



Universiteit  
Leiden  
The Netherlands

## **Romaphobia among adolescents : the role of perceived threat, nationalism, and acculturation expectations**

Ljujic, V.

### **Citation**

Ljujic, V. (2011, December 14). *Romaphobia among adolescents : the role of perceived threat, nationalism, and acculturation expectations*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18244>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/18244>

**Note:** To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

## 1. General Introduction

The studies presented in this thesis stem from an interest in Roma's fate which entails a challenge of immense practical importance. Negative attitudes towards the Roma have been a common denominator of widespread rejection, exclusion and outright hostility that marked the eight-century-long Roma history in Europe (Crowe, 2008). In recent years, an increasing ethnic mobility within the European Union enabled the Roma to travel from one country to another to escape discrimination and search for a better life (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009). Most of Roma, however, remain excluded from the mainstream population, and face continued poverty and discrimination (Kostadinova, 2011).

The goal of this dissertation is to provide an insight into social-psychological mechanisms that underlie this appalling situation of European Roma. We refer to negative attitudes towards the Roma as Romaphobia<sup>1</sup>. Like other type of outgroup attitudes, Romaphobia reflects negative emotions associated with group membership, i.e. *being Roma*. The Roma group membership is strongly determined by common ancestry (Liegeois & Gheorghe, 1995). Nevertheless, the label "Roma" does not refer to a homogenous group, but to a highly diversified minority, which adheres to multiple cultural and religious traditions (Liegeois, 1994). Cross-cultural research shows that the label "Roma" pertains to Roma ethnicity (i.e. heritage), but also reflects transparent status differences from the mainstream population (Kligman, 2001; Prieto-Flores, 2006).

The integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 1996) offers a theoretical framework for studying Romaphobia. It focuses on perceived cultural discrepancies and status differences in the form of threat to material (i.e. realistic threat) and immaterial resources (i.e. symbolic threat). In the following sections, we present the theoretical rationales for perceived threat and its antecedents to be the main causes of Romaphobia.

---

<sup>1</sup> In the following chapters, the words prejudice, negative feelings and anti-Roma attitudes are used interchangeably.

### *Integrated threat theory*

The idea that perceived threat constitutes a key for negative outgroup attitudes has extensively been discussed within the realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, 1966), and symbolic racism theory (Kinder & Sears, 1981). More recently, Stephan and Stephan (1996) unified these conceptually different notions into the integrated threat theory. The integrated threat theory suggests that the social psychological mechanisms underlying outgroup prejudice involve perceived threat and its antecedents (e.g. ingroup identity) (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006, for a meta analysis). Perceived economic threat concerns inter-group competition for scarce resources such as jobs and housing (Sheriff, 1966). Symbolic threat is about the worldviews of a group, which is assumingly threatened by out-group members with distinct morals, norms, and values (Sears, 1988).

Negative attitudes towards outgroups may be independent of actual inter-group competition, generated by minority proportion and contact opportunities (Burjanek, 2001; Nordberg, 2004; Sigona, 2005). Reluctance to share scarce resources with Roma, and intolerance towards the Roma culture, may be linked to *Zeitgeist*, or more precisely, to the extent to which general cultural and political climate in society reflects a supportive (or unsupportive) social context for intercultural relationships (e.g. Phillips, 2010). In particular, it was shown that nationalism and endorsement of unfavorable acculturation strategies, i.e., a desire for cultural homogenization among dominant group members may have contributed to the perceived threat from Roma (Brearley, 2001; Woodcock, 2007). Drawing from past research, this dissertation proposes acculturation preferences and national ingroup attitudes to be antecedents of perceived threat, and to have both direct and indirect (via perceived threat) relationship to Romaphobia.

### *Nationalism*

Nationalism is defined as an in-group identification that is primarily centered on affiliation with a nation, which, depending on the circumstances and ideological premises may reflect strong attachment to or a desire for a nation state (cf. Weiss, 2003). This definition emphasizes the importance of cultural-historical entities as the bases for political legitimacy, but also assumes a strong emotional component which determines the relationship with one's own ethnic group, language, religion, as well as a specific sense of comradeship among the group members (Anderson, 1983). For

people with strong nationalist feelings, the national group provides a familiar context in a broader social landscape.

This emotional attachment to and identification with one's nation may provide a psychological rationale for nationalism as an antecedent of prejudice, i.e., negative feelings towards and unfavorable evaluation of other (national) groups (Wagner, Becker, Christ, Pettigrew, & Schmidt, 2010). Nationalists derive their self-concept from the national group to which they belong; hence perceived threat to the continued transmission of and support for one's heritage culture and economic welfare may become the basis for negative prejudice.

#### *Acculturation expectations*

Acculturation refers to intercultural interactions and mutual influences between dominant and subordinate groups (Berry, 1999, 2003). Berry's model of acculturation (Berry, 2003) proposes the relative preference for maintenance of the own ethnic culture and the relative preference for relationships with other groups, as the main criteria for a group's acculturation. Hence, four distinct acculturation attitudes or behavioral strategies are distinguished: integration (*yes* to both cultural maintenance and interethnic contact); assimilation (*yes* to interethnic contact, *no* to cultural maintenance); segregation or separation (*yes* to cultural maintenance, *no* to intercultural contact); and marginalization or exclusion (*no* to both cultural maintenance and intercultural contact).

Past research indicates that by virtue of power advantages, the dominant group members may have relative control over the acculturation of minorities (Bourhis et al., 2009). According to the interactive acculturation models (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997; Piontkowski, et al., 2002), status differences between the subordinate and dominant group may result in different, even conflicting expectations regarding the acculturation processes (Rohmann, Florack, & Piontkowski, 2006). Scholars distinguish between nationals' perceived acculturation, i.e., nationals' perceptions of other groups' acculturation efforts, and acculturation expectations, i.e., preferences that nationals or majority group members have as regards how minority groups – in our case Roma – should acculturate. The members of subordinate groups are typically interested in cultural maintenance, and often favor integration which grants them space for both contact with nationals and maintenance of their own heritage culture (Bourhis et al., 2009; Jasinskaja-Lahti, et al., 2003; Sniderman & Hagendoorn, 2007; Zick,

Wagner, Dick, & Petzel, 2001). Nationals may perceive this acculturation preference of minority group members and be concerned with the prospects of sharing national resources with subordinate groups; hence their acculturation expectations may reflect a desire to reject intercultural relationships between minority and majority groups (Florack, Piontkowski, Rohmann, Balzer & Perzig, 2003; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2004; Piontkowski, et al., 2000). We propose acculturation expectations as antecedent of economic and symbolic threat; and investigate whether or not different types of threat mediate the effects of acculturation expectations on Romaphobia.

#### *Adolescents as research population*

Three of the four papers to be presented in this thesis are about adolescents. A growing body of research has revealed that stereotypical beliefs and prejudicial attitudes are developed at an early age, and that these attitudes, once developed, tend to be long-lasting (Aboud, 2008; Barret & Oppenheimer, 2011; Jennings, Stoker, & Bowers, 2009). Adolescents constitute an adequate and easily reached research population. Given the fact that most of students' daily life and interactions take place at schools, school may be seen as adequate terrain for prejudice transmission, but also for prejudice reduction, i.e. correction of one-sided perceptions and negative behavioral consequences (e.g., violence, discrimination).

#### *Summary and the main research questions*

The following research questions guide our studies:

1. *Is Romaphobia a manifestation of generalized prejudice or a qualitatively distinct type of prejudice?*
2. *Do perceived economic and symbolic threat provide a rationale for nationalists' Romaphobia?*
3. *How are acculturation preferences related to adolescents' Romaphobia?*
4. *Is there a common model of the relationship between Romaphobia, perceived threat and its antecedents in different intercultural settings?*

The first paper reports a secondary analysis of Hungarian national representative data to investigate the empirical justification for conceptualizing negative feelings towards the Roma as a distinct type of prejudice (chapter 2). It is a justification for

focusing the attention in the other chapters on Romaphobia as a specific type of prejudice deserving special attention. This paper momentarily is under review.

In the second and third paper, we use Serbian adolescents' data to investigate the mediating role of perceived economic and symbolic threat on relationships between nationalism and acculturation expectations, on one side, and Romaphobia on the other. The second paper (chapter 3), investigates perception of economic and symbolic threat from Roma, as well as the mediating role of perceived threats on relationships between nationalism and Romaphobia. This paper is accepted for publication in the *Journal of Political Psychology* (Ljujic, Vedder & Dekker, 2011).

In the third paper (chapter 4), we built upon the interactive acculturation model (Bourhis, et al., 2009) to explore adolescents' acculturation expectations as antecedents of perceived threat. In particular, we investigate if ethnocentric acculturation preferences, i.e., assimilation, segregation or exclusion are characterized by higher levels of perceived threat and Romaphobia, than integration preference, which are assumingly accompanied by low levels of perceived threat and prejudice. This paper has been published in the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker, & Van Geel, 2010).

The fourth paper (chapter 5) reports a comparative study. We examine interrelationships among nationalism, integrationist preferences, perceived threats and Romaphobia among Dutch and Serbian adolescents. More specifically, we analyze whether and to what extent threat mediates the relationship between nationalism and integration preferences of national youth and their Romaphobia and whether these relationships are comparable between Serbian and Dutch youth. We expect that differences between the Netherlands and Serbia in terms of density of Roma presence and corresponding contact opportunities between national and Roma youth affect the findings. This paper has been published in the *International Journal of Psychology* (Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker, & Van Geel, 2011).

## References

- Aboud, F.E. (2008). A social-cognitive developmental theory of prejudice. In: S.M. Quintana & C. McKnown (eds.), *The handbook of race, racism, and the developing child*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 55-71.

- Anderson, B., (1983). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso editions.
- Barrett, M. & Oppenheimer, L. (2011). Findings, theories and methods in the study of children's national identifications and national attitudes. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology* 8, 5 - 24.
- Berry, J. W. (1999). Intercultural relations in plural societies. *Canadian Psychology* 40, 12-21.
- Berry, J. W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. Chun, P. Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement, & applied research* (pp. 17-38). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association
- Bourhis, R., Barrette, G., El-Geledi, S. & Schmidt, D. (2009). Acculturation orientations and social relations between immigrant and host community members in California. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology* 40, 443-467.
- Bourhis, R., Moïse, C., Perreault, S. & Senécal, S. (1997). Towards an interactive acculturation model: A social psychological approach. *International Journal of Psychology* 32, 369–386.
- Brearley, M. (2001). The persecution of Gypsies in Europe', *American Behavioral Scientist* 45, 588–599.
- Burjanek, A. (2001). Xenophobia among the Czech population in the context of post-communist countries and Western Europe. *Czech Sociological Review*, 9, 1210-3861.
- Crowe, D. W (2008). The Roma in post-communist Eastern Europe: Questions of ethnic conflict and ethnic peace. *Nationalities Papers* 36, 521-552.
- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2009). *The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU member states*. Retrieved June 22, 2011 from [http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma\\_Movement\\_Comparative-final\\_en.pdf](http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/Roma_Movement_Comparative-final_en.pdf)
- Florack, A., Piantkowski, U., Rohmann, A., Balzer, T., & Perzig, S. (2003). Perceived intergroup threat and attitudes of host community members toward immigrant acculturation. *Journal of Social Psychology* 143, 633-648.
- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., Liebkind, K., Horenczyk, G. & Schmitz, P. (2003). The interactive nature of acculturation: perceived discrimination, acculturation attitudes and stress among young ethnic repatriates in Finland, Israel and Germany. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27, 79–97.

- Jennings, M.K., Stoker, L. and Bowers, J. (2009). Politics across generations: family transmission reexamined. *The Journal of Politics* 71, 782-799.
- Kinder, D. & Sears, D. (1981). Negative attitudes and politics: Symbolic racism versus racial threats to the good life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 40, 414-431.
- Kligman, G. (2001). On the social construction of "otherness": Identifying "the Roma" in post-socialist communities. *Review of Sociology* 7, 61-78.
- Kostadinova, G. (2011). Minority rights as a normative framework for addressing the situation of Roma in Europe. *Oxford Development Studies* 39, 163-183.
- Liegeois, J-P. (1994). *Roma, gypsies, travelers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Liegeois, J-P. & Gheorghe, N. (1995). *Roma/Gypsies: A European minority*. London: Minority Rights Group.
- Montreuil, A., & Bourhis, R. Y. (2004). Acculturation orientations of competing host communities towards valued and devalued immigrants. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 28, 507-532
- Nordberg, C. (2004). Legitimising immigration control: Romani asylum-seekers in the Finnish debate. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30, 717-735.
- Phillips, D. (2010). Minority Ethnic Segregation, Integration and Citizenship: A European Perspective. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36, 209-225.
- Piontkowski, U., Rohmann, A. & Florack, A. (2002). Concordance of acculturation attitudes and perceived threat. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 5, 221–232.
- Prieto-Flores, O. (2009). Does the canonical theory of assimilation explain the Roma case? Some evidence from Central and Eastern Europe. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 32, 1387-1405.
- Riek, B., Mania, E. & Gaertner, S. (2006). Intergroup threat and outgroup attitudes: A meta-analytic review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10, 336–353.
- Rohmann, A., Florack, A., & Piontkowski, U. (2006). The role of discordant acculturation attitudes in perceived threat: An analysis of host and immigrant attitudes in Germany. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30, 683-702.
- Sears, D. (1988). Symbolic racism'. In P. A. Katz and D. A. Taylor (Eds.), *Eliminating racism: Profiles in controversy* (pp.53-84). New York: Plenum.



- Sherif, M. (1966). *Group conflict and cooperation*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Sigona, N. (2005). Locating the “Gypsy Problem”. The Roma in Italy: Stereotyping, Labelling and Nomad Camps. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31, 741-56.
- Sniderman, P., & Hagendoorn, L. (2007). *When ways of life collide: Multiculturalism and its discontent in the Netherlands*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Stephan, W. & Stephan, C. (1996). Predicting prejudice. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 20, 409–426.
- Wagner, U., Becker, J.C., Christ, O., Pettigrew, T.F., & Schmidt, P. A longitudinal test of the relation between German nationalism, patriotism and outgroup derogation. *European Sociological Review*, in press.
- Weiss, H. (2003). A cross-national comparison of nationalism in Austria, the Czech and Slovak Republic, Hungary and Poland. *Political Psychology* 24, 377-401.
- Zick, A., Wagner, U., Dick, R. & Petzel T. (2001). Acculturation and Prejudice in Germany: Majority and Minority Perspectives. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 541-557.