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Intergroup contact and minority group empowerment: The perspective of Roma and non-Roma adolescents in Macedonia

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Abstract

This study focused on the endorsement of Roma empowerment in Macedonia among Roma ($N = 187$) and non-Roma (Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish; $N = 627$) adolescents. Using structural equation modelling, we examined the mediating roles of out-group feelings, negative Roma stereotypes, and perceived social injustice towards the Roma in the association between out-group contact and endorsement of Roma empowerment. In line with the prejudice reduction model, we found for the non-Roma sample that the endorsement of Roma empowerment was higher among adolescents who had more frequent (as well as more positive) contact with Roma, and this was due to more positive feelings towards the Roma, less negative Roma stereotypes, and, in the case of Albanian and Turkish minorities, more perceived social injustice towards the Roma. There was little evidence for the collective action approach in the Roma sample.

KEYWORDS

intergroup contact, minority group empowerment, prejudice, Roma, social justice

1 | INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the Roma have been among the most deprived, stigmatized, and discriminated ethnic minority groups in Central and Southeastern Europe (Gatti, Karacsony, Anan, Ferré, & Nieves, 2016). Only in the last couple of decades, serious steps towards improving the situation of Roma have been undertaken by governmental and non-governmental organizations (e.g., the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015*; Rorke, 2015). According to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (European Commission, 2011), the acceptance and empowerment of Roma is a two-way process that requires a change in attitudes among the non-Roma as well as the Roma themselves.

One promising social psychological approach for improving the position of Roma is to stimulate intergroup contact. The basic premise of Allport's (1954) contact theory is that contact with out-group members reduces prejudice and,

thus, provides a way towards out-group acceptance and intergroup equality: the prejudice reduction model of social change (Dixon & Levine, 2012). Contact is most effective in reducing prejudice when it is positive, but frequent “neutral” contact also has beneficial effects (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

However, intergroup contact also may have negative consequences for the empowerment of disadvantaged minority groups such as the Roma. Contact tends to reduce majority members' prejudicial attitudes, but that does not have to imply stronger support for minority group empowerment that typically challenges the dominant position of the advantaged group. Additionally, for minority group members, contact can lead to more favourable attitudes towards the majority group, which may weaken the motivation for collective action and minority empowerment: the collective action approach to social change (Reicher, 2007). Due to (positive) contact, one comes to like and trust members of the advantaged group, can develop more negative in-group stereotypes, and might be less inclined to recognize intergroup injustices (Wright & Baray, 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

This study examined the support for Roma empowerment among Roma and non-Roma adolescents in the context of Macedonia. We investigated whether contact with Macedonians was associated with lower support for Roma empowerment among the Roma, and whether contact with the Roma was associated with higher support for Roma empowerment among the non-Roma. In addition, we examined whether these associations were explained by out-group attitudes, negative stereotypes of the Roma, and perceived social injustice towards the Roma (see Wright & Baray, 2012). We operationalized contact both in terms of frequency and quality to arrive at more nuanced conclusions about the role of contact in promoting or inhibiting minority collective action and social change. Further, whereas previous research on prejudice reduction and on collective action is largely centred around dominant majorities and disadvantaged minorities (but see Visintin, Green, Pereira, & Miteva, 2017), our study contributes to these literatures by also considering the perspective of other relevant ethnic minority groups, in this case Albanian and Turkish minorities in Macedonia.

Based on the last Census (Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2005), 2.7 per cent of the population in Macedonia self-identifies as Roma. Yet it is estimated that the actual size of the Roma community is much larger because this figure does not include people who declare themselves to belong to specific Roma subgroups (e.g., Egyptians and Ashkalis), and because some ethnic Roma declare to belong to a “better liked” minority group in Macedonia such as Albanians and Turks. Officially, Roma are full citizens, but according to the latest Progress Report on Macedonia (European Commission, 2015), “Roma have limited economic opportunities,” “segregation, stereotyping and other forms of discrimination [towards Roma] remain prevalent,” and “poverty remains the biggest factor behind the low share of Roma children in education” (p. 61). Around 75 per cent of the Roma are unemployed, which is more than twice the national average of 30 per cent unemployed.

1.1 | The roma minority perspective

According to the social action model of social change, there are several reasons why frequent and positive contact with majority group members may reduce support for in-group empowerment among disadvantaged minority group members (Wright & Baray, 2012). A first reason is that contact may improve one's feelings towards the advantaged out-group, which reduces the willingness to “stand up against them.” Collective action and support for minority in-group empowerment is more likely when the advantaged out-group is evaluated rather negatively (Reynolds, Oakes, Haslam, Nolan, & Dolnik, 2000). This means that for the Roma, we can expect that more (positive) contact with Macedonians is associated with less support for Roma empowerment due to more positive feelings towards Macedonians.

Second, collective action orientation is more likely when members of a disadvantaged minority group have a positive view about their in-group (Wright & Baray, 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Minority group members who attribute positive characteristics to their group are likely to want to improve the position of their in-group and therefore can be expected to support in-group empowerment. In contrast, system justification theory (Jost, 2001)

proposes that minority members' endorsement of negative in-group stereotypes legitimizes the existing social arrangements and thereby contributes to the maintenance of the status quo. Allport (1954) stressed the importance of equal status for intergroup contact because in unequal status situations, members of the higher status group will most likely dominate the interaction. This will "serve to confirm the lower status of the disadvantaged group and reify existing group stereotypes" (Wright & Lubensky, 2009, p. 300). Positive contact with majority members may lead to distancing from one's disadvantaged minority in-group and adopting society's negative stereotypes about one's group. For Roma adolescents, contact with Macedonian peers may lead to subscribing more to the relatively strong negative characterizations of the Roma (Tausch, Saguy, & Bryson, 2015). Therefore, we expected that for Roma adolescents, more (positive) contact with Macedonians is associated with more negative stereotyping of the in-group and therefore with lower support for Roma empowerment.

A third reason why positive contact can undermine minority members' support for in-group empowerment has to do with the recognition of unfair disadvantages. Collective action research indicates that the recognition of group-based injustice is important for people's willingness to support or engage in actions to improve the status, position, and power of one's group (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Positive contacts with majority members can reduce the salience of group boundaries that are necessary for the recognition of group-based inequalities. This means that for the Roma adolescents, we expected that more (positive) contact with Macedonians is associated with lower perceived social injustice and therefore with lower support for Roma empowerment.

1.2 | The majority perspective

There is a large literature that demonstrates that positive, or at least neutral, contact reduces majority members' prejudicial attitudes (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This literature focuses much less on the support for minority group empowerment that challenges the maintenance of group-based social hierarchies favouring the advantaged. Yet in order to achieve some level of positive social change, it is necessary for the advantaged group to recognize intergroup injustices. Arguably, this recognition and the willingness of majority members to support minority group empowerment are critical for achieving intergroup equality (Subašić, Reynolds, & Turner, 2008).

Contact theory proposes that through contact with disadvantaged minority groups, majority members feel more positive about the out-group, abandon their negative out-group stereotypes, and become more aware of the social injustices in society (prejudice reduction model of social change; Dixon & Levine, 2012). Thus, for Macedonians, as a majority group, we expected more (positive) contact with Roma to be associated with more positive feelings, less negative Roma stereotypes, and higher perceived social injustice. In turn, these factors were expected to be associated with stronger support for Roma empowerment.

1.3 | The perspective of other minority groups

The question of Roma empowerment is likely to be important for other ethnic minority members as well. Minority members might resist Roma empowerment because it reduces their own societal opportunities. From an intergroup competition perspective (Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005), a gain in empowerment of a minority out-group implies a challenge to or loss of influence for one's minority in-group. Thus, Roma empowerment might be more threatening for Albanian and Turkish minorities than for Macedonians. This could mean that, compared to Macedonians, these two minority groups are less supportive of Roma empowerment, perceive lower social injustice for the Roma, and have less positive feelings and stereotypes about the Roma. However, these kinds of mean differences do not have to imply that the strength of the associations between the different constructs also differs between the groups (see Visintin et al., 2017). We expect the processes to

be the same for Macedonian majority and Albanian and Turkish minorities, but we will explore any possible path differences between these groups.

2 | METHOD

2.1 | Data and respondents

The data for this study were collected in Macedonia in 2015 in secondary schools and additionally by approaching Roma youth. First, a survey was distributed in eight schools in three cities in the north-western part of Macedonia: Skopje (3), Tetovo (2), and Gostivar (3). This region is culturally more diverse than the rest of the country. We selected schools that offer instruction in at least two languages: Macedonian, Albanian, and/or Turkish. The number of languages of instruction is an indicator of the level of ethnic diversity within the school as students tend to attend classes in their mother tongue (e.g., ethnic Macedonians and most Roma study in Macedonian and ethnic Albanians in Albanian). In each school, we surveyed two to three classrooms that differed in language of instruction. Participation in the survey was voluntary and participants received 100 denars (1.6 EUR).

Second, because of low number of Roma students in the surveyed schools, we collected data among an additional sample of Roma. Via local non-governmental organizations working on Romani issues, we invited Roma secondary school students to participate in the survey. The response was high, and 59 per cent of the Roma in our sample were surveyed in this manner.

The questionnaire was offered in Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish language, allowing students to complete it in the language in which they study. Eight hundred thirty-nine students were surveyed, and we selected 814 respondents who self-identified as Macedonian (211), Albanian (214), Turkish (202), and Romani (187). Thus, the total non-Roma sample is consisted of 627 adolescents. Students from all four years of secondary school participated in the survey. Their age ranged from 14 to 19 ($M = 16.55$, $SD = 1.15$), and 51 per cent were girls.

2.2 | Measures

2.2.1 | Roma empowerment

Respondents were given a short introduction and eight items about ways of achieving greater political and social participation of Roma in Macedonian society: "The EU and other transnational organizations often state that in order for Roma in Macedonia to have equal status as all other ethnic groups, it is important that they are empowered in specific ways. How can this be achieved? Below is a set of statements indicating higher social and political participation of Roma. In your opinion, how important is it that Roma have the following?: 'At least one Roma minister in the government', 'Roma representatives in the government', 'A Roma mayor in the municipalities with a Roma majority', 'Roma employees in public administration', 'Roma employees in the police', 'Roma teachers', 'Roma doctors', and 'More Roma university graduates.'" Answer categories ranged from 1 (*not important at all*) to 7 (*absolutely essential*). For both Roma and non-Roma participants, the items were internally consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$ and $.95$).

2.2.2 | Frequency of outgroup contact

Frequency of outgroup contact was measured as contact with Macedonians for the Roma sample and contact with Roma for the non-Roma sample. Participants indicated on a scale from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*) how often they actively interacted with Macedonians and the Roma in four different settings: at school; in the neighbourhood; at clubs, associations, and courses outside of school; and on the Internet. The four items formed a reliable scale for the Roma ($\alpha = .75$) and the non-Roma ($\alpha = .84$).

2.2.3 | Quality of outgroup contact

Quality of outgroup contact was measured with single items referring to the two target out-groups: "How would you describe your contact with Roma/Macedonians?" on a scale ranging from 1 (*always negative*) to 7 (*always positive*). As questions about quality were only asked to participants who did have intergroup contact, analyses using this measure rely on substantially smaller samples: Roma $N = 167$; non-Roma $N = 382$ (173 Macedonians, 104 Albanians, and 105 Turks). For this reason, we primarily focus on quantity of contact and consider quality of contact in an additional analysis.

2.2.4 | Positive outgroup feelings

Feelings towards Macedonians for the Roma sample and feelings towards Roma for the non-Roma sample were measured using feeling thermometers. Participants indicated how they felt towards the out-group on a scale ranging from -50° to 50° (with 10° increments), with 0° serving as a neutral point (i.e., neither negative nor positive feelings). The scale was recoded to range from 0 to 10, where higher scores indicated more positive feelings.

2.2.5 | Negative Roma stereotypes

Using a 7-point scale, students indicated the extent to which the Roma in Macedonia can be characterized as nice, friendly, hospitable, honest, trustworthy, fair, competent, efficient, and productive. The items were reversed so that a higher score indicates more negative stereotypes ($\alpha = .94$ and $.94$ for the Roma and non-Roma participants, respectively).

2.2.6 | Perceived social injustices towards Roma

Participants indicated their level of agreement (7-point scales) with several reasons that may have contributed to the lower social status of Roma compared to other ethnic groups in Macedonia: "Because people from other groups treat the Roma unfairly," "Because most people are prejudiced towards the Roma," and "Because the government does not do enough to improve their status." A higher score means higher perceived injustice (Roma sample: $\alpha = .79$; non-Roma sample: $\alpha = .86$).

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Descriptive results

Descriptive statistics using averaged scores for the constructs are presented in Table 1. Roma compared to non-Roma students endorsed more strongly the empowerment of the Roma group, $t(803) = 14.53$, $p < .001$, had less negative stereotypes of them, $t(805) = -11.18$, $p < .001$, and perceived more social injustices towards the Roma, $t(802) = 4.35$, $p < .001$. Roma students had relatively frequent contact with Macedonians, whereas non-Roma had little contact with the Roma, $t(807) = 21.08$, $p < .001$. Roma also had more positive contact with Macedonians $t(547) = 8.73$, $p < .001$, and liked Macedonians more than non-Roma, $t(786) = 8.17$, $p < .001$.

We also compared the three non-Roma groups. Macedonians had more positive feelings towards the Roma and less negative stereotypes than Albanians and Turks. They also perceived more social injustice, had more and higher quality contact with Roma, and more strongly supported Roma empowerment. Furthermore, compared to Turks, Albanians had less positive feelings, more negative stereotypes, and particularly little contact with the Roma.

The correlations for the non-Roma groups were all in the expected directions and significant with the exception of contact not correlating with perceived injustice for Macedonians (Table 2). Correlation coefficients for frequency and quality of contact were comparable across board. For the Roma, however, only the negative correlation between stereotypes and empowerment and the positive correlations between quality of contact and injustice and outgroup feelings were significant.

TABLE 1 Descriptive statistics of the core variables presented for the Roma sample, total non-Roma sample, and Macedonians, Albanians, and Turks separately

	Roma (N = 187)	All non-Roma (N = 627)	Macedonian (N = 211)	Albanians (N = 214)	Turks (N = 202)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Roma empowerment	6.17 ^A (1.17)	4.15 ^B (1.79)	4.59 ^a (1.64)	3.90 ^b (1.84)	3.95 ^b (1.80)
Frequency of contact	4.14 ^A (1.66)	1.23 ^B (1.66)	1.83 ^a (1.81)	.67 ^b (1.31)	1.18 ^c (1.60)
Quality of contact	5.71 ^A (1.59)	4.28 ^B (1.84)	4.91 ^a (1.58)	3.74 ^b (1.77)	3.78 ^b (2.00)
Roma stereotypes	2.89 ^A (1.51)	4.31 ^B (1.53)	3.76 ^a (1.42)	4.78 ^b (1.54)	4.39 ^c (1.46)
Roma social injustice	5.16 ^A (1.72)	4.48 ^B (1.93)	4.88 ^a (1.71)	4.18 ^b (2.18)	4.37 ^b (1.82)
Outgroup feelings	6.88 ^A (2.29)	5.12 ^B (2.62)	5.83 ^a (2.42)	4.36 ^b (2.67)	5.14 ^c (2.57)

Note. Outgroup feelings and frequency and quality of contact with Macedonians reported for the Roma, and with Roma reported for the other groups. Quality of contact reported for smaller samples (167 Roma, 382 non-Roma; 173 Macedonians, 104 Albanians, and 105 Turks). Groups that share a superscript do not differ significantly from each other on the given construct. Capital superscripts used for comparing Roma and non-Roma; small letter superscripts used for comparing the three subgroups of non-Roma with each other.

3.2 | Explaining Roma empowerment among the Roma

Focusing first on frequency of contact, we estimated a structural model for the Roma sample using Structural Equation Modelling in Mplus (version 7). The model consisted of four latent constructs (frequency of contact with Macedonians, Roma stereotypes, perceived injustice, and empowerment) and one single-item measure (feelings towards Macedonians). To confirm that the latent constructs are empirically distinct, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis. The model fit for the Roma sample improved after freeing error covariances between items measuring Roma empowerment (Items 1 and 2 and Items 7 and 8) and between items measuring negative stereotypes (Items 1 and 2; Items 4 and 5; Items 4 and 6; and Items 5 and 6). All items loaded on their respective factors at a standardized range from .540 to .954, confirming that the four latent constructs are empirically distinct.

TABLE 2 Correlations between the core variables presented for the Roma, Macedonians, Albanians, and Turks

Roma (N = 187)/Macedonians (N = 201)		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Roma empowerment		-.089	.059	-.289***	-.001	.014
2.	Frequency of contact	.232**		.215**	.015	-.034	-.037
3.	Quality of contact	.177*	.384***		-.102	.191*	.262**
4.	Roma stereotypes	-.485***	-.417***	-.440***		.006	.001
5.	Roma social injustice	.228**	-.027	.081	-.261***		.139
6.	Pos. out-group feelings	.329***	.329***	.413***	-.442***	.188**	
Albanians (N = 214)/Turks (N = 202)		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	Roma empowerment		.230**	.255**	-.484***	.475***	.295***
2.	Frequency of contact	.354***		.441***	-.328***	.151*	.321***
3.	Quality of contact	.450***	.503***		-.160***	.325**	.269**
4.	Roma stereotypes	-.356***	-.294***	-.344***		-.276***	-.273***
5.	Roma social injustice	.463***	.157*	.145	-.145*		.187*
6.	Pos. out-group feelings	.332***	.307***	.269**	-.288***	.202**	

Note. Correlations for the Roma and Albanians are presented above the diagonal and for Macedonians and Turks below the diagonal. Correlations involving quality of contact are obtained from smaller samples.

* $p < .05$,

** $p < .01$,

*** $p < .001$.

We added the hypothesized structural paths, and the fit of this model was acceptable, $\chi^2(260) = 442.438$, $p < .001$, CFI = .926, RMSEA = .061, and SRMR = .069. However, the obtained results did not confirm any of the hypothesized mediational paths. The total effect of contact on empowerment was negative but only marginally significant, $B = -.110$, $SE = .064$, $p = .079$, and comparable to the direct effect (see Figure 1). In addition, there was a significant negative association between frequency of contact with Macedonians and endorsement of Roma empowerment (see Figure 1). When replacing frequency of contact with quality, on top of replicating the negative association between stereotypes and empowerment, we found the hypothesized positive relation between contact and feelings towards Macedonians and an unexpected positive relation between contact and perceived injustice towards Roma. However, again none of the hypothesized indirect paths were confirmed.

3.3 | Explaining Roma empowerment among non-Roma

Using frequency of contact with Roma as the main predictor, we fitted a multi-group structural model distinguishing between Macedonians, Albanians, and Turks. We tested for measurement invariance to cross-validate the four factor structure found in the Roma sample. In all three non-Roma groups, the four factor solution was confirmed. We had to free error covariances between two items of Roma empowerment (Items 1 and 2) and four pairs of items measuring stereotypes (Items 1 and 2; Items 2 and 3; Items 4 and 5; and Items 8 and 9) to achieve an acceptable fit. The factor loadings were comparable and could be constrained across groups, with the exception of Item 3 of the construct *perceived social injustice of Roma* that had to be estimated freely for Albanian and Turkish participants. This model with partial metric invariance had an acceptable fit, $\chi^2(761) = 1528.079$, $p < .001$, CFI = .933, RMSEA = .069, and SRMR = .063, and the fit was equally good as that of the fully unconstrained model, as shown by a non-significant chi-square difference test, $\Delta\chi^2 = 52.949$, $\Delta df = 38$, $p = .054$. All items loaded high on their respective factors at a standardized range from .603 to .930. This meant that we could proceed to estimate and compare the structural paths across these groups.

To test the hypotheses, we added the structural part to the partial metric invariance model. Maximum likelihood robust estimator was used to account for the skewed frequency of contact measure in this sample. We constrained paths one by one to check whether they were statistically equivalent. Wald test results showed that most of the paths were indeed similar across groups, whereas three paths differed. In Figure 1, we present the coefficients obtained from this partially constrained structural model that had an acceptable fit, $\chi^2(831) = 1346.357$, $p < .001$, CFI = .941, RMSEA = .054, SRMR = .065.

We found a positive total effect of contact with Roma on Roma empowerment for all three non-Roma groups (Macedonians: $B = .167$, $SE = .050$, $p = .001$; Albanians: $B = .240$, $SE = .059$, $p < .001$; Turks: $B = .376$, $SE = .073$, $p < .001$). Frequency of contact with Roma was for all three groups associated with more positive feelings towards Roma and less negative Roma stereotypes. Furthermore, positive feelings towards Roma were associated with stronger endorsement of Roma empowerment, whereas negative stereotypes of the Roma were associated with less endorsement of Roma empowerment. The indirect effects of contact on empowerment via more positive feelings ($B = .039$, $SE = .014$, $p = .005$) and less negative stereotypes ($B = .114$, $SE = .024$, $p < .001$) were significant and equal across non-Roma groups. These findings are in line with our hypotheses.

However, the associations between contact and perceived social injustice towards Roma as well as between injustice and endorsement of Roma empowerment were absent for Macedonian participants but present for Albanian and Turkish participants (see Figure 1). For the non-Roma minorities, more frequent contact with Roma was associated with more perceived social injustice towards Roma, which was in turn related to stronger support for Roma empowerment. The indirect effect via perceived social injustice was equally strong for Albanians and Turks ($B = .065$, $SE = .025$, $p = .009$), confirming the hypothesis about the role of perceived social injustice only in the non-Roma minority samples.¹ Taken together, these findings demonstrate that most of the associations were similar for the non-Roma groups but that there were also some differences between Macedonian majority and Albanian and Turkish minorities.² We reestimated the model using quality of contact, and the conclusions were substantially the same: the paths were comparable in both direction and size, with only the path from feelings to empowerment

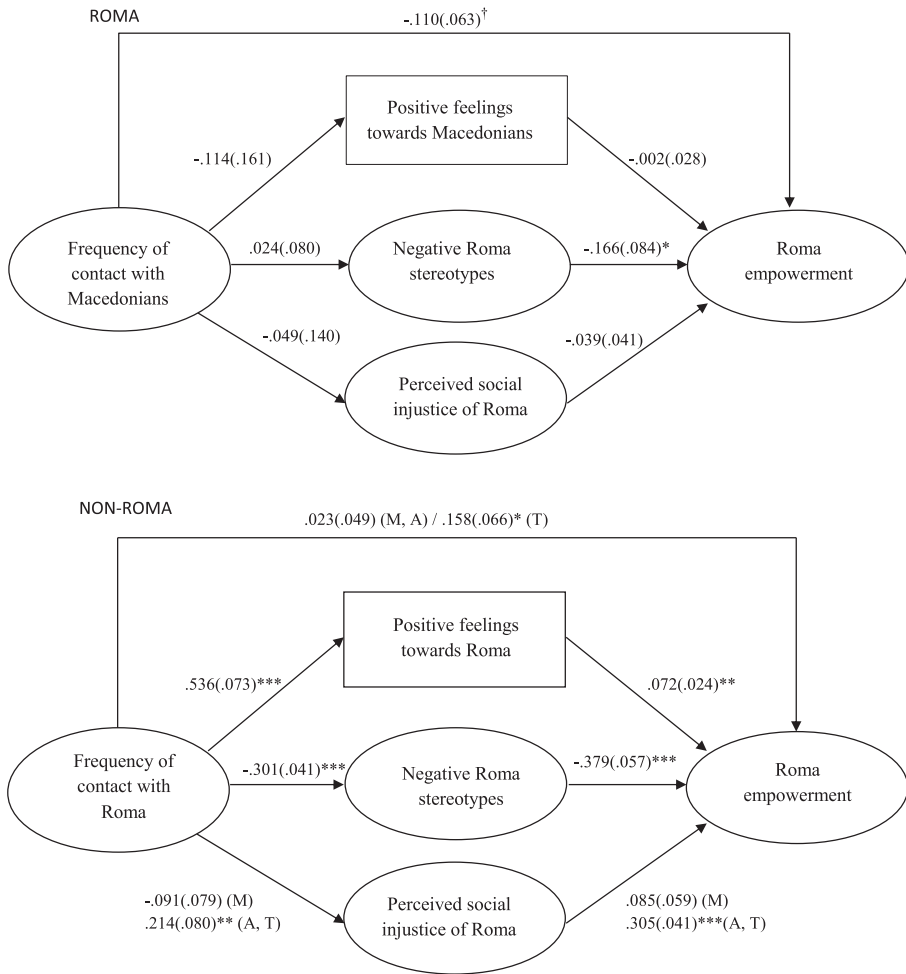


FIGURE 1 Path diagrams with unstandardized parameter estimates (standard errors in the brackets) for the sample of Roma and non-Roma participants; M = Macedonians, A = Albanians, T = Turks; $^\dagger p < .10$, $*p < .05$, $**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

becoming marginally not significant ($B = .053$, $SE = .032$, $p = .101$).³ Therefore, we may conclude that, for non-Roma, frequency and quality of contact produce similar effects.

4 | DISCUSSION

This study investigated the endorsement of Roma empowerment in Macedonia. Comparing a disadvantaged minority (Roma), dominant majority (Macedonians), and two higher-status minorities (Albanians and Turks), we examined the mediating role of out-group feelings, negative Roma stereotypes, and perceived social injustice towards the Roma in the association between positive out-group contact and endorsement of Roma empowerment. We tested the hypotheses using both frequency and quality of intergroup contact. For the non-Roma samples, the results largely confirm the hypotheses derived from the prejudice reduction approach, whereas for the Roma sample, the findings mostly refute the hypotheses derived from the collective action approach (Dixon & Levine, 2012).

For all three non-Roma groups, having more frequent and more positive contact with Roma was related to stronger endorsement of Roma empowerment due to more positive feelings towards the Roma and less negative Roma stereotypes. In the case of Albanian and Turkish minorities, higher perceived social injustice towards the Roma

was another underlying mechanism. An average, non-Roma minorities were less in favour of Roma empowerment (compared to majority members), which suggests higher competition for status rather than interminority solidarity. However, through intergroup contact with the Roma, minorities can start to perceive similar social injustices and develop support for the empowerment of the Roma. For the Macedonian sample, neither frequency nor quality of contact with Roma was related to more endorsement of Roma empowerment due to higher perceived social injustice. A possible reason for this is that for Macedonian, majority members' recognition of social injustices towards the Roma would mean blaming themselves for the low status position of the Roma. At the same time, endorsing the empowerment of Roma would mean sharing some of the social and political advantages they possess and losing part of the dominant position they hold in the society. Therefore, dominant group members are often motivated to keep issues of power and status off the table during intergroup encounters (Saguy & Dovidio, 2013).

Among the Roma youth, we found no evidence for the collective action approach in explaining the association between frequency of contact with Macedonians and endorsement of Roma empowerment (aside from the finding that negative Roma, in-group, stereotype was related to lower endorsement of Roma empowerment). Admittedly, when using quality of contact, we did find a positive relation with feelings towards Macedonians, which is in line with prejudice reduction approach (Allport, 1954; Dixon & Levine, 2012), but these positive feelings again did not translate into lower wish for in-group empowerment. Moreover, quality of contact was, contrary to the expectations, related to higher awareness of injustices that Roma are facing. There is research that demonstrates that intergroup contact may actually heighten a sense of relative disadvantage (Dixon et al., 2010), strengthen the recognition of the systematic discrimination that one's minority group faces (Poore et al., 2002), and does not have to undermine minority group's support for minority rights (Çelebi, Verkuyten, Köse, & Maliepaard, 2014). This indicates that positive contact with members of the advantaged group does not necessarily diminish disadvantaged group member's motivation to act on behalf of their group (Becker, Wright, Lubensky, & Zhou, 2013). Because there are relatively few Roma who fully participate in mainstream Macedonian society, it is possible that instead of detaching themselves from the in-group, they are in solidarity with their in-group members. This means that the social context matters in determining the success of the collective action approach for disadvantaged groups.

Whereas the conclusions for non-Roma groups were the same regardless of whether frequency or quality of contact with Roma was considered, for the Roma themselves, quality of contact with the dominant group mattered more than quantity. Even though neither measure of contact was conducive to stronger support for Roma empowerment among Roma participants, quality of contact was at least related to lower prejudice towards Macedonians and higher perceived injustice. A possible explanation could be that, given the comparatively higher levels of intergroup contact, Roma also regularly experience negative contact, which is why frequent encounters do not necessarily result in positive outcomes (Barlow et al., 2012).

In evaluating the findings, the non-representative sample and the cross-sectional nature of the data should be acknowledged. Although we managed to reach a relatively large group of Roma and other minority group adolescents in Macedonia, it is unclear whether the findings generalize to other regions in the country and whether, for example, feelings towards the Roma influence intergroup contact rather than the other way around. Despite these limitations, it is important to note that our study is one of the very few that examined the endorsement of minority group empowerment for one of the largest and most disadvantaged minority groups in Europe, the Roma. Furthermore, we tested a model that combines two contrasting approaches in explaining the endorsement of minority group empowerment for both majority and minority groups. We found that the prejudice reduction approach provides an understanding of the responses of the Macedonian majority and Albanian and Turkish minority groups. However, for the Roma adolescents, there was no empirical evidence for the collective action approach. In light of the current political discourse on empowering Roma populations across the European continent, our study provides valuable information about the relationship between contact with Roma and endorsement of Roma empowerment among non-Roma populations. More opportunity for contact with Roma peers appears to challenge adolescents' negative perceptions and feelings about the Roma, and this makes it more likely to develop a more inclusive society where Roma can benefit from their rights as citizens of Macedonia.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ We checked whether the conclusions changed when controlling for age and gender. Among the non-Roma, females had more positive feelings about Roma ($\beta = .129, p = .002$), less negative stereotypes of the Roma ($\beta = -.083, p = .032$), and perceived more social injustice than males ($\beta = .099, p = .020$). In the Roma sample, older participants held less negative stereotypes of their in-group ($\beta = -.159, p = .030$). The conclusions about the main models remained unchanged. We also compared Roma students interviewed at schools and those interviewed with the help of a local NGO, and no differences were detected.
- ² Note that the direct effect of contact on Roma empowerment was positive and significant for Turks but absent for Macedonians and Albanians (Figure 1). Thus, the relationship between contact and Roma empowerment was fully mediated for Macedonians and Albanians and partially mediated for Turks.
- ³ Complete results available from the authors upon request.

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