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Investigating majority-minority asymmetries between intergroup contact and collective action for Roma rights

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Abstract

The Roma—an ethnic minority group in Europe—continues to face high levels of discrimination. This research explores how the quality of contact between Roma and non-Roma is associated with collective action participation for Roma rights in Spain. It examines non-Roma as potential allies (Study 1; $N = 239$) and Roma (Study 2; $N = 259$), while considering the roles of social class, social identification (Roma and multiculturalist identities) and perceived discrimination in this process. Study 1 found that for non-Roma, high-quality contact with Roma, particularly with those attributed to a low social class, was related to non-Roma collective action both directly and indirectly through the high perception of discrimination and multiculturalist identity. However, the results of Study 2 with the Roma sample indicated that the quality of contact with non-Roma was associated with a lower perception of discrimination towards Roma, which in turn was related to lower intention to participate in collective action. Nevertheless, the quality of contact was associated with higher Roma intention to participate in collective action through increased multiculturalist identity, counteracting the sedative effects of contact. These findings emphasize the importance of social class, identity and perceived discrimination when examining the relationship between contact and collective action.

KEYWORDS

collective action, multiculturalist identity, perceived discrimination, positive contact, quality contact, Roma

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, intergroup dynamics have gained relevance in social research, especially in the case of groups facing inequality in their daily life. Intergroup contact has been presented as a possible factor that guides social cohesion (see Hässler et al., 2020), although it has also been associated with *sedative effects* for participation in collective action for disadvantaged groups (e.g. Çakal et al., 2011; Cernat, 2019). Research on intergroup contact has demonstrated its complexity, with findings suggesting that high-quality contact is associated with both reduced prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and potentially diminishing the motivation for collective action among disadvantaged groups (e.g. Saab et al., 2017; Saguy et al., 2009).

One ethnic minority group that has historically faced discrimination, prejudice and, therefore, social exclusion is the Roma people (Kende et al., 2020). Although numerous laws have been created in Europe to address this situation, data show that we are still far from solving it (e.g. European Commission, 2020; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [FRA], 2021; Fundación Secretariado Gitano [FSG], 2019). The psychosocial literature on the engagement of the Roma or non-Roma as allies is scarce or even non-existent (e.g. Bişu & Vincze, 2012; Hargašová et al., 2022). The present work attempts to examine the relation of the quality of intergroup contact—understood as the degree to which interactions between advantaged (non-Roma) and disadvantaged (Roma) groups are perceived as a positive experience—and their collective action intentions and participation. Additionally, we aim to test psychosocial mechanisms involved from both non-Roma and Roma perspectives.

This research makes a significant contribution by focusing on an understudied sample—the Roma population—while analysing the mediating role of a variable that has not been extensively explored in the literature, such as multiculturalist identity, and contrasting its mediating role with others more commonly studied, such as perceived discrimination and group (Roma) identity. Moreover, we include the analyses of the attributed social class that moderates the relationship between contact quality with the minority group and the tendency to engage in collective action. These factors are crucial for clarifying inconsistent findings in previous research and highlight the importance of adopting an intersectional approach.

Moreover, we analysed the mediating role of perceived discrimination and Roma and multiculturalist identities in the relationship between contact quality with the majority and participation in collective action. The multiculturalist identity was studied as a promising inclusive identity (for both groups) for the first time in the literature of contact and social change (e.g. Cocco et al., 2022, 2024; Sengupta et al., 2023; Visintin et al., 2017). This research highlights the importance of considering both perspectives—minority and majority—for understanding the effects of contact quality on collective action.

Roma people in Europe and Spain

Although considered one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe, with an estimated 10–12 million people (approximately 6 million citizens or residents of the European Union), the Roma continue to suffer from social exclusion due to prejudice and discrimination (European Commission, 2020) as well as low participation in collective action to address structural inequalities, from both the Roma themselves and the majority population (Vermeersch, 2002).

This deeply rooted bias, called *Antigypsyism*, involves historical processes of ‘othering’ based on stereotypes and negative attitudes, which are sometimes unintentional or unconscious (Council of European Union, 2021). In 2021, nearly 25% of the Roma population in Europe (37% in Spain) reported feeling discriminated against in areas such as work, education, health or public and private services (FRA, 2021). Additionally, only 27% of young Roma complete secondary education, 33% experience job search discrimination due to their Roma identity and 80% of the Roma population is at risk of poverty (FRA, 2021).

Spain, which has a Roma population representing 1%–2.1% of the country's population, exemplifies these issues (Laparra, 2007). Despite their long-standing presence since the 15th century, they continue to face discrimination in education, employment and housing. For example, 26% of Roma experience discrimination in educational settings. Unemployment among Roma stands at 52%, compared to 14.4% for the general population, with 30.1% facing labour market discrimination (CEDRE, 2020). 6.5% live in substandard conditions, 31% face discrimination in housing markets and 66% live in severe poverty (FSG, 2019). Then, for this group, the intersection between ethnicity and social class (or poverty) is especially pronounced (Urbiola et al., 2023) and can influence the effects of contact on intergroup behaviours. It is known that for the effects of contact to extend to the whole group, it is necessary that the members with whom individuals interact are perceived as typical and authentically representative of the outgroup (Wilder, 1984). Since Roma are commonly perceived as 'poor', the attribution of social class to the Roma members with whom the advantaged group members interact can be essential.

Research on Roma-led collective action is limited, despite increased political representation and strong anti-Roma sentiment. Collective action to confront antigypsyism by both Roma and non-Roma is very limited and often conducted online rather than in public spaces (Aiello-Cabrera et al., 2023; Hargášová et al., 2022) as well as closely linked to the Roma feminist movement (Bişu & Vincze, 2012; Hargášová et al., 2022). The lack of social participation among Roma and non-Roma in collective action for Roma equity is likely influenced by various factors, including the quality of contact between Roma and non-Roma people.

Does intergroup contact always lead to engagement in collective action?

Intergroup contact, in terms of both quantity and quality, has been studied as a possible reducer of prejudice towards disadvantaged groups (e.g. Al Ramiah & Hewstone, 2013; Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), where the quality of contact is more strongly related to this reduction in different contexts than the quantity of this contact (e.g. Binder et al., 2009).

Advantaged perspective

For advantaged groups (or majority), positive intergroup contact not only reduces prejudice but also often promotes participation in collective action in support of disadvantaged groups (see Cocco et al., 2024; Hässler et al., 2020; Kauff et al., 2016; Kokkonen & Karlsson, 2017; Selvanathan et al., 2018). For instance, in the context of the Roma population, Visintin et al. (2017) found that positive contact between ethnic majority Bulgarians and Roma people was associated with a greater tendency to support pro-Roma policies through increased positive emotions and decreased negative ones. The review of Cocco et al. (2024) shows that 90 of the 98 analysed studies showed a positive relationship between contact and increased participation in collective action. For example, Meleady and Vermue (2019) conducted a study with British university students and the general population, where they found that positive contact with black people (the disadvantaged group) was directly related to an increased intention to participate in collective action and to support the Black Lives Matter movement.

Similarly, Kamberi et al. (2017) showed that both the quantity and quality of contact with Roma were associated with more positive feelings towards Roma, less negative Roma stereotypes and more perceived social injustice towards Roma people, which in turn was related to higher support for Roma empowerment.

Nevertheless, recent findings also provide some mixed effects of contact on collective action participation. Sengupta et al. (2023) concluded, in a longitudinal study, that the effects of advantaged group contact with Māori people on political solidarity—support for pro-equality policies—appear to be inconsistent and possibly non-causal.

Disadvantaged perspective

Disadvantaged groups (or minority) (see Politi et al., 2020; Saab et al., 2017) may experience an opposite effect of contact (Hässler et al., 2020; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). This is known as the *sedative effects* of contact; it takes place when positive contact with the advantaged group results in the disadvantaged group ceasing to perceive the real discrimination they face, and thus there is a lack of participation in collective action to change structural inequalities (Çakal et al., 2011; Cernat, 2019; Saguy et al., 2009). For example, Çakal et al. (2011) found that Black South African students (disadvantaged group) had a lower tendency to participate in collective action or policies of social change that benefit their own group due to the positive contact they had with White South Africans (advantaged group). In the same vein, Saguy et al. (2009) found that for Israeli Arab university students (minority group), positive contact with Jews in Israel (majority group) decreased their support for collective action via a perception of Jews as fair.

Although there is little literature on intergroup contact from a Roma perspective, there are some exceptions. Pereira et al. (2017) found that positive intergroup contact with the Bulgarian national majority was associated with reduced ethnic activism (as collective action intentions) among the minority through decreased ethnic identification (as Roma). Kamberi et al. (2017) found that positive contact of Roma adolescents with Macedonians (majority) may decrease the empowerment of the minority group (defined by the authors as: ‘ways of achieving greater political and social participation of Roma in Macedonian society’ [p. 427]). Cernat (2019) similarly found a relationship between positive contact with the majority Romanian group and a decrease in perceived discrimination towards their own group, which translated into a lower willingness to advocate for policy measures supporting Roma rights.

Cocco et al. (2024) found that, from a disadvantaged perspective, contact had a mixed effect on collective action participation. They analysed a total of 49 studies from this perspective (only two from Roma view), approximately half of which (27 studies) found sedative effects of contact. However, 10 studies were related to both sedative effects and engagement in participation in collective action. Additionally, participation in collective action was found to be associated with other variables that influenced the relationship between these effects.

As noted above, recent research suggests that the relationship between intergroup contact and (dis)engagement in actions for the rights of disadvantaged groups—either by the advantaged group (Sengupta et al., 2023) or by the disadvantaged group itself (Cocco et al., 2022, 2024)—appears not to be direct, but that different variables may influence it. Cocco et al. (2024) grouped these mediators into three categories: (a) intergroup situation (e.g. perceived discrimination), (b) outgroup (e.g. attitudes and emotions) and (c) ingroup (e.g. group identity). Building on these findings, we focused our analysis on one mediator from the first category (perceived discrimination) and two mediators from the last one (Roma and multiculturalist identities). These variables, such as social identity (e.g. Urbiola et al., 2022) and perceived discrimination towards the minority group (e.g. Saguy et al., 2009; van Zomeren et al., 2008), have been studied as factors involved in participation in collective action. However, these factors have rarely been examined as mediators between contact quality and collective action (with the exception of Cernat, 2019 for perceived discrimination), an area that this research seeks to address.

Involved psychosocial factors in contact: Social identities and perceived discrimination

Social identity has been studied extensively from a psychosocial perspective to understand when and why prejudice and outgroup discrimination occur (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and also as an important factor promoting participation in collective action. Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008) posits that ingroup social identity, perceived discrimination or injustice towards the ingroup and group efficacy motivate support for social movements aiding disadvantaged groups (van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Advantaged perspective

For members of advantaged groups, positive interactions between groups can enhance their perception of a common identity (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Glasford & Calcagno, 2012) or create a common opinion-based group (Bliuc et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2019) as well as encourage them to support collective action (Hässler et al., 2020; Rosenthal & Crisp, 2006; Thomas & McGarty, 2009). Research on opinion-based groups (Bliuc et al., 2007; McGarty et al., 2009; Thomas et al., 2016, 2019) and politicized identities (Klandermans, 2005) indicates that individuals from advantaged groups can align themselves ideologically or politically with disadvantaged groups by adopting an alternative group identity that supports equality for disadvantaged groups such as feminism (see Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren et al., 2011).

Urbiola et al. (2022), as part of the AMIGAS (Achieving Multicultural Integration of Groups Across Society) model, introduced the *multiculturalist identity* as ‘an opinion-based group membership made up of people who value cultural diversity and see the respectful recognition of social groups other than their own as part of who they are’ (p. 76), as something opposed to forced cultural assimilation or social exclusion of ethnic minorities. The authors proposed that it can drive to higher collective action participation for both disadvantaged and advantaged groups in defence of equality of groups from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Urbiola et al., 2022). Thus, not only disadvantaged identities but also some inclusive broader identities can promote participation in collective action by both advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

Adopting an inclusive identity (i.e. multiculturalist) offers a unique contribution to the literature on common identity and collective action (Çakal et al., 2016; Ufkes et al., 2015, 2016). Unlike other opinion-based identities with implications for a specific disadvantaged group (e.g. feminist identity for women), it broadly values cultural diversity, fostering a normative commitment to defending it and having positive implications for numerous cultural minorities (e.g. Roma, African migrants or Latin-American migrants). This inclusive content empowers both advantaged and disadvantaged groups, promoting social harmony and addressing structural power asymmetries. While members of advantaged groups sometimes recognize injustices against the disadvantaged, they often react defensively, fearing loss of their own privileges (Hässler et al., 2019). Nevertheless, there are instances where majority members acknowledge these injustices and their own power status and act accordingly. For example, Saguy et al. (2009) found that participants from the advantaged group paid more attention to inequality between groups than participants from the disadvantaged group. Thus, positive contact with disadvantaged groups generally strengthens their opinion-based social identity and that can lead to them being more supportive of collective action in favour of minorities. In addition, the perception of discrimination often motivates them to engage in collective action.

Disadvantaged perspective

From the disadvantaged perspective, Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that members of disadvantaged or lower-status groups who perceive their situation as illegitimate tend to identify more strongly with their group. This collective identity can also drive engagement in collective action (Klandermans, 1997, 2000; Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Sometimes positive intergroup contact with the majority group means that the boundaries between groups can appear more permeable, making the minority's own identity (e.g. Roma identity) less relevant to them. Politi et al. (2020) indicated that, among Kosovo Albanian migrants in Switzerland, intergroup contact with the majority group is associated with a lower ethnic identification, which is an important mechanism for increasing engagement. As mentioned before, the multiculturalist identity could to some extent be recognized as the importance of these minority identities but using a more inclusive identity category.

In relation to perceived discrimination, Tropp et al. (2012) found that maintaining positive contact (in the form of friendship) with members of the majority led the minority group to engage in less activism through decreased perceptions of discrimination. Similar results were found in the case of Hispanic Americans (Hayward et al., 2018) or by Cernat (2019) in the Roma and non-Roma relations. In conclusion, previous evidence suggests that harmonious contact with advantaged groups reduces identification with one's own ethnic group and diminishes the perception of discrimination among members of disadvantaged groups.

The role of attributed social class to minority members

The study of intercultural relations should also consider social class, which is in line with an intersectional approach (see Cole, 2009). The interaction of socio-economic status with ethnic identities further illustrates how discriminatory practices are not only widespread but also complexly intertwined, impacting various social groups in distinct ways. People of lower *social class* (or people with a low socio-economic status) can be considered one of the groups most discriminated against by the majority (Cortina, 2017). Although discrimination by ethnicity (e.g. Pettigrew, 1979) or social class (e.g. Wilson, 1978) has historically been studied separately, some authors argue that discrimination is sometimes explained by an interaction effect between both variables (see Kessler & Neighbors, 1986; Urbiola et al., 2023; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). In connection to our research context, Urbiola et al. (2023) showed that discrimination and prejudice towards Roma people in Spain cannot be explained without considering the attribution of Roma's socio-economic status. As in the contact between other social groups (e.g. Reimer et al., 2017), Vázquez et al. (2022) suggested that contact between people from different social classes may increase the predisposition of individuals from more advantaged classes to engage in collective action supporting the disadvantaged.

Therefore, social class has to be taken into account as an important variable in these intergroup relations, since the effects of contact experiences can be different when the interactions are with Roma of low vs. high social class. For the interactions with the Roma of low social class, it can be easier to realize that the minority ethnic group faces structural disadvantage and reacts to these inequalities, facilitating participation in collective action (i.e. the disadvantages that Roma suffers are clearer when they are of low social class). Building on these insights, the present study considers the attribution of Roma social class as a moderator in the relation between contact and participation in collective action from the majority perspective.

The present research

The main objective of this research is to explore the relation between the quality of intergroup contact and participation in collective action as well as the involved psychosocial factors in this relationship from both a Roma and non-Roma perspective. As far as we know, no literature has examined this process from both the majority (non-Roma) and minority (Roma) perspectives, including various forms of collective actions for social change. In this context, this is the first time that multiculturalist identity and perceived discrimination as psychosocial mechanisms are studied simultaneously from both an advantaged and disadvantaged perspective in the context of Roma and non-Roma relations. Moreover, we consider attributed social class to Roma in those processes, capturing a more intersectional approach.

Finally, this research aims to extend previous studies by considering measures of both intention (collective action intentions) and actual behaviour (collective action participation). This approach acknowledges that results could be more easily found in intentions than in participation, and it offers a more applied and comprehensive perspective on how intergroup contact is associated with participation in collective action for minority rights.

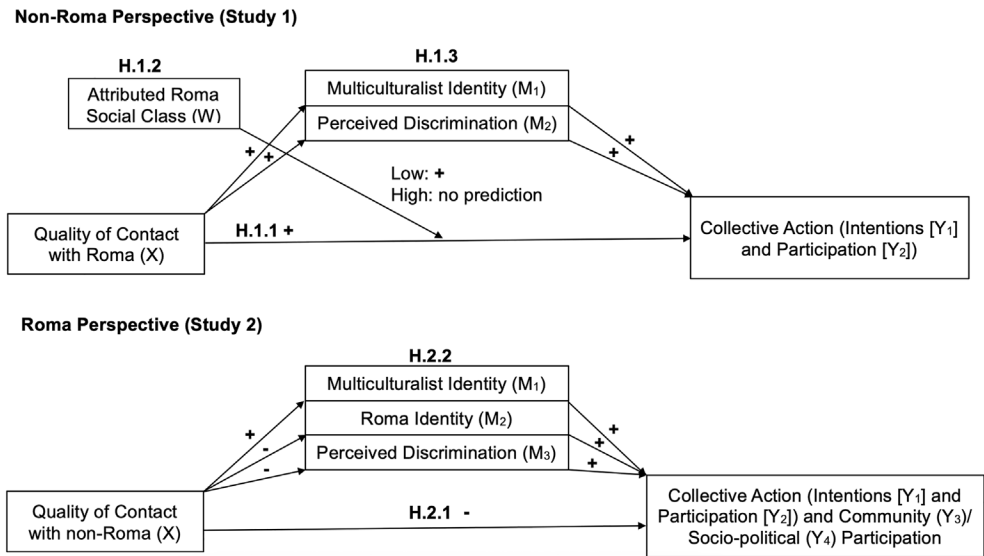


FIGURE 1 Conceptual models of Studies 1 and 2.

The goals of the research were to analyse (a) the relationship between the quality of intergroup contact and support for collective action for the equality of Roma people, (b) the mediating role of multiculturalist identity, Roma identity (only in Study 2) and the perceived discrimination against Roma people from the perspective of both non-Roma (Study 1) and Roma (Study 2) participants. Study 1 also aimed to (c) explore the moderating role of attributed social class to the Roma people with whom participants interact.

Based on previous literature (see Çakal et al., 2016; Hargášová et al., 2022; Hässler et al., 2019, 2020; Saguy et al., 2009; Tropp et al., 2012; Urbíola et al., 2022, 2023; van Zomeren et al., 2008), we expected that from the non-Roma (majority group) perspective (Study 1): (a) a high quality of contact with Roma people would be directly related to a higher tendency to participate in collective action (Hypothesis 1.1); (b) the relationship between the quality of contact with the minority group and participation in collective action would be moderated by the social class attributed to the Roma (stronger effects when Roma people are perceived as belonging to a low social class) (Hypothesis 1.2); (c) a high quality of contact would be related to greater participation in collective action through higher endorsement of a multiculturalist identity (Hypothesis 1.3a) and the perception of discrimination against Roma people (Hypothesis 1.3b). On the contrary, from the Roma perspective (Study 2) it was expected that: (a) a higher quality of contact with the majority (non-Roma) group would negatively relate to the Roma's participation in collective action (sedative effect; Hypothesis 2.1); (b) however, the quality of contact with the majority would positively relate to greater participation in collective action through higher endorsement of a multiculturalist identity, counteracting the demobilizing effects sometimes associated with intergroup contact (Hypothesis 2.2a); while the quality of contact would be negatively related to participation in collective action through low perception of discrimination (Hypothesis 2.2b) and low endorsement of Roma identity (Hypothesis 2.2c) (see Figure 1 for the conceptual models).

STUDY 1

This study explores the perspective of the non-Roma majority, focusing on how engaging in interactions of quality with Roma can relate to the willingness to participate in collective action in favour of

the Roma. It also explores the role of participants' multiculturalist identity and perception of discrimination against Roma as mediators in this process and tests the Roma attributed social class (based on Urbíola et al., 2023) as a moderator between quality of contact with Roma people and collective action (see hypotheses in the previous section).

Method

Participants

Participants were drawn from a pool of volunteers who had previously taken part in studies unrelated to the present research. They were initially recruited by Psychology students from a distance learning university and expressed their willingness to participate in future research projects. For this research, participants received an email inviting them to participate in a study about intergroup relations. A total of 720 participants started to answer the questionnaire, but only 482 completed it and, of those, three participants were removed because they were Roma. Analyses were conducted to check for the existence of multivariate outliers with Mahalanobis distance, and eight participants were eliminated. In addition, because the analyses were to be conducted based on the quality of contact with Roma, participants who had not had contact with Roma (231 participants) were eliminated. Therefore, the final sample for the analyses was 240 non-Roma participants who had contact with Roma (70.8% women, 28.7% men). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 74 years ($M = 34.70$; $SD = 11.79$). Regarding their educational level, 0.4% finished primary education, 44% finished secondary education, 37.5% finished a university degree and 18.1% finished postgraduate studies. Participants were asked about their subjective social class using Adler et al.'s (2000) 10-point scale (1 = *Less money, lower educational levels, and job positions without prestige or are unemployed*; 10 = *Lot of money, higher educational levels and having job positions with prestige*), with 43.5% reporting belonging to a low social class (1–3), 53.4% a medium social class (4–7) and 3.1% a high social class (8–10).

A power analysis was conducted using Monte Carlo simulations in order to determine the probability of detecting significant indirect effects in a mediation model. For the power analysis, 5000 simulations were run using a sample size of 240 participants and a significance level of $\alpha = .05$. The power obtained to detect a significant indirect effect was for $a_1b_1 = 1.00$ and for $a_2b_2 = 0.81$.

Variables and instruments

Although this research was not preregistered due to its exploratory nature and the scarce literature on collective action in the Roma context to use as a basis, all datasets and materials as well as questionnaires have been made publicly available at OSF (https://osf.io/u2nes/?view_only=f83f5c557c8d4e779fc8b6cdcca2bfdd),¹ allowing for accessibility and future replication.

Quantity of contact

This variable was measured with a single item (Navas et al., 2004). Participants were asked to indicate the degree of contact they had with Roma people using six alternative responses, corresponding to six levels of contact, each of them more inclusive (indicating more contact) than the previous one. These alternatives varied from (1) 'I don't have any contact. I only see them on the street or in public places but never talk to them'; to (6) 'My partner is Roma'. This question was used to exclude those participants who marked the first alternative.

¹The questionnaire consists of more measures in addition to those shown in this article as it belongs to a larger project. However, they are not reported here as they are not among the objectives of this study but can be seen at OSF link.

Quality of contact

This variable was measured with a 5-item scale based on Gómez et al. (2018). Participants had to respond about the quality of the contact they had with Roma people ('positive', 'negative' (reversed), 'voluntary', 'cooperative', 'equal'), using a 7-point scale (1 = *Nothing*; 7 = *Very much*). Higher scores indicated a high quality of contact with Roma people (negative contact was inverted; $\alpha = .85$).

Multiculturalist identity

This variable was measured with a 3-item scale based on the work of Leach et al. (2008) applied to a multiculturalist identity (Urbiola et al., 2022). Participants were asked to indicate the importance they gave to their multiculturalist identity ('I usually think about the fact that I am a multiculturalist'; 'Being a multiculturalist is an important part of my identity'; 'Being a multiculturalist is an important part of how I see myself'), using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Totally disagree*; 7 = *Totally agree*; $\alpha = .92$). To ensure clarity, participants were provided with the following definition: 'Multiculturalists are people who value cultural diversity and the respect and recognition of cultural differences with other social groups'.

Perceived Roma discrimination

This variable was measured using the perceived discrimination scale based on Navas et al. (2004), composed of five items. Participants were asked to respond to what extent they believed that Roma people are treated worse than non-Roma people in different situations ('working conditions', 'rental or purchase of housing', 'in bars, pubs or discos', 'health centres or hospitals' and 'in the media'), using a 5-point scale (1 = *Nothing*; 5 = *Very much*; $\alpha = .85$).

Attributed Roma social class

This variable was measured with the step ladder of Adler et al. (2000). Participants were asked to indicate the socio-economic position of Roma people they had contact with using a 10-point scale (1 = *Less money, lower educational levels and job positions without prestige or are unemployed*; 10 = *Lot of money, higher educational levels and having job positions with prestige*). Higher scores indicate higher social class attributions to the Roma.

Collective action intentions

This variable was measured with eight items based on van Zomeren et al. (2011, 2012). Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they were willing to participate in collective action that support Roma equality in the future (e.g. 'Share events and calls on social networks', 'Attend meetings or workshops'), using a 5-point scale (1 = *Nothing*; 5 = *Very much*). Higher scores indicated a high tendency to participate in collective action ($\alpha = .93$).

Collective action participation

Participants read a hypothetical online petition created ad hoc for this research about the rights of the Roma people in the educational context, and they were given the opportunity to sign it.

Procedure

Participants answered an online questionnaire designed on the Qualtrics survey platform and distributed through a university's institutional mailing list. Participants were informed at the beginning of the survey about the objective of the study, the time needed to answer the questionnaire (10 min), the anonymity of responses, the voluntary nature of participation and the possibility to drop out at any time. Every participant signed an informed consent form. The study was approved by the Human Research Bioethics Committee at the researchers' university.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Quality of contact	4.54	1.56	—	.18*	.33**	.34**	.33**	.25**
2. Perceived discrimination	3.26	0.88		—	.30**	-.12	.50**	.27**
3. Multiculturalist identity	5.24	1.47			—	.26**	.51**	.27**
4. Attributed Roma social class	4.14	1.84				—	.03	.03
5. Collective action intentions	2.96	1.05					—	.51**
6. Collective action participation	—	—						—

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Results

The results of descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) as well as the bivariate correlations of the studied variables are shown in Table 1. It is worth noting the positive association between the quality of contact with Roma and collective action intentions and participation. Moreover, the perception of discrimination against Roma and multiculturalist identity was positively related to collective action, especially in the case of intentions.

To explore whether the attributed social class of Roma people (W) moderates the relation between quality of contact with Roma (X) and collective action intentions (Y_1) and participation (Y_2), in addition to analysing the mediating role of a multiculturalist identity (M_1) and perceived discrimination against Roma people (M_2), we carried out Model 5 in PROCESS macro-4.2 in SPSS Statistics using a bootstrap of 10,000. We conducted two separate analyses, one for each dependent variable and in each one both a multiculturalist identity and perceived discrimination were included as parallel mediators.

For non-Roma participants, the quality of contact with Roma (X) had direct significant effects on both types of collective action: intentions (Y_1) ($b = .344$, $SE = 0.084$, $t = 4.076$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.178, 0.510]) and participation (Y_2) ($b = 1.133$, $SE = 0.281$, $Z = 4.037$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.583, 1.683]). This relationship was also moderated by the social class attribution of the Roma people with whom participants had contact (W) (with collective action intentions (Y_1): $b = -.055$, $SE = 0.018$, $t = -2.992$, $p = .003$, 95% CI [-0.091, -0.019]; with collective action participation (Y_2): $b = -.202$, $SE = 0.058$, $Z = -3.490$, $p = .001$, 95% CI [-0.316, -0.089]). A high quality of contact with Roma people was associated with a higher tendency to participate in both types of collective action among participants who attributed a low social class to the Roma people with whom they interacted, but not among participants who attributed a high social class to the Roma people (collective action intentions (Y_1): $b = .013$, $SE = 0.051$, $t = 0.249$, $p = .804$, 95% CI [-0.088, 0.114]; collective action participation (Y_2): $b = -.081$, $SE = 0.141$, $Z = -0.576$, $p = .565$, 95% CI [-0.356, 0.194]) (see Table 2 and Figure 2).

In addition, the quality of contact with Roma (X) had significant positive indirect effects through an increased multiculturalist identity (M_1) and increased perceived discrimination towards Roma (M_2) in both types of collective action (Y_1 and Y_2).

Summarizing, analyses revealed that for non-Roma, social class attribution moderated the relation of quality of contact on both intentions and participation in collective action, with stronger effects when participants attributed a lower class to Roma people. Additionally, a high quality of contact was related to stronger intentions to participate in both types of collective action through increasing multiculturalist identity and perceived discrimination.

STUDY 2

To also capture the minority perspective and test the expected asymmetries of intergroup contact correlates, we developed a similar study from the Roma perspective. Moreover, we examined Roma identity as

TABLE 2 Direct and indirect effects of quality of contact with Roma and the intentions and participation of non-Roma in collective action.

		Collective action intentions (Y ₁)		Collective action participation (Y ₂)	
		Coeff.	95% CI	Coeff.	95% CI
Direct effect of quality of contact		.344 (.084)	[0.1775, 0.5097]	1.133 (.281)	[0.5828, 1.6828]
Direct effect moderated by attributed social class	Low social class (−1 SD)	.233 (.054)	[0.1273, 0.3393]	.728 (.179)	[0.3765, 1.0799]
	Medium social class	.123 (.038)	[0.0492, 0.1968]	.324 (.112)	[0.1043, 0.5430]
	High social class (+1 SD)	.013 (.051)	[−0.0882, 0.1137]	−.081 (.141)	[−0.3562, 0.1944]
Indirect effect via multiculturalist identity		.078 (.020)	[0.0434, 0.1208]	.073 (.041)	[0.0069, 0.1645]
Indirect effect via perceived discrimination		.040 (.017)	[0.0093, 0.0765]	.055 (.031)	[0.0090, 0.1278]
Total indirect effect		.118 (.028)	[0.0671, 0.1760]	.129 (.050)	[0.0475, 0.2431]

Note: Statistically significant coefficients are shown in bold.

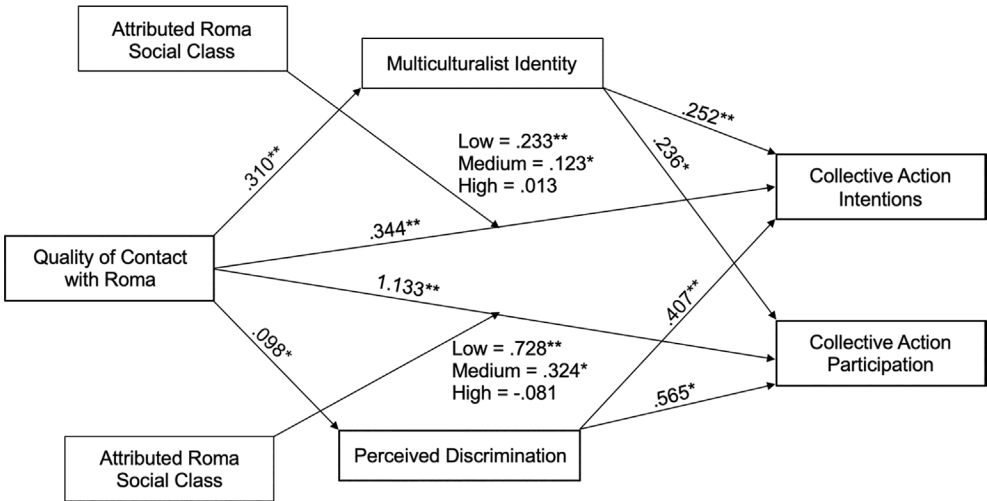


FIGURE 2 Quality of contact and the intentions and participation of non-Roma in collective action mediated by a multiculturalist identity and perceived discrimination and moderated by attributed Roma social class (Study 1). This figure shows the two independent analyses for each dependent variable together. In each analysis, we included together the moderator variable and the two mediating variables in parallel (Model 5 in PROCESS macro). * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

a potential mediator of the relationship between the quality of contact with non-Roma and collective action for social change. In order to encompass different forms of collective action intentions, two measures of community and socio-political intentions of participation were included. These variables broaden the scope beyond traditional collective action (e.g. protests, boycotts) related to a highly mobilized population or established social movements, recognizing that participation in the community (e.g. I participate in the activities that take place in my neighbourhood, community and/or city [bike rides, community recreational activities, neighbourhood festivals, etc.]) and political spaces (e.g. I am part of/collaborate in meetings or activities of a labour union or political party) can also foster social change for Roma.

We hypothesize that (a) a higher quality of contact with the majority (non-Roma) group would negatively relate to the Roma's participation in collective action (sedative effect; Hypothesis 2.1); (b) however, the quality of contact with the majority would positively relate to greater participation in collective action through the higher endorsement of a multiculturalist identity, counteracting the demobilizing

effects sometimes associated with intergroup contact (Hypothesis 2.2a), while the quality of contact would be negatively related to participation in collective action through low perception of discrimination (Hypothesis 2.2b), and low endorsement of Roma identity (Hypothesis 2.2c).

Method

Participants

The sample of this study was composed entirely of Roma people who were contacted with the collaboration of the Spanish pro-Roma Organization Fundación Secretariado Gitano, which has representation in a variety of Spanish cities. Two of the professionals of the organization distributed the access link to the online questionnaire designed for this study among Roma workers, beneficiaries and friends, using the institutional mailing list and the organization's social networks (e.g. WhatsApp groups of workers, workshop, programmes, etc.). A total of 525 individuals started the questionnaire, but only 285 finished it, of which 11 were excluded because they identified themselves as non-Roma. Analyses were conducted to check for the existence of multivariate outliers with Mahalanobis distance, and 14 participants were eliminated. Finally, because the analyses were to be conducted based on the quality of contact with non-Roma, one participant was removed for not having any contact with non-Roma. Therefore, the final sample for the analyses was 259 Roma participants who had contact with non-Roma people (60.6% women, 39.4% men). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 68 years ($M = 30.62$; $SD = 10.50$). Regarding their educational level, 44.4% had finished secondary school or professional training, 28.2% had completed degree studies, 15.1% had a master's degree, 8.9% had completed elementary school and 3.5% did not finish elementary school. For their subjective social class (measured with the same instrument as Study 1), 18.1% reported belonging to a low social class (1–3), 71.6% reported belonging to a medium social class (4–7) and 10.3% reported belonging to a high social class (8–10).

As in the previous study, a power analysis was conducted using Monte Carlo simulations in order to determine the probability of detecting significant indirect effects in three parallel mediator models. For the power analysis, 5000 simulations were run using a sample size of 259 participants and a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The power obtained to detect a significant indirect effect was for a_1b_1 path = 0.44, for a_2b_2 path = 0.51 and for a_3b_3 path = 0.95.

Variables and instruments

We used the same instruments as in Study 1, changing the outgroup for the majority group or non-Roma people to measure the following variables: quantity of contact (in order to exclude participants who did not have any contact with non-Roma people), quality of contact ($\alpha = .75$), multiculturalist identity ($\alpha = .90$), perceived discrimination of Roma people ($\alpha = .79$), collective action intentions ($\alpha = .93$) and participation (sign a petition). The following variables were also measured in this study.

Roma identity

This variable was measured with a 3-item scale based on Leach et al. (2008), applied to a Roma identity. Participants were asked to indicate the importance they give to their Roma identity ('I usually think about the fact that I am a Roma person'; 'Being Roma is an important part of my identity'; and 'Being Roma is an important part of how I see myself'), using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Totally disagree*; 7 = *Totally agree*) ($\alpha = .85$).

Community and socio-political participation

These variables were measured using the Community and Socio-Political Participation Scale (SCAP) by Moreno-Jiménez et al. (2013), composed of eight items, where participants were asked about different actions regarding their participation in their community and in socio-political activities. Participants

responded to three items that measure community participation (e.g. ‘I belong to/collaborate with an NGO, association, or social collective [e.g., neighbourhood association, cultural society, PTA, volunteer group, sport club, etc.]’; $\alpha = .83$), and five items that measure socio-political participation (e.g. ‘I actively participate in the various electoral processes [vote, attend rallies, know the electoral manifestos of the parties, etc.]’; $\alpha = .89$) using a 9-point scale of frequency (1 = *Never*; 9 = *Usually*).

Procedure

The online questionnaire was designed with the Qualtrics platform, with an estimated duration of 15 min (available at OSF: https://osf.io/u2nes/?view_only=f83f5c557c8d4e779fc8b6cdcca2bfdd). Participants were informed at the beginning of the survey about the objective of the study, anonymity, the voluntary nature of their participation and the possibility of dropping out at any time. Their participation was compensated by including them in a raffle for an economic prize. As with the previous study, this was approved by the Human Research Bioethics Committee at the researchers' university.

Results

The results of the means, standard deviations as well as the bivariate correlations are shown in Table 3. From these results, it is noteworthy that high-quality contact with non-Roma people was negatively associated with the perception of discrimination against Roma people, Roma identity and collective action intentions. It is also important to highlight that Roma participants reported more identification with a multiculturalist identity than with a Roma identity, $t_{(1,258)} = 3.99, p < .001; d = 1.81$, and that this multiculturalist identity was positively associated with the quality of contact, collective action intentions and participation as well as community and socio-political participation measures.

Separate mediation analyses for the 4 criterion variables with Model 4 in PROCESS macro-4.2 in SPSS statistics using a bootstrap of 10,000 were carried out to explore if the importance of their multiculturalist identity (M_1) and Roma identity (M_2), and perceived discrimination against their own group (M_3) mediated the relationship between quality of contact with non-Roma people (X) and collective action (CA): CA intentions (Y_1), CA participation (Y_2), community participation (Y_3) and socio-political participation (Y_4).

Contrary to Hypothesis 2.1, Roma participants' quality of contact with non-Roma (X) had no significant direct association with any of the collective action variables: collective action intentions (Y_1) ($b = -.067, SE = 0.056, t = -1.193, p = .234$), collective action participation (Y_2) ($b = -.196, SE = 0.177, Z = -1.107, p = .268$), community participation (Y_3) ($b = .041, SE = 0.158, t = 0.257, p = .797$) or socio-political participation (Y_4) ($b = -.127, SE = 0.141, t = -0.902, p = .368$). However, in line with Hypothesis 2.2a, a high quality of this contact (X) was indirectly and positively associated with higher collective

TABLE 3 Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations of the variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Quality of contact	5.80	1.01	–	.14*	-.19*	-.23**	-.13*	-.09	-.03	-.12
2. Multiculturalist identity	6.06	1.26		–	.21**	.15*	.22**	.21**	.22**	.21**
3. Roma identity	5.61	1.60			–	.33**	.27**	.15*	.17*	.23**
4. Perceived discrimination	4.06	0.71				–	.34**	.14*	.29**	.38**
5. Collective action intentions	3.92	0.93					–	.29**	.39**	.56**
6. Collective action participation	–	–						–	.13*	.17*
7. Community participation	5.48	2.55							–	.73**
8. Socio-Political participation	4.91	2.36								–

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

action intentions (Y_1) through increased multiculturalist identity (M_1). In line with Hypothesis 2.2b, the indirect effect through decreased perceived discrimination towards Roma (M_3) was negative in the case of collective action intentions (Y_1) and community (Y_3) and socio-political (Y_4) participation. The indirect relationship through decreased Roma identity (M_2) (Hypothesis 2.2c) was non-significant, although it is worth noting that the quality of contact with the majority group was negatively related to this identity, supporting the potential sedative effects of contact (see [Table 4](#) and [Figure 3](#)).

Synthesizing, for Roma people, quality of contact with non-Roma was not directly associated with any type of collective action. However, a high quality of contact was positively linked with high collective action intentions via increasing multiculturalist identity. Conversely, this quality of contact was associated with a reduced tendency to participate in collective action intentions or community and socio-political participation by decreasing perceived discrimination towards their own group.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research examined how the quality of intergroup contact affects individuals' willingness to participate in collective action for Roma rights from two perspectives: majority (non-Roma) and minority (Roma). In line with what previous research has suggested ([Çakal et al., 2011](#); [Cocco et al., 2024](#); [Hässler et al., 2020](#)), our results indicated asymmetries in psychosocial processes that may influence the relation between intergroup contact and participation in collective action in favor of the Roma.

Advantaged perspective

In Study 1 from a non-Roma perspective, we observed that the quality of contact with Roma people was directly associated with intention and participation in collective action in favour of Roma (in line with the review of [Cocco et al., 2024](#)). This association was also moderated by the attribution of social class, so that it was only present among participants that attributed a low and medium social class to the Roma with whom they had had some contact, not among those who attributed a high social class. This finding aligns with the role of perceived typicality ([Wilder, 1984](#)), as contact with Roma individuals who are perceived as more representative of the group (i.e. those attributed a lower or medium social class) is more likely to trigger recognition of structural disadvantage and motivate them to participate in collective action. These results highlight the need to consider the social class of Roma people, which aligns with [Urbiola et al. \(2023\)](#), who concluded that prejudice and discrimination towards Roma in Spain are related to an interaction effect between Roma ethnicity and attributed social class. This intersection underscores the structural disadvantage faced by Roma individuals, as their marginalized ethnicity often amplifies the negative effects of perceived lower social class, creating a compounded barrier in social and institutional contexts.

In line with previous studies (e.g. [Hässler et al., 2019, 2020](#); [Urbiola et al., 2022](#)), the results in Study 1, from the non-Roma perspective, showed that a high quality of contact with Roma is related to higher intentions and participation in collective action through an increased multiculturalist identity and an increased perception of discrimination towards Roma. This shows that quality of contact with the minority can strengthen a common inclusive identity (multiculturalist) and can make the majority group more aware of the discrimination suffered by the disadvantaged group, which can have important practical implications for increasing members of the majority group's participation in collective action for the rights of marginalized groups.

Disadvantaged perspective

From a Roma perspective in Study 2, a high quality of contact of Roma participants with non-Roma people was associated with a decreased perceived discrimination of Roma, which in turn was related

TABLE 4 Direct and indirect effects of quality of contact with the intentions and participation of Roma in collective action.

	Collective action intentions (Y ₁)			Collective action participation (Y ₂)			Community participation (Y ₃)			Socio-political participation (Y ₄)		
	Coeff.	95% CI		Coeff.	95% CI		Coeff.	95% CI		Coeff.	95% CI	
Direct effect of quality of contact	-.067 (.056)	[-0.1774, 0.0435]		-.196 (.177)	[-0.5428, 0.1510]		.041 (.158)	[-0.2699, 0.3509]		-.127 (.141)	[-0.406, 0.151]	
Indirect effect via multiculturalist identity	.022 (.015)	[0.0002, 0.0586]		.050 (.032)	[-0.0014, 0.1242]		.055 (.035)	[-0.0004, 0.1390]		.049 (.035)	[-0.0005, 0.1311]	
Indirect effect via Roma identity	-.024 (.016)	[-0.0608, 0.0006]		-.031 (.036)	[-0.1101, 0.0340]		-.029 (.035)	[-0.1016, 0.0381]		-.037 (.033)	[-0.1072, 0.0237]	
Indirect effect via perceived Roma discrimination	-.052 (.020)	[-0.0963, -0.0176]		-.042 (.046)	[-0.1389, 0.0443]		-.146 (.055)	[-0.2630, -0.0525]		-.167 (.055)	[-0.2789, -0.0717]	
Total indirect effect	-.055 (.032)	[-0.1186, 0.0085]		-.023 (.046)	[-0.1389, 0.0443]		-.120 (.078)	[-0.2738, 0.0331]		-.156 (.077)	[-0.3044, -0.0018]	

Note: Statistically significant coefficients are shown in bold.

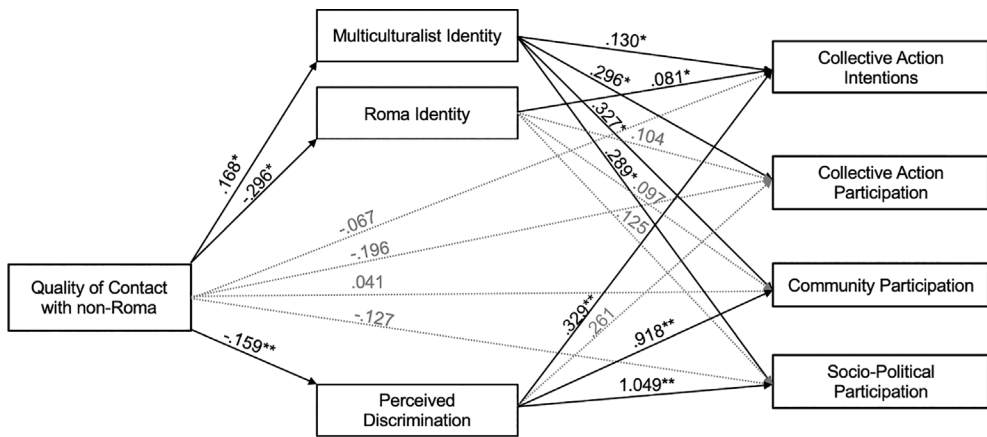


FIGURE 3 Quality of contact and the intentions and participation of Roma in collective action and mediated by multiculturalist identity, Roma identity and perceived discrimination against Roma (Study 2). Model 4 in PROCESS macro. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

to fewer intentions to engage in collective action for the rights of the ingroup. These findings are in line with other studies which found a negative effect of the quality of contact on the perception of discrimination from the point of view of minority groups, and thus a lower tendency to participate in collective action (e.g. Hayward et al., 2018; Tropp et al., 2012). This inverse relationship might stem from the sedative effects of contact, where higher quality interactions with the majority group can make Roma people perceive less discrimination towards their own group, decreasing their tendency to participate in actions aimed at achieving higher equality (Çakal et al., 2011, 2016; Cernat, 2019; Cocco et al., 2024; Hässler et al., 2020; Kamberi et al., 2017; Saguy et al., 2009; Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

Although we note that a Roma identity does not mediate the relationship between the two variables, we can find interesting effects, in line with the results of Giroud et al. (2021) with Roma Bulgarians, of how the quality of contact with non-Roma predicts reduced importance of identification with one's own ethnic identity (see also Politi et al., 2020 or the meta-analysis of Reimer & Sengupta, 2023).

Study 2 underscores the nuanced dynamics of intergroup contact from the perspective of a minority group. While high-quality contact may foster multiculturalist identification that increases participation in collective action, it appears to have unintended consequences reducing perceived discrimination and diminishing the motivation for collective action.

For Roma people, results highlight the need to look at the perspective of minority groups, since the potential sedative effects of contact and the factors that buffer this 'dark side' of contact are specific and can endanger intercultural cohesion and social equality.

Both perspectives

From both perspectives, we observed that through an increased multiculturalist identity, the quality of contact with outgroup members was associated with greater participation in collective action in favour of Roma people. This is in line with what Urbiola et al. (2022) suggest about the multiculturalist identity as a common or inclusive identity that works as a promoter of participation in collective action for the rights of minority groups (see also Glasford & Calcagno, 2012). This innovative result supports the potential of an inclusive identity category that the majority group can easily endorse but also minority members embrace without generating less participation in collective action, or the so-called sedative effects of contact. This identity category could be implemented in interventions for increasing intergroup harmony and reducing structural inequalities.

Limitations of the research

The limitations of this study should be noted. The sample of Study 2 (Roma people) was collected mainly through a non-profit foundation dedicated to fighting for the rights of Roma people, so the specific characteristics of the participants could explain the high scores on some study variables. Therefore, despite the high difficulty, future studies should look for more Roma participants contacted individually in order to increase the representativeness of the sample.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that strategies for social integration should be tailored to each national context, as antigypsyism and attitudes towards the Roma population can vary significantly across countries (see Kende et al., 2020). However, our findings give valuable insights into the role of multiculturalist identity, perceived discrimination and attributed social class to understand the dynamics in the engagement in collective action. While these results are specific to the Roma population in Spain, they may have implications for other marginalized and stigmatized groups that face systemic discrimination in other contexts and to whom the effects of social class can modulate their contact experiences (e.g. migrant population).

Furthermore, we must bear in mind that the data were collected cross-sectionally. Therefore, although we can identify possible associations between the variables studied, future studies should establish causal conclusions between contact and collective action (see Sengupta et al., 2023 for a critical perspective) since the relationships could be explained in another direction (e.g. it is possible that higher multiculturalist identity derives from higher participation in collective action that strengthens a shared inclusive identity) or by unobserved variables (Sengupta et al., 2023). Additionally, individuals with a stronger multiculturalist identity or greater commitment to social causes might perceive their contact experiences as being of higher quality. Since contact quality is a subjective judgement, it is plausible that other psychological processes also influence these evaluations. However, in the context of pro-Roma collective action, the participation of both Roma and non-Roma supporting them is generally low and there are no collective movements to challenge the structural discrimination of the Roma, unlike other racial inequalities. Hence, our results are an important initial step towards understanding participation in collective action for Roma equality considering both perspectives.

Finally, we acknowledge that the low statistical power for some indirect effects on Study 2 is a limitation. However, these results represent an important first step in exploring participation in collective action from a Roma perspective, a hard-to-reach ethnic minority, which limits the possibility of obtaining a larger sample size.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the limitations, this research contributes significantly to understanding the asymmetries that affect various processes among minority and majority perspectives. These findings underscore the importance of considering power asymmetry in contact interventions and policies aimed at reducing prejudicial attitudes and intergroup behaviours that foster inequality. Additionally, these interventions must consider the role of social class, emphasizing the need to examine interactions involving this factor. The acquisition of a new inclusive identity category (multiculturalist identity) in addition to perceiving that the disadvantaged group is discriminated against emerged as key psychosocial factors in engaging advantaged groups to support actions in favour of minority groups without diminishing the quality of contact. This identity could also potentially increase the participation in collective action of disadvantaged groups. Hence, these results provide valuable insights for advancing social movements among the Roma people and elucidate the role that non-Roma allies can play in these movements.

This paper presents, for the first time, studies of the effects of contact and new involved variables as the multiculturalist identity, from both the majority and minority perspectives, which are essential to understand the psychosocial processes from both perspectives. Although these processes have similarities, they can vary for ethnic minorities, such as the Roma, becoming less aware of the social and

structural discrimination suffered by their group. This exploration aims to uncover new insights into the complexities of intergroup dynamics, potentially offering innovative approaches to fostering social cohesion. Understanding how the quality of contact can affect the willingness of groups to engage in collective action in favour of the minority is crucial to create social policies and programmes based on equity and non-discrimination, as well as to improve intergroup relations.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Cristina Carmona-López: Writing – original draft; methodology; writing – review and editing; validation; visualization; software; formal analysis; data curation; investigation; conceptualization; supervision. **Ana Urbiola:** Conceptualization; investigation; funding acquisition; writing – original draft; methodology; validation; writing – review and editing; project administration; supervision; resources; visualization. **Marisol Navas:** Conceptualization; investigation; writing – original draft; writing – review and editing; validation; supervision; visualization. **Laura del Carmen Torres-Vega:** Conceptualization; investigation; writing – review and editing; validation; formal analysis; methodology; data curation; software. **Lucía López-Rodríguez:** Conceptualization; investigation; writing – review and editing; validation; methodology; supervision. **Alexandra Vázquez:** Conceptualization; investigation; writing – review and editing; validation; supervision; resources.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on the Open Science Framework (OSF) platform at https://osf.io/u2nes/?view_only=f83f5c557c8d4e779fc8b6cdcca2bfdd.

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