Conformity to group norms: How group-affirmation shapes collective action☆

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ABSTRACT

Why do people collectively support action for (or against) marginalized groups in society? Three studies ($N = 1161$) conducted in France and Romania tested the hypotheses that collective action is partly driven by conformity, as people follow what they perceive as normative in the social context. Further, we hypothesized that a contemporaneous affirmation of group identity would amplify such conformity. Consistent with expectations, participants randomly assigned to affirm a value central to their groups tended to conform to salient group norms in their support for collective action, regardless of whether salient norms were discriminatory or non-discriminatory. Participants assigned to self-affirmation condition (Study 1) or to a control condition (Studies 1–3) were less influenced by group norms. The results suggest that group-affirmation increases conformity and, as such, may foster pro-minority collective action when the normative context is non-discriminatory. However, group-affirmation could also foster anti-minority collective action when the normative context is discriminatory. Results are discussed in the context of how to understand motivations for and against collective action on behalf of marginalized groups in society.

Collective action refers to all forms of action organized and undertaken by a group of individuals to achieve common goals and share benefits (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Collective action can take many forms, such as signing petitions, participating in demonstrations, and responding more directly to the humanitarian needs of the oppressed in order to reduce social inequities (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). However, collective actions sometimes aim to maintain the status quo and the advantageous position of the ingroup (van Zomeren, 2016). Therefore, when members of advantaged groups engage in collective action for the benefit of their own group, it can serve to maintain their group's position in the existing social hierarchy, as in conservative social movements (van Zomeren, 2016). This type of collective action, which is hostile towards minorities and other disadvantaged groups, can be particularly visible in contexts that encourage the expression of prejudice and discrimination (Postmes & Smith, 2009).

Indeed, the intention of individuals to engage in collective action on behalf of or against the interests of a minority group is associated with perceptions of social norms regarding attitudes and behaviors towards that group (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'brien, 2002; Smith & Louis, 2008; van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). People are influenced by both the larger societal norms (Postmes & Smith, 2009), and norms of their key ingroups (Abrams & Hogg, 2001) that can be either pro-minority or anti-minority. When society values equality and non-discrimination, collective action can be influenced by these societal norms and aimed at improving the status of minority groups. However, in relatively pluralistic egalitarian country, there are subgroups that try to perpetuate social hierarchy and to maintain the disadvantaged position of minority groups. When stigmatized groups are widely discriminated against and devalued by society, people may conform to these norms or engage in collective actions aimed to defend the rights of minority groups.

In the social identity approach to inter-group relations, social norms are internalized through identification with a group. According to social identity theory, belonging to a social group such as a nationality provides members with a definition of 'who we are' and a description and

prescription of what it means to be a member of a group (i.e. the internalization of group norms, Abrams & Hogg, 2001; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996; Smith & Louis, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, being socialist in France is associated with norms of tolerance towards minorities that may lead to a greater intention to host Syrian refugees (Badea, Tavani, Rubin, & Meyer, 2017). Thus, people are influenced by norms because they prescribe and describe attitudes and behaviors appropriate for them as members of a group.

We present three studies that seek to better explain the psychological underpinnings of the link between social norms and collective action. Using an approach based on self-affirmation theory, we seek to better understand the link between social norms and collective action by observing whether people conform to descriptive social norms after different aspects of self-concept have been experimentally affirmed. Although a small amount of research has examined how self-affirmations influence conformity (e.g., Binning, Brick, Cohen, & Sherman, 2015), the research has not explored the consequences of a different but widely studied type of affirmation, group affirmation, on responses to social norms. How might the assertion of values essential to group identity influence support for collective action on behalf of or against a minority group?

1. Self-affirmation, group-affirmation and conformity to social norms

Recent studies based on self-affirmation theory have examined the consequences of threats to social identity in terms of intergroup relations (Badea & Sherman, 2019). The basic tenet of self-affirmation theory (Steele, 1988; see also Cohen & Sherman, 2014) is that people strive to maintain self-integrity, a global image of the self as being capable, morally adequate, and adaptive. Threats to a social identity—to the extent that the social identity is connected to the individual's self—can threaten this notion of self-integrity and people can respond defensively, by exhibiting prejudice and discrimination (Sherman, Brookfield, & Ortosky, 2017). However, self-affirmations can reduce the pressure to protect social identity, and studies have shown that it can reduce negative attitudes towards outgroup members (Fein & Spencer, 1997).

Research by Binning et al. (2015) directly examined the effect of self-affirmation on participants' tendency to conform to salient descriptive national norms. In short, this work found that self-affirmation seemed to free people from identity-based pressures to conform to their group. That is, following a self-affirmation task (versus a control, non-affirming task), participants were not swayed by opinion polls, illustrating majority's opinions (i.e., descriptive social norms). Instead, they appeared to be more comfortable breaking from group norms and basing their judgments, not on norms but on evidentiary information. Specifically, participants in the control condition conformed to opinion polls about how then-President Obama was handling the economy and increased or decreased presidential approval as a function of increasing or decreasing presidential popularity. Meanwhile, they ignored ostensible data on US economic health. By contrast, participants in the self-affirmation condition seemingly ignored group norms and, instead, moved their approval in line with the economic data. Self-affirmed participants were less concerned with "going along the group" and more concerned with "getting it right."

However, the Binning et al. (2015) study did not examine desire for collective action, and it only examined the effects of self-affirmation (versus control). There are in fact at least two types of affirmation procedures that have been studied in the literature, namely self-affirmation (which affirms primarily individuals' personal identity) and group-affirmation (which affirms a valued social identity). The first procedure involves allowing members of the threatened group to bolster or affirm a positive image of the self, whereas the second involves allowing them to bolster or affirm a positive image of their group (Sherman, Kinias, Major, Kim, & Prenovost, 2007). Critically, evidence suggests these two procedures each have powerful, distinct implications

for prejudice and desires for collective action on behalf of oppressed groups.

While self-affirmation has reduced conformity and prejudice across a wide range of domains (for a review, see Sherman et al., 2017), the pattern of results with group-affirmation is less clear: it can attenuate, have no impact on, or even accentuate negative attitudes (Badea & Sherman, 2019). For example, Canadians who ranked a list of values in order of their importance to them as Canadians showed higher collective guilt about Canada's mistreatment of Aboriginal children in residential schools compared to a control condition (Gunn & Wilson, 2011). Other research (Čehajić-Clancy, Effron, Halperin, Liberman, & Ross, 2011) found that only self-affirmation was successful in increasing recognition by Serbian high school students of atrocities committed by Serbs against Bosnian Muslims, whereas group-affirmation had no effect. In France, people who wrote about important values for them as French citizens, a group affirming activity, did not express a higher willingness to receive Syrian refugees (Badea et al., 2017) and did not show any reduced support for discriminatory measures undertaken by the French government against North African immigrants in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, compared to control condition (Badea, Binning, Verlhiac, & Sherman, 2018). By contrast, only self-affirmation was led to the more positive intergroup attitudes in these studies. Finally, in another study conducted in the U.S., when people affirmed a value important to their political party, the more participants identified with this in-group, the more they evaluated an outgroup negatively (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015).

One possible reason for the mixed findings with group-affirmation procedures is that this technique increases the salience of social identity (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015). Reflecting on a positive aspect of a social category via group-affirmation may increase identification with the group and, consequently, the salience of associated norms (Badea & Sherman, 2019). In the present research, we test whether group-affirmation increases the impact of social norms on collective action defending versus oppressing a minority. Group-affirming exercises, such as writing and reflecting on important values for one's group can increase the social identity salience associated with the group used in the affirmation procedure. By focusing on a specific group-level aspect of the self, we theorized that the group-affirmation procedure activates the psychological attributes (e.g., social norms) pertinent to that group membership. In addition, group-affirmation makes individuals aware about the positive aspects of their ingroup and in this way, it can increase ingroup identification (e.g., Badea et al., 2017). According to social identity theory, people are motivated to identify with positively valued groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and to behave in congruence with its norms (Abrams & Hogg, 2001). Furthermore, making norms about discrimination regarding outgroups are made salient it may increase the perception of entitativity of the ingroup, which has been associated with increased group identification under certain conditions (Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, & Moffitt, 2007).

Therefore, we sought to test whether group-affirmation would enhance the tendency for people to conform to salient social norms, by increasing group identification. If these norms are non-discriminatory, group-affirmation will increase the impact of positive norms on collective action on behalf of the minority group. If these norms are discriminatory, group-affirmation will increase the impact of negative norms on collective action expressing hostility towards the minority group. Following prior research, we further hypothesized that self-affirmation would, by contrast, result in lower conformity responses (Binning et al., 2015).

2. Collective action in connection with the Roma minority

In this research we focus on the example of individuals' intention to engage in collective action in connection with Roma minority and on the role of descriptive norms (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990) in shaping support for pro-Roma and anti-Roma collective action. Roma people are

a traditionally itinerant ethnic group of people, who originated in northern India, but in contemporary times live throughout the European continent. They mostly live in East-Central Europe, where they make up 5 to 10% of the population (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2019). In Western Europe, the Roma minority includes people who have lived in the host countries for several generations and immigrants from Eastern Europe who came after the EU enlargements in the 21st century (Kalb & Halmai, 2011). Roma people have been historically mistreated, persecuted, and exterminated all over Europe, and are still marginalized and discriminated against in many ways in education, housing, employment, and health care. Moreover, with the rise of populist ideologies in Europe, expressions of hate and violence against Roma have increased over the last decade (FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, 2019).

Across much of Europe, the overall normative context can be considered negative towards the Roma minority. In 2013, for example, former French Prime Minister Manuel Vals expressed open hostility towards Roma when he declared that Roma people should return to Romania (Le Parisien, 2013). Recently, many attacks against Roma people were recorded in France, which were followed by a series of rumors spread on social media alleging that Roma people in a "white van" were abducting children (The Conversation, 2019). In Romania, a survey initiated by the government in 2009 showed that 43% of the respondents would not want to hire a Roma person because "they are lazy and they steal." The survey also shows that 55% of Romanians think that Roma people should not be allowed to travel abroad because they damage Romania's reputation (see also, Amnesty International, 2018; Loveland & Popescu, 2016). Whereas negative attitudes against members of the Roma minority are widespread in Europe, there are citizens who defend the rights of this minority group, sometimes by means of engaging in collective action (e.g., FranceInfo, 2018). Therefore, our question is about the circumstances under which individuals demonstrate conformity to discriminatory norms and engage in anti-Roma collective action. And in contrast to this, we also aim to investigate the conditions under which individuals engage in pro-Roma collective action to defend the rights of this minority.

In three experiments we examined how group-affirmation moderates the impact of social norms on individuals' intentions to engage in collective action in connection with the Roma minority. In Study 1, we also examine the effects of self-affirmation. Specifically, we measured the perception of discriminatory norms in France (Study 1) and we manipulated discriminatory norms to be cognitively salient in Romania (Study 2), before the induction of the affirmation procedure. In Study 3, we manipulated the salience of non-discriminatory norms among Romanian psychology students. We hypothesize that discriminatory norms diminish individuals' willingness to engage in collective action on behalf of the Roma minority, and this effect can be even stronger when individuals reflect on important values for their national group (i.e., group-affirmation). We also hypothesize that discriminatory norms increase citizens' intentions to engage in hostile collective actions towards Roma, and this detrimental effect can be higher in group-affirmation condition compared to control. In Study 3, we hypothesize that non-discriminatory norms increase individuals' willingness to engage in collective action on behalf of the Roma minority, and diminish individuals' intentions to engage in hostile collective actions. These effects will be stronger in group-affirmation compared to control. In this last experiment we test the role of group identification as a psychological mechanism of conformity effects. We expect that group-affirmation can increase the salience of social identity (Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015), and therefore, we also expect that the interactive effect between norms and group-affirmation on collective action to be mediated by a higher identification with the group used in group-affirmation procedure.

This research program was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology at University of Iasi, Romania for the Study 2, ref. 808,062/12.09.2018. The experimental procedure of the Studies 1 and 3 was similar to that one conducted in Romania, and meets the European

ethical requirements. We report all measures, manipulations, and participants' exclusions in these studies. Data collection was not continued after analysis. Data for all studies and supplemental materials are publicly accessible on Open Science Framework: https://osf.io/2y6rp/?view_only=d625b12eb28a4552a450bbbcca06bc2c

3. Study 1

In Study 1, we conducted an experiment to examine how self-affirmation, group-affirmation, and no-affirmation (control condition) would affect the association between perceived discriminatory norms and pro-Roma versus anti-Roma collective action. As noted above, Binning et al. (2015) found that self-affirmation freed people from the influence of descriptive group norms and allowed them to base their judgments on evidentiary data. Extending this logic to the present research, self-affirmation may diminish conformity response to social norms. Research has yet to investigate how group-affirmation may moderate responses to perceived norms. Based on the ineffectiveness of the group-affirmation procedure at reducing prejudice when this negative attitude appears to be a normative response (e.g., Čehajić-Clancy et al., 2011), there is reason to think that the group-affirmation may foster conformity by making people more attuned to group norms (Badea & Sherman, 2019). In short, we tested the hypotheses that self-affirmation would decrease conformity to discriminatory norms (e.g., higher pro-Roma action when norms are anti-Roma), whereas group-affirmation would increase this type of response to discriminatory norms (e.g., lower pro-Roma action when norms are anti-Roma).

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants and experimental design

The sample consisted of 371 French psychology undergraduates who participated in the study for course credit. Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 50 years ($M = 19.67$, $SD = 3.68$). There were 303 women, and 68 men. The survey was distributed in French, using Qualtrics software on the intranet platform of a French university. The study consisted of a one-factor, 3-group between-subjects design (affirmation status: self-affirmation, group-affirmation, control). Sensitivity tests conducted in G*Power revealed that, with a total sample size of 371 and an alpha of 0.05, the three-group design had 0.80 power to detect effects as small as $f = 0.15$, which means the design was adequately powered to detect small-to-medium effect sizes comparable to those seen in prior affirmation research (e.g., Binning et al., 2015).

3.1.2. Procedure

Prior to the affirmation manipulation, participants responded to a scale that assessed their *perception of discriminatory norms* concerning attitudes towards Roma in France ("Most French people have negative attitudes/opinions towards the Roma minority"; "Most French people think that Roma people have negative characteristics – e.g., thief, aggressive", "Most French people do not like Roma minority"; "Most French people discriminate against Roma minority"). Responses were offered on a seven-point scale (1 = "total disagreement" 7 = "total agreement") and the reliability of the 4 items scale was good, α = 0.92.

3.1.2.1. Manipulation of affirmation. The self-affirmation, group-affirmation, and control conditions were adapted from prior research (e.g., Sherman et al., 2007). Participants in all conditions first ranked a list of values from the most important to the least important (religious fulfillment, financial success, cultural sensitivity, friends and family, athletic achievement, physical fitness, artistic abilities, and life full of adventure). Participants in the self-affirmation condition ranked the importance of the values to them personally, and participants in the group-affirmation condition ranked the importance of the values to them as French citizens. Then, participants explained in an open-ended text box

why the first top value was important to them personally (self-affirmation) or to them as a French citizen (group-affirmation). We used this social group because discriminatory norms can be related to the national category. Indeed, political discourse promoting hate towards ethnic minorities captures the attention of all citizens without referring to a particular subgroup (e.g., the discourse of the former prime minister Manuel Valls, in 2013, Le Parisien, 2013). In the control condition, participants wrote why the last ranked value may be important for someone else.

3.1.3. Dependent measures

After the affirmation manipulation, participants completed a questionnaire that measured their own intention to engage in collective action, and their perception of the normative behavior in France, towards the Roma. They recorded the scores on seven-point scales (1 = "total disagreement" 7 = "total agreement").

3.1.3.1. Measure of intention to engage in collective action.
First, participants read the following scenario that we created for the purpose of this questionnaire: "Imagine that a poor Roma family moves into your neighborhood from a country-side village. They are not welcome by some of your neighbors and members of the local school. These people consider various forms of actions to make sure the Roma people do not stay in their new home." Then, participants responded to questions concerning the probability that he or she would engage in different activities related to the described situation, in a measure similar to other research on collective action intentions (based on e.g., van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004).

Six items measured participants' intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action: "I would participate in some form of action (e.g., signing a petition) defending the rights of the Roma", "I would express my concern about racism against the Roma", "I would motivate others to participate in actions for the human rights of Roma people", "I would donate clothing, school supplies or toys for Roma families", "I would do some kind of volunteer work for an organization that helps Roma people", "I would motivate others to donate for the Roma", α =0.91. Higher score indicates higher intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action. Three items measured participants' intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action: "I would participate in some form of action (e.g., signing a petition) against policies that strive for the integration of Roma in mainstream society", "I would express my concern about the growing rights of the Roma, at the expense of the majority", "I would motivate others to participate in actions to restrict the rights of Roma people", α = 0.84. Higher scores indicate higher intentions to engage in hostile behavior.

3.2. Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and correlations), Study 1.

	M (SD)	1	2	3
Self-affirmation				
1. Discriminatory norms	5.12 *(1.18)*			
2. Pro-Roma collective action	4.31 *(1.48)*	0.02		
3. Anti-Roma collective action	2.36 *(1.35)*	−0.03	0.11	
Group-affirmation				
1. Discriminatory norms	5.29 *(1.25)*			
2. Pro-Roma collective action	4.22 *(1.51)*	-.21[a]		
3. Anti-Roma collective action	2.28 *(1.41)*	−0.19	.26[b]	
Control				
1. Discriminatory norms	5.13 *(1.32)*			
2. Pro-Roma collective action	4.25 *(1.49)*	0.14		
3. Anti-Roma collective action	2.76 *(1.66)*	-.17[c]	.27[d]	

Note. [a] $p = 0.032$, [b] $p = 0.007$, [c] $p = 0.022$, [d] $p < 0.001$.

The aim of Study 1 was to test whether the affirmation procedures significantly moderated the effects of perceived discriminatory norms against Roma minority on collective action. To test for this interaction, we followed a standard analytic approach in which a series of two contrasts were used to compare each experimental condition one to each other (e.g., Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991). Contrast 1 coded self-affirmation as 1, control as −1, and group-affirmation as 0. This contrast therefore compared whether self-affirmation differed from the control condition. Contrast 2 coded self-affirmation as 0, control as −1, and group-affirmation as 1. This contrast compared whether the group-affirmation condition differed from the control condition. Finally, Contrast 3 coded self-affirmation as 1, control as 0, and group-affirmation as −1 and compared whether self-affirmation differed from group-affirmation. We ran several multiple regression analyses using intentions to engage in pro-Roma collective action and intentions to engage in anti-Roma collective action as dependent variables. The independent variables were the experimental condition (coded as Contrast 1, Contrast 2, Contrast 3), the perceived discriminatory norms assessed prior to the manipulation (mean-centered), and the product between each contrast and perceived norms in order to test for their interaction. Results of this multiple regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

3.2.1. Intentions to engage in pro-Roma collective action

The effect of Contrast 2 on this dependent variable was significant, $b = 1.05$, 95% CI [0.29, 1.82], $SE = 0.39$, $t(367) = 2.71$, $p = .007$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$. Participants in the group-affirmation condition expressed higher intention to engage in pro-Roma collective compared to those in the control condition. The interaction term between Contrast 2 and the perceived discriminatory norms was also significant, $b = −0.21$, 95% CI [−0.35, −0.06], $t(367) = 2.81$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. No other contrasts or interactions were significant. The plot of estimated means of collective action for all experimental conditions is depicted in Fig. 1.

In the group-affirmation condition, the score of pro-Roma collective action was lower when the perception of discriminatory norms was higher, $b = −0.26$, 95% CI [−0.51, −0.02], $SE = 0.12$, $t(365) = 2.17$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. The link between perception of discriminatory norms and pro-Roma collective action was not significant in control condition, $b = 0.15$, 95% CI [−0.01, 0.32], $SE = 0.08$, $t(365) = 1.85$, $p = .065$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$ nor was it significant in the self-affirmation condition, $b = 0.02$, 95% CI [−0.22, 0.27], $SE = 0.12$, $t(365) = 0.21$, $p = .833$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$.

Table 2
Unstandardized regression coefficients for the effects of self- vs. group-affirmation on individuals' intention to engage in pro-Roma versus anti-Roma collective action (Study 1).

|	Pro-Roma collective action			Anti-Roma collective action		
	b	95% CI	p	b	95% CI	p
Contrast 1 = self (1), control (−1), group (0)	0.55	[−0.22, 1.33]	0.159	−0.62	[−1.41, 0.16]	0.120
Contrast 2 = self (0), control (−1), group (1)	1.05	[0.29, 1.82]	0.005	−0.32	[−1.11, 0.45]	0.411
Contrast 3 = self (1), control (0), group (−1)	0.73	[−1.64, 0.19]	0.119	−0.51	[−1.44, 0.42]	0.286
Discriminatory norms	−0.02	[−0.15, 0.11]	0.694	−0.15	[−0.28, −0.03]	0.016
Contrast 1 x discriminatory norms	−0.10	[−0.25, 0.04]	0.167	0.07	[−0.07, 0.22]	0.301
Contrast 2 x discriminatory norms	−0.21	[−0.35, −0.06]	0.005	−0.01	[−0.12, 0.16]	0.824
Contrast 3 x discriminatory norms	0.14	[−0.02, 0.32]	0.088	0.10	[−0.07, 0.27]	0.252
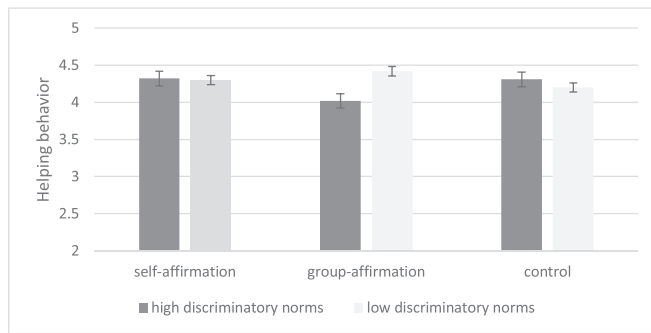
Fig. 1. Estimated means and standard errors for collective action as a function of affirmation status and discriminatory norms (Study 1).
Note. Higher scores indicate higher intention to engage in collective action on behalf of the Roma minority.

3.2.2. Intentions to engage in anti-Roma collective action

The same multiple regression analysis as described above showed only a significant effect of discriminatory norms, $b = -0.15$, 95% CI $[-0.28, -0.03]$, $SE = 0.06$, $t(365) = 2.42$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. The more participants perceived discriminatory norms, the less they express their willingness to engage in hostility against Roma minority.

Taken together, the results of Study 1 provided initial, partial support for our hypotheses. First, inconsistent with expectations, self-affirmation did not affect intentions to engage in collective action, compared to other conditions. That is, self-affirmation did not diminish conformity effect, despite prior research documenting that self-affirmation can free people from the pressure to conform to salient national norms (Binning et al., 2015). However, in support of our hypotheses, group-affirmation produced a conformity effect. That is, group-affirmation resulted in lower support for pro-Roma action when discriminatory norms were higher. Notably, this conformity effect did not hold for support for anti-Roma action, only for pro-Roma action. Intentions to engage in anti-Roma collective action were correlated with the perception of discriminatory norms, but this link was not moderated by the affirmation procedure.

This first study presents some limitations. First, discriminatory norms were measured rather than manipulated and thus could be confounded with other variables. For example, those who perceived more discriminatory norms may be more discriminatory themselves. In order to show clearly a "conformity effect", we need to manipulate social norms and to examine whether there is a causal relationship with intentions to engage in collective action. Second, in this study conducted online, we did not include an item to check for participants' attention. We address these limitations is the following study, where we also move the experimental context to another European country, Romania.

4. Study 2

Study 2 sought to examine further questions as to whether group-affirmation results in conformity to salient group norms and the impact this may have for collective action on behalf of a group experiencing societal discrimination. In this study, rather than measuring perceived norms, we experimentally manipulated the salience of discriminatory norms whereby participants read information that described that most Romanians had negative attitudes (vs. control) towards the Roma. In addition, Study 2 focused solely on the comparison between group-affirmation and a no-affirmation control; self-affirmation was not included in the design. Another notable difference is that Study 2 took place in Romania. In Romania, discrimination and prejudice against Roma are widespread (e.g., Ciobanu, 2017). The European Commission noted that "the risk of living in poverty is almost three times higher for Roma than for the rest of the population" (Amnesty International, 2018). As such, a manipulation of discriminatory norms was highly credible. As in Study 1, we examined conformity in two ways and expected (1) intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action would be lower when the discriminatory norms towards Roma minority are made salient and this effect would be stronger in group-affirmation condition, compared to control; and (2) intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action would be higher when the discriminatory norms towards Roma minority are made salient and this effect would be stronger in group-affirmation condition.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and experimental design

The sample consisted of 356 Romanian citizens (students and other categories) who voluntarily participated in the study.[1] Participants' ages ranged from 17 to 66 years ($M = 25.28$, $SD = 5.58$). The survey was distributed in Romanian using Qualtrics software on the intranet platform of a Romanian university. Students who completed the questionnaire were asked to send the link to other persons from their own social network. The survey did not record whether participants were students versus other categories. The total sample included 158 women and 198 men. The experiment used a 2 (affirmation: group-affirmation vs control) x 2 (discriminatory norms: salient vs non-salient) between-subjects factorial design. Sensitivity tests conducted in G*Power revealed that, with a total sample size of 356 and an alpha of 0.05, the four-group design had 0.80 power to detect effects as small as $f = 0.17$, which means the design was adequately powered to detect small-to-medium effect sizes.

4.1.2. Procedure

4.1.2.1. Manipulation of discriminatory norms' salience. Participants were first asked to carefully read a short text presented as a newspaper excerpt. In the discrimination-salience condition, the text was: "A recent survey conducted in Romania shows that most of the Romanians have negative attitudes towards the Roma minority. Much of the Romanians think that Roma have negative characteristics (for example, they are thieves and aggressors) and therefore do not like them. In fact, most of the Romanians refuse to live near Roma, or to work with them."

In the discrimination non-salience condition, the text was: "A recent survey conducted in Romania shows that most Romanians have positive attitudes about balanced nutrition. Much of the Romanians believe that meat products have negative characteristics (for example, high cholesterol) and therefore want to consume more fruits and vegetables cultivated without pesticides and other chemical components. Most of the Romanians are trying to buy high-quality nutritional products."

4.1.2.2. Manipulation of group-affirmation. The group-affirmation versus control conditions were the same as in the Study 1 (self-affirmation was not included in the design). Participants in all conditions first ranked a list of values from the most important to the least important (religious fulfillment, financial success, cultural sensitivity, friends and family, athletic achievement, physical fitness, artistic abilities, and life full of adventure). Participants in the group-affirmation condition ranked the importance of the values to them as Romanian citizens, then they explained why the first top value was important to them as Romanian citizen. In the control condition, participants explained why the last ranked value may be important for someone else.

4.1.3. Dependent measures

After the experimental manipulation, participants completed a questionnaire that included a salience manipulation check, and then the

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[1] A total of 481 participants clicked on the study's link. 25% did not complete the study. The final sample consisted of 356 participants.

key dependent measures, the measure of intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action and the measure of intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action. Responses were offered on a seven-point scale (1 = "total disagreement" 7 = "total agreement").

4.1.3.1. Attention and manipulation checks. We included a check of the participants' attention to the experimental manipulation of the salience of discriminatory norms. At the end of the study, participants were asked to indicate which text they read: a text on attitudes towards Roma vs. a text on eating habits. All of the participants (100%) were able to say what text they read at the beginning of the experiment. We also included a measure of perceived discriminatory norms. Participants expressed their agreement with the following items, using a seven-point scale (1 = "total disagreement" to 7 = "total agreement"): "Most Romanian people have negative attitudes/opinions towards the Roma minority"; "Most Romanian people think that Roma people have negative characteristics (e.g., thief, aggressive)"; "Most Romanian people do not like Roma minority"; "Most Romanian people discriminate against Roma minority", α =0.93. An independent samples *t*-test with the salience of discriminatory norms as independent variable and the perception of norms as the dependent variable indicated a significant effect of norms' salience, t (354) = 3.68, $p < .001$, $d = 0.38$. Participants in the salient norm condition, perceived higher discriminatory norms ($M = 5.88$, $SD = 1.11$), compared to those in the non-salient condition ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.76$).

Measure of intention to engage in collective action. We used the same scenario and the same items as in Study 1 to measure intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action, α = 0.88, and intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action, α = 0.84.

4.2. Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics are presented in the Table 3.

In order to test our hypotheses, we conducted a 2 (affirmation: group-affirmation vs control) x 2 (discriminatory norms: salient vs non-salient) between-subjects factorial ANOVA for intentions to engage in pro-Roma collective action and for intentions to engage in anti-Roma collective action.

4.2.1. Intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action

Results showed a significant main effect of discriminatory norms, F (1, 352) = 4.78, $p = .029$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. Participants in the salient norm condition ($M = 3.42$; $SD = 1.56$) expressed lower intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action, compared to those from control condition ($M = 3.78$; $SD = 1.42$). The main effect of the affirmation procedure was not significant, $F(1, 352) = 0.55$, $p = .458$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$.

Results also showed a significant interaction between affirmation and norms, $F(1, 352) = 5.01$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. The pattern of means showed a conformity effect similar to Study 1. In the group-affirmation condition, the intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action was higher when discriminatory norms were not-salient ($M = 3.91$; $SD = 1.34$) than when discriminatory norms were salient, $M = 3.17$; $SD = 1.56$, $F(1, 352) = 9.33$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. In the control condition, there was no significant difference between salient and non-salient norms conditions, $M = 3.66$; $SD = 1.53$ versus $M = 3.65$; $SD = 1.48$, F

Table 3
Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations by condition), Study 2.

	Discriminatory norms	
	Salient	*Not salient*
Group-affirmation		
Pro-Roma collective action	3.17 *(1.56)*	3.91 *(1.34)*
Anti-Roma collective action	2.97 *(1.91)*	2.66 *(1.32)*
Control		
Pro-Roma collective action	3.66 *(1.53)*	3.65 *(1.48)*
Anti-Roma collective action	2.58 *(1.55)*	2.42 *(1.51)*

$(1,352) = 0.01$, $p = .971$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$.

4.2.2. Intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action

The effect of discriminatory norms, $F(1, 352) = 1.75$, $p = .186$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$ the effect of the affirmation procedure, $F(1, 352) = 3.12$, $p = .078$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.009$ and the interaction between affirmation and norms, $F(1, 352) = 0.19$, $p = .657$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, were not significant. However, ancillary analyses that compared pro-Roma and anti-Roma collective action as a within-subjects factor did reveal a noteworthy result. Namely, a 2 (affirmation: group-affirmation vs control) x 2 (discriminatory norms: salient vs non-salient) x 2 (collective action: pro-Roma vs anti-Roma) mixed model factorial ANOVA yielded a significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 352) = 3.89$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$.[2] As shown in Fig. 2, a plot of the interaction revealed that intentions for pro-Roma collective action were consistently higher than intentions for anti-Roma collective action (see Table 3, for means and standard deviation): $F(1, 352) = 24.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.06$, for control/non-salient norms; $F(1, 352) = 31.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.08$, for control/salient norms; and $F(1, 352) = 21.98$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.05$, for group-affirmation/non-salient norms, respectively.

There was one notable exception: In the affirmation/salient norms condition, the gap between pro- and anti-Roma collective action was reduced to non-significance, $F(1, 352) = 0.98$, $p = .322$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$. In other words, when discriminatory norms against the Roma were made salient, group-affirmation appeared to simultaneously decrease pro-Roma intentions and increase anti-Roma intentions.

In summary, results were consistent with Study 1 in showing group-affirmation produced a conformity effect. This study built on Study 1 in that it directly manipulated social norms rather than simply measuring them. Doing this yielded the insight that when discriminatory norms were not made salient, group-affirmation had no effect on participants' collective action intentions. However, when discriminatory norms were made salient, group-affirmation produced conformity in the direction of those norms. That is, group affirmed participants reported decreased intentions to engage in pro-Roma collective action when discriminatory norms were salient.

5. Study 3

In Study 3, we examine how group-affirmation moderates the impact of non-discriminatory norms on individuals' intentions to engage in collective action in connection with the Roma minority. Specifically, we manipulate non-discriminatory norms to be cognitively salient, before the induction of the affirmation procedure. We also test a psychological mechanism of conformity to groups' norms: increased group identification.

We hypothesize that non-discriminatory norms increase individuals' willingness to engage in collective action on behalf of the Roma minority, and this effect will be stronger when individuals reflect on important values for their group (i.e., group-affirmation). We also hypothesize that non-discriminatory norms diminish individuals' intentions to engage in hostile collective actions towards Roma, and this effect will be higher in the group-affirmation condition compared to control. We expect that these effects are mediated by a higher identification with the group used in group-affirmation procedure. This experiment was preregistered https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=xu8fv3

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[2] This analysis also showed a significant main effect of the type of collective action, $F(1, 352) = 67,84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. Participants expressed higher intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action ($M = 3.60$; $SD = 1.63$) than to engage in anti-Roma collective action ($M = 2.66$; $SD = 1.52$).
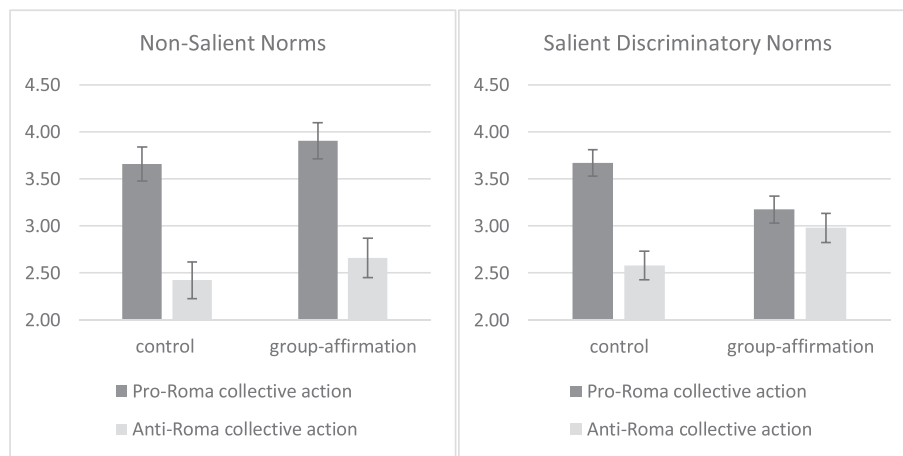
Fig. 2. Estimated means and standard errors for collective action as a function of affirmation status and discriminatory norms (Study 2).
Note. Higher scores indicate higher intention to engage in either pro-Roma or anti-Roma collective action.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and experimental design

The sample consisted of 434 undergraduates[3] in psychology from many Romanian universities, who voluntarily participated to the study. Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 53 years ($M = 23.58$, $SD = 7.41$). The sample included 403 women and 31 men. No participants declared their ethnic group as Roma. The survey was distributed in Romanian using Qualtrics software on the intranet platform of universities. The experiment used a 2 (affirmation: group-affirmation vs control) x 2 (non-discriminatory norms: salient vs non-salient) between-subjects factorial design. We calculated the required sample size using G*Power. We assume a small to medium effect size of the interaction between group-affirmation and norms, $f = 0.15$, for an ANOVA with 4 groups, and 0.80 power, which results in a required sample size of 432. With a sample of 434 participants, our study is adequately powered to detect small-to-medium effect sizes.

5.1.2. Procedure

5.1.2.1. Manipulation of non-discriminatory norms' salience.
As in the Study 2, participants were first asked to carefully read a short text presented as a newspaper excerpt. In this study, we used the group of psychology students because among this part of Romanian population, non-discriminatory norms against Roma are more credible. In the non-discrimination-salience condition, the text was: "A recent survey conducted in Romanian universities shows that most psychology students have a positive attitude towards the Roma minority. Most psychology students reject negative stereotypes about the Roma and express their willingness to help this minority group. They are attached to the principle of non-discrimination and defend it in society." In the control condition (non-salient norm), the text was the same as the control condition in Study 2 (a newspaper showing psychology students' preference for balanced nutrition).

5.1.2.2. Manipulation of group-affirmation.
The group-affirmation versus control conditions were similar to that used in the Study 2, although to keep the group consistent with the group for whom norms was manipulated, the group affirmation also focused on psychology students. Participants in the group-affirmation condition ranked the importance of the values to them as psychology students, and explained

why the first top value was important to them as member of this group. In the control condition, participants explained why the last ranked value may be important for someone else.

5.1.3. Dependent measures

After the experimental manipulation, participants completed a questionnaire that included a salience manipulation check, the measure of intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action, the measure of intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action, and the measure of identification with psychology students. Responses were offered on a seven-point scale (1 = "total disagreement" 7 = "total agreement").

5.1.3.1. Attention and manipulation checks.
We included again a check of the participants' attention to the experimental manipulation of the salience of non-discriminatory norms. As in Study 2, participants were asked to indicate which text they read: a text on attitudes towards Roma vs. a text on eating habits. The majority of participants (99.6%)[4] were able to say what text they read at the beginning of the experiment. We also included a measure of perceived non-discriminatory norms. Participants expressed their agreement with the following items, using a seven-point scale (1 = "total disagreement" to 7 = "total agreement"): "Most psychology students reject negative stereotypes about the Roma"; "Most psychology students express their willingness to help Roma minority"; "Most psychology students are attached to the principle of non-discrimination concerning Roma", "Most psychology students express their willingness to defend Roma minority in society", $\alpha = 0.87$. An independent samples t-test with the salience of discriminatory norms as independent variable and the perception of norms as the dependent variable indicated that all participants perceive higher non-discriminatory norms among psychology students (salient norm condition, $M = 4.54$, $SD = 1.21$ versus non-salient condition, $M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.32$), $t(432) = 0.074$, $p = .941$, $d = 0.007$. This can be linked to social desirability norms. However, as the attention test shows, non-discriminatory norms were salient for half of participants.

5.1.3.2. Measure of intention to engage in collective action.
We used the same scenario and the same items as in Study 1 to measure intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action, $\alpha = 0.88$, and intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action, $\alpha = 0.86$.

5.1.3.3. Measure of group identification.
We included a measure of

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[3] A total of 660 participants clicked on the study's link. 34% did not complete the study. The final sample consisted of 434 participants.

[4] When the other 0.4% of participants are excluded, results remain unchanged.

identification with psychology students. Participants expressed their agreement with the following items, using a seven-point scale (1 = "total disagreement" to 7 = "total agreement"): "I define myself as a psychology student"; "Being a psychology student is an important aspect of my personality"; "I am proud to be a psychology student"; "Being a psychology student is not important for who I am" (reversed); "I see myself as being similar to other psychology students" (adapted from Badea et al., 2017), α =0.78.

5.2. Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics are presented in the Table 4.

Following the approach used in Study 2, we conducted a 2 (affirmation: group-affirmation vs control) x 2 (non-discriminatory norms: salient vs non-salient) between-subjects factorial ANOVA for intentions to engage in pro-Roma collective action, for intentions to engage in anti-Roma collective action, and for group identification.

5.2.1. Intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action

Results showed there was no main effect of non-discriminatory norms, $F(1, 429) = 0.72$, $p = .398$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$. Support for pro-Roma collective action was high, regardless of norm condition: Participants in the salient norm condition ($M = 4.71$; $SD = 1.44$) expressed the same intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action as did participants in the control condition ($M = 4.60$; $SD = 1.54$). The main effect of the affirmation procedure was also not significant, $F(1, 429) = 2.59$, $p = .108$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.006$. However, these main effects were qualified by significant interaction between affirmation and norms, $F(1, 429) = 4.20$, $p = .041$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$.

The pattern of means was consistent with a conformity effect. In the group-affirmation condition, the intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action was higher when non-discriminatory norms were made salient ($M = 4.98$; $SD = 1.27$) than when they were not, $M = 4.57$; $SD = 1.53$, $F(1, 429) = 4.34$, $p = .038$, $\eta_p^2 = 010$. In the control condition, there was no significant difference between salient and non-salient norms conditions, $M = 4.46$; $SD = 1.54$ versus $M = 4.63$; $SD = 1.56$, $F(1, 429) = 0.70$, $p = .403$, $\eta_p^2 = 002$. In other words, the norms manipulation only had an effect in the affirmation condition.

5.2.2. Intention to engage in anti-Roma collective action

The effect of non-discriminatory norms, $F(1, 429) = 0.68$, $p = .410$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$, the effect of the affirmation procedure, $F(1, 429) = 1.15$, $p = .283$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$, and the interaction between affirmation and norms, $F(1, 429) = 0.27$, $p = .601$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, were not significant. Unlike in Study 2, ancillary analyses that compared pro-Roma and anti-Roma collective action as a within-subjects factor did not reveal a three-way

Table 4
Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations by condition), Study 3.

	Non-discriminatory norms	
	Salient	*Non-salient*
Group-affirmation		
Pro-Roma collective action	4.98 *(1.27)*	4.57 *(1.53)*
Anti-Roma collective action	2.50 *(1.72)*	2.28 *(1.62)*
Control		
Pro-Roma collective action	4.46 *(1.54)*	4.63 *(1.56)*
Anti-Roma collective action	2.59 *(1.77)*	2.54 *(1.54)*

interaction, $F(1, 429) = 1.12$, $p = .291$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$. However, the mixed-model factorial analysis did yield a significant 2 (affirmation: group-affirmation vs control) x 2 (collective action: pro-Roma vs anti-Roma) interaction, $F(1, 429) = 4.01$, $p = .046$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$.[5] The pattern of means revealed that, relative to the control condition, group-affirmation resulted in higher support for pro-Roma collective action ($Ms = 4.78$ vs. 4.54; $SDs = 1.40$ vs. 1.55, $F[1, 429] = 2.59$, $p = .108$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.006$.) and lower support for anti-Roma collective action ($Ms = 2.40$ vs. 2.57; $SDs = 1.68$ vs. 1.75, $F[1, 429] = 1.07$, $p = .302$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$.). Although neither of these simple slopes was significant, the interaction pattern is generally consistent with a conformity effect. That is, given that support for non-discriminatory norms was relatively high across the sample (regardless of norm condition), group-affirmation seemed to increase adherence to these generally high norms.

5.2.3. Group identification

Results showed no main effect of non-discriminatory norms, $F(1, 429) = 0.14$, $p = .707$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$. The main effect of the affirmation procedure was also not significant, $F(1, 429) = 0.686$, $p = .408$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$. However, these main effects were qualified by significant interaction between affirmation and norms, $F(1, 429) = 4.14$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$. Although neither of these pairwise comparisons was significant, the interaction pattern is consistent with our hypothesis: In the group-affirmation condition, group identification tend to be higher when non-discriminatory norms were salient ($M = 5.54$; $SD = 1.10$) than when non-discriminatory norms were not-salient ($M = 5.28$; $SD = 0.92$), $F(1, 429) = 3.01$, $p = .083$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$. In the control condition, the difference between means was weaker, $M = 5.23$; $SD = 1.14$ vs. $M = 5.41$; $SD = 1.21$, $F(1, 429) = 1.33$, $p = .249$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$.

We also hypothesized that the effect of interaction between affirmation and norms on collective action is mediated by group identification. Analysis presented above showed a significant interaction (independent variable) on pro-Roma collective action (dependent variable) and on group identification (mediator). We further tested the mediation model using the Hayes and Preacher (2014) PROCESS macro for SPSS. The analysis with 1000 bootstraps showed that the indirect effect was not significant, $b = 0.03$, $SE = 0.02$, 95% CI $[-0.006, 0.08]$, suggesting the absence of mediation.

In summary, results were consistent with Studies 1–2 in showing group-affirmation produced a conformity effect. Like Study 2, this study directly manipulated social norms rather than simply measuring them as in Study 1. However, Study 2 manipulated pro-discriminatory norms, whereas Study 3 showed that group-affirmation also produced conformity to non-discriminatory norms. That is, when non-discriminatory norms were salient, participants in the group affirmation condition were more supportive of pro-Roma collective action than when they were not. It is worth noting that perception of non-discriminatory norms among psychology students in Romania did not vary with the experimental manipulation of the salience of non-discriminatory norms. A possible explanation for this is that students' perceptions were influenced by impression-management strategies, as psychology students are trained to work against prejudice and discrimination. Ancillary analyses showed that net of the norms' manipulation, affirmation seemed to produce conformity towards these norms, as affirmation generally increased support for pro-Roma collective action while decreasing support for anti-Roma collective action.

Although the results did not fully support the idea that stronger group identification explains conformity with social norms in group-affirmation condition, they show that participants' identification was stronger after a group-affirmation task and a reminder of non-

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[5] This analysis also showed a significant main effect of the type of collective action, $F(1, 429) = 461.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.518$. Participants expressed higher intention to engage in pro-Roma collective action ($M = 4.66$; $SD = 1.48$) than to engage in anti-Roma collective action ($M = 2.49$; $SD = 1.71$).

discriminatory social norms. Future research needs to investigate other psychological mechanisms that could explain the conformity effect.

6. General discussion

The aim of this research was to examine the link between social norms and collective action in relation to a minority group by analyzing the conformity to group norms after different aspects of self-concept have been experimentally affirmed. We took the example of pro-Roma and anti-Roma collective action among citizens from two European countries (France and Romania). Results of affirming participants' personal identity (self-affirmation) were inconclusive, as self-affirmation did not reduce conformity in Study 1 (see, Badea, Bender, & Korda, 2020, for a similar result), as prior research suggested it might (Binning et al., 2015). However, the results of affirming participants' social identity (group-affirmation) yielded significant effects across studies. Across the three studies, the results indicate that group-affirmation does not necessarily increase or decrease support for pro-Roma collective action in itself. Rather, the results consistently suggested that the effect of group-affirmation depended on what norms were most salient. When non-discriminatory norms were salient, group-affirmation increased support for pro-Roma collective action. However, when discriminatory norms were salient, group-affirmation decreased support for pro-Roma collective action. As such, the results are broadly consistent with the thesis that group-affirmation increases conformity to salient discriminatory norms.

In line with previous research (Badea et al., 2018; Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015), we argue that group-affirmations drawing on group membership increased the salience of elements that define the content of associated social identity. Consequently, group-affirmation did not lead uniformly to support or opposition for collective action defending the rights of a minority group. Instead, the effect of group affirmation depended on whatever norms were salient in the context. The results are in line with previous findings in the literature. For example, in the studies by Gunn and Wilson (2011), Canadian participants who completed a group affirmation task expressed greater guilt about their country's mistreatment of Inuit (compared to the control condition). In this research, the normative context can be seen as non-discriminatory because the participants were students who generally exhibited favorable attitudes towards the Indigenous population (Donakowski & Esses, 1996). In another study (Badea et al., 2018), group affirmation had no significant effect on opposition to discriminatory measures against Muslim immigrants after the terrorist attacks in France. However, the study did not measure social norms. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the normative context regarding attitudes towards Muslims was plausibly negative. Then, the absence of the group affirmation effect could be explained by the fact that this technique made discriminatory norms salient.

The present results shed light on the psychology of how conformity shapes collective action. It seems that asking participants to consider what matters to them as a national ingroup member (Studies 1 & 2) does not cause critical or constructive response but, rather, a conformity response. In other words, reflecting on and writing about what values are most important to one's national identity did not result in participants endorsing an injunctive position about how the group ideally ought to be. It did not seem to enhance what Schatz, Staub, and Lavine (1999) termed *constructive patriotism*, which describes the desire for positive group change and living up to national group ideals. Rather, group affirmation produced effects more analogous to *blind patriotism*, which describes people's unquestioning allegiance and loyalty to one's national ingroup. Constructive patriotism would have been observed if there was a main effect of group affirmation on intentions to act on behalf of the minority group to the extent that taking care of the vulnerable is consistent with natural ideals. But rather, and more akin to blind patriotism, group affirmation led people only act on behalf of the vulnerable when it is normative, and could also lead people to act

contrary to the vulnerable when that is normative too. While it should be noted that at no point was anti-Roma collective action higher than pro-Roma collective action, the results suggest that the type of patriotism group-affirmation may lead to in the intergroup contexts in the present studies is one that is not uniformly constructive and leads to strong adherence to norms.

One future direction this raises is that alternative group-affirmation procedures – perhaps ones that encourage a positive but critical affirmation of the nation (see Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006) – could attenuate group conformity. This may be a particularly important for fostering justice when negative outgroup beliefs are normative or deemed culturally acceptable.

The lack of effect of self-affirmation in Study 1 may be instructive. Prior research found that self-affirmation reduced conformity with national opinion polls about then-President Obama (Binning et al., 2015). Instead, self-affirmed participants based their judgments on evidentiary indicators of his effectiveness (e.g., economic growth). In the present research, self-affirmation did not decrease conformity to social norms. One major difference between the two studies is in the dependent variables of interest. The present work focused not on presidential approval but on desires to act for or against a stigmatized minority group, issues which may differ in terms of their moral and psychological implications.

Results showed that group-affirmation can lead to either greater support or lesser support for pro-minority collective action, depending on what is seen as normative for the group (see also, Kende, Hadarics, & Lášticová, 2017). These results imply that one way to foster collective action on behalf of a stigmatized group would involve highlighting societal support for non-discriminatory norms, coupled with an affirmation of that collective group identity. In this way, conformity can be leveraged in the interest of social justice. Unfortunately, of course, this also means the opposite is possible. Namely, the results also suggest that one way to stoke discrimination against a stigmatized group is to make discriminatory behavior appear to be normative, coupled with an affirmation of the ingroup identity. Thus, for example, a national leader who tacitly or explicitly condones discriminatory behavior while also encouraging his or her supporters to affirm the virtues of their national identity may effectively foster anti-minority collective action (Sprong et al., 2019).

Indeed, this may capture recent history in the US. During the 2016 Presidential Election, candidate Donald Trump adopted a platform that embraced his supporters' values as the authentic, American values (perhaps prompting them to affirm their national identity). He also maligned particular groups (e.g., Muslims and certain immigrant groups) but not others (e.g., alcoholics, atheists). As Crandall, Miller, and White (2018) found in samples of Americans during and after the election, "Participants saw an increase in the acceptability of prejudice toward groups Trump targeted but little shift in untargeted groups" (p. 186). Group-affirmation may be a means, not to make group members strive for their ideal group identity but, rather, to strive to adhere to their current group norms.

In other words, the way in which individuals represent their social identity is important. The representation of national identity, including discriminatory or non-discriminatory norms, can play an important role in legitimizing prejudice against minorities and prescribing collective actions in favor of minority rights. Future research could examine whether educating children about tolerant values in general along with introducing national group-affirmation in schools, can encourage constructive patriotism and a "critical" national identification, where egalitarian norms towards all groups would be developed as opposed to increasing national glorification and intergroup hostility as a consequence.

In Study 3, we also tested the role of increased group identification as a psychological mechanism of conformity to groups' norms. Specifically, we expected that the interactive effect between norms and group affirmation on collective action would be mediated by a stronger identification with the group used in the group affirmation procedure. Results

partially support this interpretation. Group identification was higher in group-affirmation /salient norms condition, compared to other conditions, but did not play a mediational role. We note that group identification can be also a moderator of group-affirmation effects (e.g., Ehrlich & Gramzow, 2015; Sherman et al., 2007). Future research should further test the psychological mechanism of conformity to social norms (e.g., fear of rejection by ingroup members; desire to be a good group member; Binning et al., 2015), and the moderator role of group identification.

The present research has limitations. One important limitation of our studies is that they did not consider injunctive norms. Although descriptive norms can influence individuals' behaviors to a greater extent (Cialdini et al., 1990), other research shows that injunctive norms can also play a role in shaping individuals' actions if these norms are cognitively salient (Smith & Louis, 2008). In these studies, we measured intentions to engage in collective action on behalf of Roma people. Actual collective behavior towards this minority should be examined in future research. It should also be noted that the majority of our participants (except for some Romanian community members in Study 2) were college students. It is important to note that even among this traditionally more open-minded group, there was openness to acknowledging anti-Roma intentions as well as pro-Roma intentions. Conducting research with a group of Europeans with a wider range of attitudes and political orientations is an important goal for future research. Finally, the interaction between norms and group-affirmation was a consistent effect across studies but of small size. We have proposed here interpretations of this effect that we believe to be theoretically and societally important. However, some caution is needed, as further experimental studies with perhaps higher statistical detection power should confirm and strengthen these findings.

7. Conclusion

The act of conforming to a social norm is considered a rational choice that people make if they want to avoid rejection by other members of their group (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Some empirical studies showed that in-group members who display in-group favoritism elicit more spontaneous positive reactions than those who behave in an egalitarian way (Carraro & Castelli, 2010). Promoting in-group positive identity by discriminating against others (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) can be perceived as a norm to the extent that it generates social approval (Pinto, Marques, Levine, & Abrams, 2010). We argue that by highlighting group-affirmation as a driver of conformity to group norms, we have improved our understanding of how collective action occurs and when group members are more likely to challenge the prevailing norms of the group, which is all the more important when those norms are discriminatory.

Funding

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare they have no competing interests.

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