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Predicting Online and Offline Civic Participation among Young Czech Roma: The Roles of Resources, Community Perceptions and Social Norms

Jan Šerek and Hana Machackova

Roma in the Czech Republic represent a large ethnic minority that faces intolerance and social exclusion. This study aims to describe factors that boost civic participation among Roma adolescents and emerging adults. Specifically, it asks whether different factors apply to Roma and members of the majority, and whether different factors boost offline and online participation. Survey data were analysed from Roma (n = 157) and majority (n = 573) participants between the ages of 15 and 28. Hierarchical regression models suggested that certain factors (a sense of collective influence and peer participatory norm) predict all forms of civic participation, regardless of ethnicity. For Roma youth, in contrast with the majority, offline participation was associated with a perceived lack of opportunities and unmet needs in their communities, which suggests that their offline civic participation might be a reaction to perceived communal problems. Finally, a lack of education was identified as a major explanation for lower rates of online participation among Roma.

Keywords: Civic Participation; Czech Republic; Online Participation; Roma; Sense of Community

Introduction

Many ethnic minorities face social exclusion from the majority society. In the European context, the Roma are an example of such a minority: they face not only socio-economic disadvantage (Sirovátka and Mareš 2006; Večerník 2009), but also intolerance from a considerable part of the majority population (Eurobarometer 2008; Fawn 2001). Previous research has shown that young people from ethnically

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diverse and low-income neighbourhoods derive psychological and developmental benefits from multiple forms of community engagement (e.g., sports, academics, religion; Pedersen et al. 2005). One of the most important forms of engagement for young people is civic participation, defined as contributing to the public good through cooperation with others (Youniss et al. 2002; Zukin et al. 2006). Through civic participation, young people work to improve living conditions in their communities, and at the same time develop a sense of personal agency (Beaumont 2010). Therefore, it is essential to know what factors boost civic participation among young Roma, in order to promote the positive development of individuals and whole communities.

The scarcity of previous research on civic participation among young Roma is surprising. A few qualitative studies stress the roles of perceived disadvantage and community-related motives in Roma civic participation (Ataman, Çok, and Şener 2012; Šerek, Petrovičová, and Macek 2011). However, there is still a shortage of studies using larger sample sizes to systematically examine predictive factors. Hence, the aim of this study is to fill the knowledge gap and describe factors that boost civic participation among young Czech Roma. Taking into account the fact that, for the current generation of young people, civic participation is commonly associated with the use of new media (Bennett 2008), our second aim is to explore whether different factors are associated with offline and online participation among young Roma.

Factors Supporting Civic Participation among Youth

Civic participation, in the traditional sense, means contributing to the public good through ‘real-world’ activities such as doing volunteer work, donating money or participating in fundraising efforts (Zukin et al. 2006). Rates of participation in these activities are assumed to be high among people who have sufficient socio-economic resources, have psychological disposition to participate and are surrounded by a social environment (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Socio-economic resources can be primarily understood in terms of economic status or education. Young people whose psychosocial development is marked by poverty and social exclusion tend to participate less than those with higher status (Atkins and Hart 2003; Lenzi et al. 2012). The negative effect of adverse economic conditions can be explained not only by a lack of time and money, but also by a lack of opportunities to acquire civic skills and meet participatory role models (Atkins and Hart 2003; Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg, and Lin 2011). Another socio-economic resource that influences these opportunities is education. For instance, it has been observed that young people at universities can increase their civic participation through discussions with their peers (Klofstad 2007, 2010) and classes in the social sciences (Hillygus 2005).

Aside from resources, individual psychological factors are also predictive of civic participation. These include a feeling that one can make a difference, a sense of civic duty and a feeling of connection with others (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). While these factors can be conceptualised in various ways, we think it is useful to

consider them as aspects of citizens' *sense of community* (Albanesi, Cicognani, and Zani 2007; Flanagan et al. 2007; Settle, Bond, and Levitt 2010). In this context, we can identify two basic, distinct beliefs. First, young people are motivated to participate if they feel that people and institutions in their communities care about them and work for their benefit (Duke et al. 2009; Lenzi et al. 2012). Second, civic participation among young people is positively associated with their sense of agency—that is, their belief that their actions can have an influence on their communities (Beaumont 2010; Zukin et al. 2006).

Finally, civic participation often results from being in a *participatory social environment*, i.e., meeting with people who themselves participate or hold positive attitudes towards participation. In such an environment (e.g., family or peer group), young people might be invited by others to participate, or they might wish to conform to a social norm favouring civic participation (Zaff, Malanchuk, and Eccles 2008). Adolescents' and young adults' civic participation is supported particularly by family civic values and participatory role models (Flanagan et al. 1998; Zukin et al. 2006), but also by participatory incentives and role models from their peer group (Dahl and van Zalk 2013; Gordon and Taft 2011; Klofstad 2007, 2010).

Online Civic Participation

The effect of these factors is not limited to the offline context. Recent rapid developments in information and communication technologies have introduced an additional channel through which people can engage in civic life (Banaji and Buckingham 2010; Livingstone, Couldry, and Markham 2007; Mossberger, Tolbert, and McNeal 2008). In contrast with offline civic participation, online participation does not manifest itself through direct help, but rather through seeking and spreading information on the Internet, discussing and expressing opinions online and organising group actions on social networking sites. Online participation represents a relatively easy and low-cost form of civic activism (Byrne 2007; de Zúñiga and Valenzuela 2011; Diani 2000). Unlike offline participation, online activities can be carried out independent of time and place wherever an Internet connection is available, and they facilitate connections between people all over the world. Considering the prevalence of technology, it is not surprising that online participation has become increasingly common among younger generations, who are the most frequent Internet users (Livingstone, Couldry, and Markham 2007).

To a certain extent, online civic participation is encouraged—or inhibited—by the same factors as offline civic participation. Involvement in online civic activities is largely intertwined with having sufficient resources. Despite enthusiast views of the Internet as an open and egalitarian public arena, inequalities persist in access to the Internet and the distribution of digital skills (Hargittai 2010; Lutz, Hoffmann, and Meckel 2014). Even in countries with high Internet penetration among youth, such as the Czech Republic (with 97% of the population between the ages of 15 and 34 using the Internet: Lupač, Chrobáková, and Sládek 2014), lower socio-economic status is connected with lower rates of Internet access and use (Lupač and Sládek 2008), which

constitutes a barrier to online civic participation (Norris 2003; van Dijk and Hacker 2003). On the other hand, some authors suggest that the access gap is constantly narrowing, which creates growing opportunities for those young people who are traditionally excluded from offline participation (Krueger 2006). Aside from resources, the same social influences that predict offline civic participation can predict analogous activities online. Similar networks of people usually interact both online and offline (Subrahmanyam et al. 2008), and many communities communicate and 'live' in both these realms (Wellman, Boase, and Chen 2002). Thus, the incentive for civic participation can come thorough both online and offline channels, and participation can take place in either environment.

Civic Participation in Minority Youth

Factors influencing civic participation among young people vary across ethnic and cultural contexts (Zaff, Kawashima-Ginsberg, and Lin 2011). Overall, civic participation tends to be lower among ethnic minorities that have less access to resources (Lopez and Marcelo 2008; Ramakrishnan and Baldassare 2004). On the other hand, community-related incentives for civic participation can be stronger for ethnic minorities. It has been observed that civic participation among young members of some ethnic minorities is motivated by helping other members of their communities, maintaining their cultural identities or improving the status of their communities in society (Jensen 2008; Stepick and Stepick 2002; Stepick, Stepick, and Labissiere 2008). Hence, minority youth may have different motivations than the majority for getting involved in civic action.

In the same vein, a social identity approach to collective action emphasises the role of collective hardship and a desire to improve the condition of one's group as psychological factors that motivate civic participation. According to this view, people from ethnic minorities may be motivated towards civic participation by their perception of their group's grievances (Klandermans, van der Toorn, and van Stekelenburg 2008; Simon 2011). This motive for civic participation is probably much less salient among the majority because, in their case, hardships experienced are not connected in any obvious way to their ethnicity.

For minority youth, online participation can hold a specific significance. Previous research has shown that young people from ethnic minorities are highly motivated to use the Internet for civic purposes, e.g. in order to connect with other minority members or to discuss issues related to their ethnic group (Bloemraad and Trost 2008; Byrne 2007; Mossberger, Kaplan, and Gilbert 2008). Compared to offline participation, which often presents a high-cost activity (e.g., in terms of time), online activism might provide these young people with a more easily available alternative. Besides, the relative anonymity of online civic participation might be attractive for young people who feel endangered in society due to their ethnicity (Seif 2010, 2011). On the other hand, some authors warn against considering online activism a 'magic bullet' for minority youth participation. Although involvement in online activities strengthens community ties (Hampton and Wellman 2003), minority youth might

doubt the effectiveness and real-world impact of online actions (Byrne 2007). Therefore, it is possible that when solving serious issues regarding their communities, people from ethnic minorities would favour offline participation, which can be perceived as more effective (Banaji and Buckingham 2010).

The Present Study

Our study focuses on civic participation among young Roma in the Czech Republic. Despite their cultural and linguistic heterogeneity, Roma (or Romani) are often referred to collectively as the largest ethnic minority in Europe (Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens 2005). Members of this group face prejudice, discrimination and social exclusion, as both researchers (see, e.g., O'Nions 2007) and policy-makers (see, e.g., European Commission 2011) have acknowledged. The level of intolerance that they face in the Czech Republic is among the highest in the European Union (Eurobarometer 2008). At the same time, a growing number of Czech Roma live in socially excluded localities, which are characterised by a lack of employment opportunities, poor access to secondary and tertiary education, high rent for low-quality housing and usury (Večerník 2009). Considering the current situation, young Roma could benefit from civic participation; it could improve living conditions in their communities and establish their sense of agency.

Although research on the factors supporting or inhibiting civic participation among Roma youth is still scarce, the existing findings point to several key issues. Qualitative studies from Turkey and the Czech Republic have suggested that young Roma perceive economic disadvantage, stemming from unemployment and insufficient education, as the main barrier to civic participation (Ataman, Çok, and Şener 2012; Šerek, Petrovičová, and Macek 2011). A previous Czech study has also shown that an effort to help other Roma and improve the community is a strong motive for civic participation among young Roma (Šerek, Petrovičová, and Macek 2011). Moreover, a study of a Roma social networking site in Hungary has shown that similar factors also lead to online participation (Szakács and Bognár 2010).

This study therefore aims to broaden our knowledge of the factors associated with civic participation among young Roma. Three sets of factors are examined: individual socio-economic resources (economic status and education), a sense of community and a social environment favouring participation. Young Roma are studied in comparison with majority youth in order to identify factors that may be specific to their community. We hypothesise that higher educational level, higher economic status, greater perceived collective influence and stronger parental and peer norms of participation will have positive effects on civic participation. Additionally, we expect that a lack of resources and the differential impact of community-related factors can account for many of the differences between civic participation among the Roma and among the majority. More specifically, we hypothesise that negative perceptions of one's community (e.g., community not working for one's benefit) will have a stronger positive effect on civic participation among Roma than among the majority. Furthermore, taking into account the growing popularity of online civic participation,

we explore whether different factors support offline and online participation for the two groups.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Data were collected in Czech municipalities (populations 22,000–400,000) in 2011 as part of the multinational research project ‘Processes Influencing Democratic Ownership and Participation’ (<http://www.fahs.surrey.ac.uk/pidop>). Participants were recruited by contacting secondary schools (grades 9–13), universities, non-governmental organisations and social workers. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the institution conducting the research and assured of their anonymity. Respondents who agreed to participate then completed a self-report questionnaire (either online or paper-based) on their involvement in civic activities, civic attitudes and socio-demographic characteristics.

In total, 203 Roma and 825 majority participants aged 15–28 took part in the study. Due to missing data on some variables, data from 157 Roma (43% females) and 573 majority members (61% females) were used for the analysis. Participants in the Roma group were younger on average ($M = 19.25$, $SD = 3.34$) than in the majority group ($M = 21.24$, $SD = 3.31$). Gender and age were controlled for in all analyses to address the imbalances between the groups. In the Roma group, 45% of the participants were full-time students, 18% full-time workers, 12% looking for their first job and 22% unemployed. In the majority group, 77% participants were full-time students, 17% full-time workers, 2% looking for their first job and 1% unemployed (the remaining participants were part-time students and/or part-time workers).

Detailed analyses of missing data showed that less-educated people and people with lower economic status were underrepresented in the final sample. On the other hand, participants included and not included in the final sample did not differ in their levels of offline ($M_{\text{Included}} = 2.01$; $M_{\text{NotIncluded}} = 1.91$; $t_{917} = 1.46$, $p = .14$) and online ($M_{\text{Included}} = 2.07$; $M_{\text{NotIncluded}} = 2.14$; $t_{913} = 1.00$, $p = .32$) civic participation.

Measures

Offline and Online Civic Participation

Participants were presented with a list of activities and asked how often they had taken part in these activities in the last 12 months. Responses could range from ‘never’ (1) to ‘very often’ (5). *Offline civic participation* included (i) doing volunteer work, (ii) wearing a bracelet, sign or other symbol to show support for a social or political cause, (iii) donating money to a social or political cause/organisation and (iv) taking part in concerts or fundraising events with a social or political cause ($\alpha = .63$). *Online civic participation* was represented by (i) sharing a link to news, music or videos with social or political content with one’s contacts, (ii) discussing societal or political questions on the Internet, (iii) visiting the website of a political or civic

organisation, (iv) participating in an online petition, protest or boycott and (v) connecting to a group on Facebook or a similar online social network dealing with social or political issues ($\alpha = .78$).

A confirmatory factor analysis showed that offline and online activities formed two distinct dimensions of civic participation ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.40$; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .04) rather than one common dimension ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 8.18$; CFI = .85; RMSEA = .10). The two-dimensional model had full factorial and almost full intercept (7 of 9) invariance across the Roma and majority groups ($\chi^2/\text{df} = 2.37$; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .06), which suggested that intergroup comparisons were possible.

Sense of Community

We measured two types of community perception using two subscales taken from the Brief Scale of Sense of Community in Adolescents (Chiessi, Cicognani, and Sonn 2010). Participants were instructed to assess 'the place where they live, their neighbourhood'. One subscale, called *opportunities for involvement and satisfaction of one's needs*, measured whether young people believed that their communities care about them and work for their benefit. The measure was composed of four items ($\alpha = .87$; 'In this place, there are enough initiatives for young people', 'In this place, there are many events and situations which involve young people like me', 'In this place, young people can find many opportunities to have fun' and 'In this place, there are opportunities to meet other boys and girls'). The other subscale measured perceived *collective influence* (called *opportunities for influence* in the original scale): that is, whether respondents believed that they were able to influence events in their communities. Four items were used to measure this perception ($\alpha = .74$; 'If the people here were to organise, they would have good chance of reaching their desired goals', 'If only we had the opportunity, I think that we could be able to achieve something special for our neighbourhood', 'Honestly, I feel that if we engage more with relevant social and political issues, we would be able to improve things for young people in this neighbourhood' and 'I think that people who live in this neighbourhood could change things that are not working properly for the community'). Response scales ranged from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).

Parental and Peer Norms of Participation

We asked respondents about the people close to them: their civic participation and attitudes towards participation. *Parental norm of participation* was measured using three items based on Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) and Pattie, Seyd, and Whiteley (2003): 'My parents would approve if I engaged politically', 'My parents are involved in political actions, e.g. wearing bracelets, demonstrations, petitions, boycotting products, etc.' and 'My parents would agree that the only way to change anything in society is to get involved' ($\alpha = .68$). *Peer norm of participation* was measured using the same three items, referring to 'friends' instead of 'parents' ($\alpha = .65$). Responses could range from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (5).

Education

Participants were asked about the highest level of education they had completed or were currently pursuing. Six education levels were given as options, ranging from elementary education (1) to university doctoral degree (6).

Economic Status

Subjective evaluation of economic status was assessed by asking 'Does the income of your household cover everything that its members need?' Response scale ranged from 'not at all' (1) to 'completely' (4).

Data Analysis

Scales were computed by averaging the items, and correlations between all variables were compared between the Roma and majority groups. Next, two hierarchical linear regressions with interactions were computed on the whole sample to predict offline and online civic participation. This method represents a convenient way to assess how different blocks of predictors help to explain variance in the outcome variable. Predictors were added into the model in the following steps: (i) ethnicity, (ii) control variables (gender, age) and socio-economic resources (education, economic status) and (iii) sense of community (opportunities for involvement and collective influence) and norms of participation. Finally, four interactions were added in separate steps in order to test whether the effects of sense of community and participation norms differed across ethnic groups. Interaction terms were computed by multiplying each predictor with participants' ethnicity (0= majority, 1= Roma).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations (Table 1) showed the expected socio-economic differences between the Roma and majority samples. Compared to majority participants, Roma participants had a lower mean education level and economic status. Moreover, age was positively correlated with educational attainment for the majority, but not for the Roma sample.

Civic participation had similar correlates in both groups. The strongest correlates of offline and online civic participation in both groups were peer norm of participation, parental norm of participation and collective influence. The biggest intergroup difference was a positive association between online participation and opportunities for involvement in the Roma group versus no association in the majority group.

Predictors of Offline Civic Participation

Results of hierarchical regression analysis (Table 2) showed that offline civic participation was independent from participants' ethnicity. Regarding resources and

Table 1. Correlations, means and standard deviations.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
(1) Gender (Female)		.07	-.04	-.08	-.02	.08	.15	.22**	.18*	.14
(2) Age	.06		.11	-.15	-.08	.00	-.06	.13	.05	.01
(3) Education	.12**	.71**		.21**	.12	-.10	-.15	.00	-.07	.12
(4) Economic status	-.11*	.02	.20**		.19*	-.07	.04	.02	-.19*	.06
(5) Opportunities	-.05	.12**	.17**	.17**		.49**	.24**	.19*	-.06	.23**
(6) Collective influence	-.05	.16**	.10*	.02	.32**		.40**	.35**	.21**	.23**
(7) Parental norm	-.09*	.05	.04	.00	.11**	.25**		.53**	.22**	.19*
(8) Peer norm	-.07	.19**	.22**	.05	.14**	.34**	.55**		.29**	.36**
(9) Offline participation	.11**	-.01	-.01	-.06	.03	.19**	.16**	.21**		.40**
(10) Online participation	-.02	.14**	.19**	-.01	.02	.23**	.26**	.41**	.38**	
M_{Roma}	0.43	19.25	1.63	2.47	3.16	3.45	2.52	2.53	1.97	1.77
SD_{Roma}	0.50	3.34	0.57	1.09	1.15	1.01	1.08	1.03	0.98	0.88
M_{Majority}	0.61	21.24	3.86	3.39	3.44	3.24	2.57	2.91	2.02	2.15
SD_{Majority}	0.49	3.31	1.18	0.77	1.05	0.77	0.87	0.86	0.75	0.77

Note: Correlations for Roma participants are presented above and correlations for majority participants under the diagonal. Correlations significantly different ($p < .05$) between the groups are in bold.

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

controls, women participated slightly more than men, age and education were not associated with offline civic participation and economic status had a small negative effect. Furthermore, collective influence and peer participatory norms positively predicted offline civic participation, but perceived opportunities and parental participatory norms did not.

There was a significant interaction between ethnicity and perceived opportunities for involvement (the model was significantly improved by this interaction) but not between ethnicity and perceived collective influence, parental participatory norms or peer participatory norms. These results suggest that perceived opportunities for involvement were not associated with offline participation for the majority (unstandardised simple slope = -0.02 , $p = .62$) but had a negative effect on offline participation in the Roma group (unstandardised simple slope = -0.14 , $p < .05$; see Figure 1). On the other hand, the groups were similar in that collective influence and peer norms had a positive effect, while parental norms had no effect.

Predictors of Online Civic Participation

In contrast to offline participation, Roma were less likely than the majority to participate online (Table 2). However, this difference was explained by unequal levels of education, as the effect of ethnicity disappeared when level of education was accounted for. Gender, age and economic status had no effect on online participation. As was the case with offline participation, online participation was positively

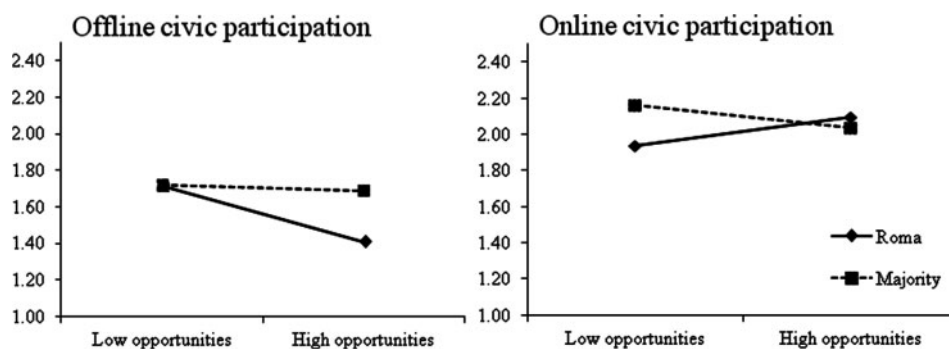


Figure 1. Interaction effects of opportunities for involvement and ethnicity on offline and online civic participation.

Note: All control variables were centred except gender (results for boys are shown). High/low opportunities were calculated as \pm one standard deviation from mean.

predicted by perceived collective influence and peer participatory norms, but not by perceived opportunities for involvement or parental participatory norms.

There was a significant interaction between participants' ethnicity and perceived opportunities for involvement (the interaction improved the model significantly), but not with perceived collective influence, parental participatory norms or peer participatory norms. Although these results suggest different effects of opportunities for involvement, a simple slope analysis showed no significant effect either in the Roma group (unstandardised simple slope = 0.07, $p = .16$) or the majority group (unstandardised simple slope = -0.06 , $p = .06$; see Figure 1). In any case, the groups showed similarities regarding the effects of collective influence and peer participatory norms on online participation, as well as the lack of an effect for parental participatory norms.

Discussion

This study aimed to identify factors that strengthen offline and online civic participation among young Roma in the Czech Republic. Specifically, we focused on the role of individual socio-economic resources (education and economic status), sense of community (opportunities for involvement and collective influence) and social environment (parental and peer participatory norm). Generally, our results show that all three of these domains are related to civic participation, having similar effects for Roma and members of the majority. However, certain differences were also found between ethnic groups.

First, we will address the peer participatory norm and collective efficacy—two predictors that show consistent effects across ethnic groups and forms of civic participation. Both offline and online participation is greater among young people whose friends have positive attitudes towards participation or participate themselves. Recently, it has been shown that this association is a product of two intertwined

Table 2. Hierarchical regression models with interactions predicting offline and online civic participation.

	Offline civic participation							Online civic participation						
Step	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ethnicity (Roma)	-.02	-.05	-.06	-.07	-.06	-.06	-.05	-.19**	-.06	-.05	-.04	-.05	-.06	-.06
Socio-economic resources and controls														
Gender (Female)		.12**	.13**	.13**	.13**	.13**	.12**		-.01	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00
Age		.01	-.03	-.04	-.03	-.03	-.03		-.01	-.06	-.05	-.06	-.06	-.06
Education		-.02	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03		.23**	.19**	.19**	.19**	.19**	.19**
Economic status		-.10*	-.09*	-.09*	-.09*	-.09*	-.09*		-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03
Sense of community and social norms														
Opportunities			-.06	-.02	-.06	-.06	-.06			-.04	-.08	-.04	-.04	-.04
Collective influence			.15**	.16**	.16**	.15**	.15**			.12**	.11**	.12**	.12**	.12**
Parental norm			.06	.06	.06	.05	.06			.03	.03	.03	.06	.03
Peer norm			.17**	.17**	.17**	.17**	.16**			.32**	.32**	.32**	.32**	.33**
Interactions														
Roma × Opportunities				-.09*							.09*			
Roma × Coll. influence					-.01							-.01		
Roma × Parental norm						.02							-.04	
Roma × Peer norm							.03							-.02
Adjusted R ²	.00	.03**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.04**	.07**	.21**	.22**	.21**	.21**	.21**
R ² change	.00	.03**	.08**	.01*	.00	.00	.00	.04**	.03**	.14**	.01*	.00	.00	.00

Note: N = 730. All predictors were centred except ethnicity and gender.

**p < .01; *p < .05.

processes: people who already participate select friends who share their attitudes and interests, and existing friends exert social influence on young people [see Dahl and van Zalk (2013) or Kandel (1978)]. Hence, if young people perceive civic participation as something normal or even appreciated by their peers, they tend to conform to this norm and participate more readily (Glasford 2008; Glynn, Huye, and Lunney 2009). Many members of the current young generation can be described as ‘standby citizens’, which means that they do not participate very often, but they are attentive to politics and are prepared to participate if needed (Amnå and Ekman 2013). It seems that a request from their friends can be an important trigger that pulls these young citizens from their standby mode. Our results further suggest that peer participatory norms predict online rather than offline participation. It is not surprising, taking into account that online participation represents a low-cost form of civic activity that is more ‘at hand’ for young people than offline participation (Banaji and Buckingham 2010).

In comparison with influence from peers, the parental participatory norm has no such effect on young people’s civic participation. This is not surprising, considering that we focused on people in late adolescence and young adulthood, which are developmental stages characterised by the decreasing importance of parental influence (Vollebergh, Iedema, and Raaijmakers 2001).

The second consistent predictor of civic participation is perceived collective influence, which boosts both offline and online civic participation, regardless of participants’ ethnicity. Young people who strongly believe that they can make a difference in their communities thus participate more than those who doubt their influence. This finding is consistent with previous findings that efficacy and control beliefs are important cognitive antecedents of civic participation (Beaumont 2010). Our findings illustrate the universality of this effect across people with different ethnic backgrounds, as well as across different forms of participation.

In contrast, perceptions of opportunities for involvement and of (un)met needs in the community have no such consistent effects on civic participation. Young Roma who believe that their communities do *not* provide them with opportunities for involvement or provide for their needs tend to participate *more* in offline civic activities. Thus, we can deduce that offline civic participation among young Roma often serves as a way to compensate for perceived unsatisfactoriness or problems of one’s community, reflected here in the lack of opportunities for involvement and unmet needs (Šerek, Petrovičová, and Macek 2011; for other minorities, see Jensen 2008; Stepick and Stepick 2002; Stepick, Stepick, and Labissiere 2008). Young Roma who perceive greater problems in their communities might feel a greater urge to engage in direct hands-on work or to help out financially than those whose perception of their communities is more optimistic. On the other hand, *online* civic participation among young Roma is not positively associated with their perception of community problems. It therefore seems that Roma youth have a greater tendency to address their communities’ problems through offline rather than online civic activities.

Among young people in the majority, by contrast, there seems to be no relation between perceived communal problems and offline civic participation. Civic participation does not seem to be, for them, as strongly tied to community-related motives as it is for the Roma. This difference might stem from the fact that the culture of Czech Roma puts a great emphasis on communal values and close social ties, which implies a sense of solidarity with worse-off community members (Ševčíková 2004). Moreover, aside from the cultural explanation, it should be acknowledged that, in comparison with the majority, a greater proportion of the Roma population live in impoverished and socially isolated neighbourhoods (Sirovátka and Mareš 2006; see also lower economic status of Roma in our sample). As a consequence, the day-to-day hardship present in these neighbourhoods might increase the sensitivity of local people to the needs of others and increase their inclination to help. This tendency can be even amplified if the hardship is perceived as collectively shared by the Roma minority (Klandermans, van der Toorn, and van Stekelenburg 2008; Simon 2011). Thus, it is probably a combination of specific cultural values and collective hardship, less of a pressing issue for the majority, that drives offline participation among many young Roma in response to communal problems.

Certain differences were also observed in the effects of community perceptions on *online* civic participation between the two groups. Roma living in communities that are perceived as unsatisfactory seem to participate online less than Roma from communities that are viewed more positively, an effect that was not observed in the majority. However, our results do not provide unambiguous conclusions about the nature of these effects, as they were non-significant in both groups. To gain better insight, it would be beneficial to focus on the specific content of online participation. Young people from both ethnic groups might use the Internet for various civic purposes, from those related to the local community to broad social issues (Mossberger, Kaplan, and Gilbert 2008). Clearer conclusions may be drawn from future studies if they are able to distinguish among these forms of online participation.

Our results suggest that young Roma participate *online* less than young majority members; however, this can be fully accounted for by their lower average level of education. This finding is similar to findings on minorities in other countries (Lopez and Marcelo 2008; Ramakrishnan and Baldassare 2004; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995) and underscores the importance of education for civic participation among minority youth. At the same time, this finding supports the warning that online participation does not ameliorate the disparity in participation between educated and uneducated people (Schlozman, Verba, and Brady 2010). Secondary and tertiary education provides young people with resources such as civic and political knowledge, communication skills and media literacy that are all necessary for effective online participation. Therefore, disadvantaged social groups with limited access to advanced education, such as Roma in the Czech Republic (O’Nions 2010), might lack the resources that would enable their participation. Based on our results, it seems more plausible to attribute the disparity in levels of online participation

between Roma and the majority to the education gap rather than to inherent (e.g., cultural) differences between the ethnic groups.

Nevertheless, the effect of socio-economic resources has only been found to apply to online participation, not to offline forms. Moreover, the effect of the other indicator of resources, economic status, on offline participation was slightly negative, which contradicts our initial expectations. One explanation is that, unlike online participation, offline activities, such as volunteering or donating money, have more complex associations with personal resources. Although having some basic level of resources is probably a necessary precondition for offline participation, the further association is not linear, and having more resources does not automatically mean greater participation. For instance, as mentioned above, young people from impoverished and socially excluded neighbourhoods might be more sensitive to the needs of others and, therefore, be more engaged in offline helping activities. Besides, perceived economic disadvantage is a potential mobilising factor for civic participation in order to improve one's living conditions (van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears 2008).

Concerning gender, we have found that men and women share similar levels of online participation, but women participate slightly more offline than men. These findings are in line with recent studies pointing out that the traditional gender gap, according to which men participate more than women, remains only for participation within traditional political institutions, such as political parties (Stolle and Hooghe 2011). However, there are no substantial gender differences regarding other forms of civic participation, including online activities (Oser, Hooghe, and Marien 2013). In fact, women currently seem to be more involved than men in offline civic activities that are incorporated into their daily lives, such as volunteering or donating money (Coffé and Bolzendahl 2010; Zukin et al., 2006). This is consistent with our own findings, as our scale for offline participation referred mainly to these activities.

Several limitations need to be noted regarding the present study. First, our sample represented only those young Roma who were willing to cooperate with us and complete a relatively extensive questionnaire. Although recruitment proceeded through non-governmental organisations and social workers, it is probable that young Roma with a deep distrust of mainstream Czech society would refuse to take part in a study conducted by an academic institution. Second, our sample did not include people who lacked the skills or education necessary for completing the questionnaire. Moreover, based on the analysis of missing data, it seems that people with higher education and economic status were over-represented in our sample. Third, the cross-sectional nature of our study makes difficult to infer causal relations. This issue has been already mentioned regarding peer norms, but it can also apply to other predictors such as community perceptions (e.g., activists might be more aware of communal problems than non-activists). Fourth, our predictors were able to account for only one-tenth and one-fifth of variance in offline and online civic participation, respectively. Although similar results are common in civic participation research, it suggests that some relevant predictors of participation may have been

omitted. Fifth, findings on economic status should be interpreted with caution, as they were based on self-reported data that could incorporate subjective bias and we lacked other indicators of socio-economic status, such as parental occupation status. Similarly, Internet access and use were not measured in this study. We recommend capturing this information in future studies, since it can further improve our understanding of differences between the majority and minorities in online participation. Finally, the effects of participatory norms might be somewhat underestimated because our measures did not refer to civic participation in general, but to 'political' participation, which does not include all possible civic activities.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our research enriches existing knowledge in two main directions. Most importantly, this study is one of the first attempts to identify factors that boost civic participation among young Roma, an ethnic minority facing heavy discrimination and societal barriers. Additionally, we consider not only traditional offline forms of civic participation, but also online civic activities that are increasingly popular with the current young generation. Overall, we found many similarities between young Roma and young members of the majority. For both groups, civic participation is associated with a sense of collective influence on their communities and with having friends who get involved and/or have positive attitudes towards participation. Even though young Roma might participate online less than the majority, this difference should be attributed to their limited access to higher education. On the other hand, offline civic participation among young Roma seems to be more strongly associated with perceived communal problems than it is for the majority. Therefore, creating opportunities where young people can actively build a sense of influence on their communities and where they can meet like-minded peers are promising strategies for boosting their rates of civic participation. Such opportunities could be created and promoted in communal centres (e.g. libraries, social and cultural centres) that offer a place for both formal and informal debates on public issues and for organising community events. Moreover, these centres can easily provide local people with the information and equipment needed for civic participation (including computers and Internet access). Nevertheless, these specific arrangements must be accompanied by more general policies that would promote equal access to education for young people from disadvantaged social backgrounds.

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