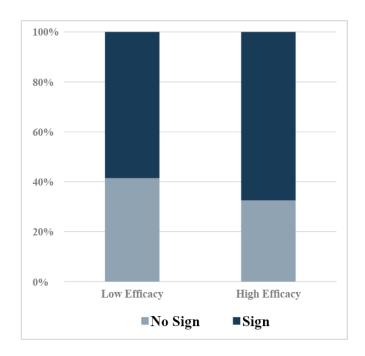
Moreover, perceiving non-Roma allies' high efficacy not only increased future intentions to mobilise in favour of Roma people, but also increased the tendency to support Roma rights in the present. We found that Spanish participants assigned to the high group efficacy condition signed the petition in favour of Roma equality to a somewhat greater extent than participants assigned to the low group efficacy condition (see Figure 5).





Figure 5

Differences Between Participants Assigned to the High Versus Low Group Efficacy Conditions as Regards their Tendency to Support Roma Equality (i.e., Signing the Petition in Change.org)

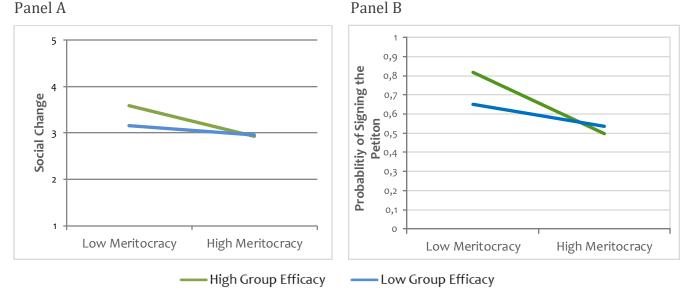


Influence of Meritocratic Beliefs. Unlike the results of the Hungarian data collection, in Spain we observed that the effect of group efficacy on participants' support for Roma equality was influenced by their meritocratic beliefs, namely, their beliefs that Roma people could improve their socioeconomic situation if they really put in enough effort. As Figure 6 shows, emphasising non-Roma allies' efficacy increases participants' intentions to engage in activities supporting Roma rights (Panel A), as well as their current support for Roma equality by signing the petition (Panel B) only among participants with lower meritocratic beliefs. However, among participants with higher meritocratic beliefs, increasing or decreasing perceived non-Roma allies' efficacy has no significant effect on their actions to support for Roma equality.





Figure 6
Influence of Meritocratic Beliefs on the Effect of Group Efficacy on Support for Roma Equality



Note. Statistics for the result showed in Panel A: F(1, 334) = 4.10, p = .044, R^2 change = .012. Statistics for the result showed in Panel B: $R^2(1) = 4.35$, p = .037.

Influence of Perceived Discrimination. Regarding the role of perceived discrimination, consistently with the Hungarian findings we observed that this variable was strongly related to both measures of collective action. Namely, the greater the perception that Roma are discriminated against, the higher the intention to participate in activities for social change and the higher the tendency to sign the petition in favour of Roma equality.¹³

However, perceived discrimination did not influence the effect of group efficacy on participants' support for Roma equality. The effect of group efficacy on participants' intention to participate in collective action in favour of Roma equality was independent of whether they perceived the discrimination toward Roma people or not.

Underlying Psychological Processes for the Effect of Group Efficacy on Support for Roma Equality: The Role of Hope. Similarly to what we found in the Hungarian study,

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¹³ Relationship between perceived discrimination and intentions to participate in activities in favour of Roma equality: b = .50, SE = .08, p < .001. Relationship between perceived discrimination and signing the petition in favour of Roma equality: b = .93, SE = .20, p < .001.





the results with the Spanish sample showed that the increase in hope could be an important explanatory mechanism for the effect of group efficacy on participants' support for Roma equality. Across studies, we observed that participants assigned to the high group efficacy condition showed higher levels of hope towards the situation of Roma people, which in turn was associated with higher intentions to participate in activities supporting Roma equality in the future. However, in the Spanish study this indirect effect through hope was not observed when considering the behavioural measure of support for Roma equality (i.e., the probability of signing the online petition).

Conclusions

- The results suggest the relevance of promoting group efficacy not only for actions conducted by Roma activists, but also conducted by the non-Roma allies.
- These results also point out the dangers of low group efficacy perceptions—a common narrative in countries where trust in politics and a positive outlook on the social political situation is low—that can further decrease willingness to engage in pro-Roma actions.
- To make socio-economic inequality and discrimination of the Roma visible can contribute to higher engagement.
- Meritocratic beliefs can reduce the positive effect of group efficacy perceptions on allies' mobilization. However, this effect was not evenly present in both countries: unlike in Spain, in Hungary meritocratic beliefs influenced collective actions independently of group efficacy, suggesting that the understanding about what meritocracy is or the intersection of these beliefs with group efficacy perceptions could vary across countries. Future research in other countries as well as qualitative research of the ENGAGE project could further clarify this.
- It is crucial to consider emotions and their importance in social change tendencies, especially hope that is essential to promote collective action participation.

¹⁴ Statistics for the effect of the group efficacy condition (X) on participants' intentions to participate in activities supporting the Roma in the future (Y) through the increase in hope (M). Coefficient for the effect of X on M: b = .38, p < .01; coefficient for the effect of M on Y: b = .17, p < .001; coefficient for the direct effect of X on Y: b = .05, p > .05; indirect effect of X on Y through X throu





For more information about the project visit https://polrom.eu/engage/

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Appendix

This appendix includes the details of the measures and instruments used in the research. We present the measures and instruments used in Spain. In Hungary the measures and instruments were the same but they were adapted to the Hungarian context.

Notes on the Method

The anonymous data of all the participants in the two experiments are available at the Open Science Framework platform at the following link: https://osf.io/gfekv/
The hypothesis and design of the studies were pre-registered. The pre-registration of the study conducted in Hungary can be accessed at: https://osf.io/vdzk6/?view_only=7265f232ffd64ab097d003aea81dd06d
The pre-registration of the study conducted in Spain can be accessed at: https://osf.io/fsxp5/?view_only=a87619a678c648f783d744c8830eb76e.

Measures

Meritocracy

We used 8 items from Bay-Cheng et al. (2015) to assess meritocracy (e.g., "Any goal can be achieved with hard work and talent"). Participants indicated their level of agreement or disagreement with each item by using a scale from 1, *totally disagree*, to 5, *totally agree*, so that higher scores indicated higher levels of meritocratic beliefs.

Contact Quantity

We measured the amount of contact the participants have with Roma people with the following item: "In general, how much contact do you have with Roma people?". Participants answered from 1 (no contact) to 5 (lot of contact).

Contact Quality

We used five items based on Gómez et al. (2018) which measure to what extent participants perceive their contact with Roma people is: positive, negative, voluntary,





cooperative, and egalitarian. Participants answered using a Likert scale from 1 (*Nothing*) to 7 (*Totally*).

Perceived Discrimination

We used the six items developed by Navas et al. (2004). Specifically, participants indicated to what extent they thought Roma people were discriminated against (they were treated worse than non-Roma people) in the following aspects: (a) rental or purchase of houses, (b) in bars, pubs or clubs, (c) in the mass media, (d) in labour context, (e) in the healthcare services, and (f) at schools. Participants answered by using a Likert scale from 1(nothing) to 5 (a lot). Higher scores indicate higher perceived discrimination toward Roma.

Prejudice Towards Roma People

We used the feeling thermometer measure (Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1993). This is a measure in which participants indicate their assessment towards a group (in our case Roma people) by using a scale from 0 (*very negative*) to 100 (*very positive*).

Emotion Towards the Situation

Participants indicated to what extent the current situation of Roma people produced the following emotions in them: "anger", "outrage", and "hope." Participants answered to each emotion by using a Likert scale from 1 (*nothing*) to 5 (*a lot*). Therefore, higher scores mean that participants felt more anger, outrage, and/or hope about the Roma situation.

Emotion Towards the Group

We based on Lantos et al. (2018) to measure emotion towards Roma people. We asked participants to indicate to what extent they felt "pity" and "empathy" towards Roma people (from 1, *nothing*, to 5, *a lot*). Higher scores indicate more pity and empathy towards Roma people.

Collective Action: scale of Social Change

We adapted the Collective Action Scale (van Zomeren et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2012) to evaluate participants' intentions to participate in activities to support Roma equality in the future. The measure was composed of eight items (e.g., signing petitions, attending protests). Participants answered using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (nothing) to





5 (*a lot*). Higher scores indicated greater intentions to participate in actions supporting Roma equality.

Behavioural Measure of Support for Roma Equality

We created a hypothetical online petition in the "Change.org" platform, which asked for Roma equality in the educational context (Figure 7). We offered participants the possibility of signing that petition, thus showing their support for Roma equality.

Figure 7Behavioural Measure of Support for Roma Equality in Spanish

