

What predicts anti-Roma prejudice? Qualitative and quantitative analysis of everyday sentiments about the Roma

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Funding information

Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, Grant/Award Number: LP2012-36; Emberi Erőforrások Minisztériuma, Grant/Award Number: ÚNKP-16-3 and ÚNKP-17-3; Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office, Grant/Award Number: FK124225 and PD116686

Abstract

The present research focused on two primary goals: (a) identifying the content of sentiments about the Roma to which Hungarians are exposed during everyday family conversations, and (b) determining which types of everyday sentiments about the Roma most strongly predict Hungarian respondents' anti-Roma prejudice. Content analyzing open-ended responses from a representative sample of Hungarians ($N = 505$), we found that more than 76% of the respondents reported being exposed to negative stereotypes about the Roma, 27% to threats posed by Roma, and 16% to overt dehumanization of Roma; additionally more than 20% reported hearing no positive sentiments about the Roma in everyday family conversations. We then examined which negative and positive sentiments most strongly predicted respondents' anti-Roma prejudice (using measures of social distance³ and modern racism). Higher social distance scores were predicted by a lack of positive sentiments, whereas lower social distance scores were most strongly predicted by unambiguously positive sentiments expressed during family conversations. Higher modern racism scores were further predicted by sentiments expressing dehumanization, threat, and violence against Roma. Together, these results attest to the extremity of anti-Roma sentiments expressed regularly by Hungarians, and suggest how exposure to specific sentiments may foster anti-Roma hostility. Moreover, these findings provide guidance regarding the specific negative anti-Roma sentiments that should be combated to enhance the effectiveness of anti-prejudice interventions.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The Roma are Europe's largest minority population, currently numbering 10–12 million people (European Commission, 2011). The Roma have been socially excluded and marginalized for centuries (Mezey, 1998). Beginning in the 18th century, information campaigns depicted the Roma as “uncivilized,” and show trials accused Roma wanderers of cannibalism and executed them based on their coerced and false confessions (Puskás & Végh, 1998). Forced assimilation of the Roma people was accomplished through policies that separated children from families and sought to socialize them as “good peasants” (Kende, 2000; Mezey, 1998). During World War II, Roma people were considered

“sub-human” by Nazi Germany and exterminated in concentration camps, along with the Jewish population. Today, anti-Roma (or anti-“Gypsy”)¹ sentiments represent a multifaceted amalgam of attitudes and beliefs, including stereotypes arising from exotic myths (Pivetti, Melotti, & Bonomo, 2017), and extraordinarily high levels of prejudice (Villano, Fontanella, Fontanella, & Di Donato, 2017). Despite cultural differences that exist across the countries in which the Roma live, Roma people are described by similar characteristics, including

¹Roma is a rather politically correct term, while the term of gypsy or gipsy (along with other terms such as Gitano, Gitana) refers to the Egyptian origin of Roma people (Weyrauch, 2001). Despite the term of gypsy is an exonym and it is not unequivocally politically correct, Gypsy is one of the most frequently used term in everyday discourses for Roma people in Eastern Europe (e.g., Simhandl, 2006).

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untruthful, criminal, passive, aggressive, and lazy (Barberet & García-España, 1997; Kende, Hadarics, & Láštiová, 2017; Láštiová & Findor, 2016; Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker, & Van Geel, 2012; Villano et al., 2017). This multifaceted prejudice against Roma is very deeply rooted in European culture (Villano et al., 2017) and is present in public discourse, in the media, and in policy decisions across Europe (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2011; Kroon, Kluknavská, Vliegthart, & Boomgaarden, 2016).

1.1 | Anti-Roma sentiments in Hungary

Sentiments toward the Roma people in Hungary typify the antagonism they have faced across Europe. Indeed, the Roma continue to be the most derogated ethnic minority group in Hungary (Balassa, 2006; Erős, 2005, 2007; Murányi, 2006; Pataki, 1997; Political Capital, 2008; for a recent summary, see Váradi, 2014). Consistent with dehumanized perceptions of Roma propagated during the 18th and 19th centuries (Mezey, 1998), representative national samples show that 60% of Hungarians report that the Roma are less “evolved and civilized” than non-Roma Hungarians (Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015), and 60% of Hungarians believe that “the inclination toward criminality is in the blood of gypsies” (Bernát, Juhász, Krekó, & Molnár, 2013). These dehumanizing perceptions are openly expressed through social and political discourse and reinforced through prevailing norms (see Bernáth & Messing, 2013). For example, an editorial by a well-known journalist and co-founder of the ruling right wing party (Fidesz) stated: “A significant portion of the Gypsies are unfit for co-existence, not fit to live among human beings . . . these people are animals and behave like animals . . . These animals should not be allowed to exist. In no way. That needs to be solved—immediately and regardless of the method” (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2015).

Thus, hostility toward the Roma is strong across European societies, and more specifically within Hungary, and public sentiments about the Roma are often extremely negative. To counter these tendencies, researchers have focused on common prejudice reduction strategies. For example, some studies have shown that anti-Roma sentiments can be diminished through greater contact between Roma and non-Roma Hungarians (e.g., Orosz, Bánki, Bóthe, Tóth-Király, and Tropp, 2016; Váradi, 2014). However, other studies suggest that the effects of contact are sensitive to normative influences (Kende, Tropp, & Lantos, 2017), and in some cases, greater contact with Roma may even correspond with stronger anti-Roma attitudes among non-Roma Hungarians (e.g., Kende, Tropp, & Lantos, 2017). One possibility for the divergent effects of contact on anti-Roma hostility may be that the psychology governing Romaphobia has been shown to be at least somewhat distinct from the psychology driving hostility toward other groups (e.g., McGarry, 2017; Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker, & Van Geel, 2012). Therefore, it may be important to identify not just the degree of anti-Roma bias, but also the quality of anti-Roma bias. Understanding which specific perceptions of Roma are driving hostility could enable the construction of new interventions that are more targeted at these psychological

processes. We therefore, focus on the nature and content of prevailing social narratives about the Roma in Hungary, in order to provide a foundation for future efforts toward prejudice reduction.

1.2 | The current research

The current research is framed around two primary goals. First, this research seeks to identify the content of sentiments about the Roma to which Hungarians are regularly exposed, and second, it uses this information to identify the types of sentiments about the Roma that most strongly predict anti-Roma prejudice among non-Roma Hungarians. Prior studies have typically used survey techniques to investigate the predictors of anti-Roma prejudice (e.g., Kende et al., 2017). Although this survey research has provided important insights regarding predictors of anti-Roma prejudice, such studies may be guiding theories and do not necessarily reflect respondents' everyday experiences and societal messages to which they are exposed. In the present study, we combine the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches, using content analysis and survey research methodologies, to assess commonly expressed sentiments about the Roma and to uncover which of these sentiments are prime movers of Hungarians' anti-Roma prejudices. This mixed-method approach adds to the previous literature in two primary ways. First, since the research allows open-ended responses and compares these responses to self-reported anti-Roma hostility, it is relatively free of investigator bias. Second, by having participants report what others say (rather than what they feel themselves), and comparing these responses to their own scores on prejudice measures, we are able to survey the range of anti-Roma sentiments commonly expressed in one's social environment, the prevalence of each type, and which of these sentiments most strongly predicts one's own behavior. This approach may help to provide a deeper understanding of the processes that comprise Hungarians' views of the Roma people, as well as the processes that most strongly relate to people's own anti-Roma prejudice. Ultimately, the information obtained through this methodology may be able to inform intervention strategies aimed at reducing anti-Roma prejudice.

To examine the range, frequency, and depth of anti-Roma sentiment, we asked Hungarian participants to report the most common everyday negative and positive sentiments that they have heard expressed during family conversations about the Roma. An important feature of the current research is that Hungarian participants did not report what they personally think or say about the Roma, but rather what they most commonly hear about the Roma from family members. We used this approach for two reasons. First, the extent to which people perceive prejudice to be normative in their social environments predicts their endorsement of prejudice toward the target of prejudice (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002). Families in particular represent a formative environment where intergroup prejudice can be normalized (e.g., Aboud, 1988; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Rohan & Zanna, 1996), which may account for a strong consistency in prejudice toward specified outgroups across generations (see Lane, 1965). Second, people may sometimes be reluctant to report accurately any negative perceptions of other groups that they personally hold, yet more willing to

report the negative views expressed by others (e.g., Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Zitek & Hebl, 2007). Therefore, third party reporting served to both limit demand characteristics and assess directly the normative environment that people inhabit.

Following a content analysis of the sentiments expressed during family conversations, we examined which of the expressed sentiments were most predictive of Hungarian participants' own prejudices against the Roma, employing two commonly used prejudice measures: reported desire for social distance from the Roma (Bogardus, 1933), and reported modern racism in relation to the Roma (McConahay, 1986). These prejudice measures were chosen because they have been used successfully in prior studies of anti-Roma prejudice in Hungary (see Orosz et al., 2016). Building on past research (Orosz et al., 2016), we predicted that the normative environment matters—that views of the Roma expressed by family members would predict Hungarian participants' own levels of prejudice toward the Roma. Further, we sought to clarify which of those views expressed by family members most strongly predict anti-Roma hostility among the participants themselves. As far as we know, no prior research has adopted such a mixed-method approach to specify the types of normative sentiments expressed about the Roma in one's immediate family environment which are most likely to predict individuals' own prejudices against the Roma.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | Participants

This research employed a nationally representative probability sample of Hungarians who used the Internet at least once a week. Participants were selected randomly from 15,000 panel members with the help of a research market company in the summer of 2015. For the preparation of the sample, a multiple-step, proportionally stratified, probabilistic sampling method was employed, in which individuals were removed from the panel if they gave responses too quickly (i.e., without paying attention to their response) and/or had fake (unused) e-mail addresses (see Orosz, Dombi, Andreassen, Griffiths, & Demetrovics, 2015 for similar procedures). The final sample of 505 Hungarian respondents who gave valid answers was nationally representative in terms of gender (female = 265; 52.5%), age ($M_{\text{age}} = 44.37$ years; $SD_{\text{age}} = 15.59$ years; range 15–75 years), education (22.8% had primary level of education, 24.8% had vocational school degree, 31.5% graduated from high school, and 21.0% had higher education degree), and place of residence (18.8% in capital city, 19.6% in county capitals, 31.7% in towns, and 29.9% in villages).

2.2 | Procedures

After consenting to participate in the study, willing participants were asked to report the most frequent negative sentiment directed toward the Roma people and the most frequent positive sentiment directed toward the Roma people heard during their family discussions. Specifically, respondents were asked the following: "Please, write down the

most characteristic negative sentence related to Gypsies² that can be heard during family conversations. (This statement could derive from any family members.)" Then, on a separate page, they were asked the following: "Please, write down the most characteristic positive sentence related to Gypsies that can be heard during family conversations. (This statement could derive from any family members.)" We purposely asked participants to offer open-ended responses regarding what might be expressed during family discussions, in order to provide a concrete frame of reference within their immediate social context that is likely to be relevant to their everyday lives.

Therefore, we expected open-ended complete sentences in response to these questions. Finally, participants completed the Social Distance and Modern Racism scales adapted to assess prejudice in relation to Roma people in a commonly operationalized way (e.g., Orosz et al., 2016), and then replied to a series of demographic questions, including age, gender, level of education (with the following options: primary level of education, vocational school degree, graduated from high school, or higher education degree), and region in which they live (capital, regional capital, town, village).

2.3 | Quantitative measures

2.3.1 | Social distance

Social distance assesses respondents' willingness to engage in social contact with members of a particular group. Social distance is a widely used method to measure prejudice, and has been used previously to assess relations with Roma people in Hungary (Bigazzi & Csertő, 2016; Szabó & Örkény, 1996; Váradi, 2014). We adapted a single-item version of the Social Distance scale (Bogardus, 1933; Norman, Sorrentino, Windell, & Manchanda, 2008) to measure desire for social distance from Roma people. Participants were provided with the following response options, through which they indicated the closest they were willing to come to Roma people: 1—as close relatives by marriage; 2—as my close personal friends; 3—as neighbors on the same street; 4—as coworkers in the same occupation; 5—as citizens in my country; 6—as noncitizen visitors in my country; 7—exclude from entry into my country. Correspondingly, higher scores on this scale indicate higher levels of social distance.

2.3.2 | Modern racism

We used a six-item version of the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986), adapted to Roma targets (e.g. "Over the past few years, Gypsies have gotten more economically than they deserve"; see Orosz et al., 2016). Respondents indicated their level of agreement using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), with higher scores indicating greater modern racism ($\alpha = 0.87$). After being modified to include Roma as the target group, both measures were translated into Hungarian (see also Beaton, Bombardier, Guillemin, & Ferraz, 2000).

²The more pejorative term "Gypsy" was used instead of "Roma" because Gypsy is more commonly used, and we felt that using the more culturally sensitive term might censure the reporting of negative perceptions.

2.4 | Coding of qualitative responses

Inductive content analysis and emergent coding procedures were used to identify meaningful dimensions through which responses to the open-ended questions could be interpreted (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Stemler, 2001). Following the steps of conventional content analysis, a team of three researchers read over the sentences multiple times and identified key themes and meaningful dimensions. Then, based on this initial discussion, the researchers specified and defined the categories of statements to be coded. The coding procedure was guided by the clear coding scheme and the detailed definition of each category (see Section 1.2). Categories were organized into higher order categories if there were meaningful connections among them. Separate coding schemes were created for both negative and positive statements.

Categories for negative statements included (1) specific negative stereotypes such as (1a) criminal, (1b) lazy, (1c) poor personal hygiene, (1d) aggressive, and (1e) loud; (2) *threat* relating to (2a) socioeconomics, (2b) demographics, and (2c) physical assault; (3) *dehumanization* relating to (3a) being primitive, (3b) having animalistic traits, (3c) being barbaric, and (3d) less than human; (4) *explicit discrimination against Roma*; (5) *different cultural values*; (6) *problems of adaptation to Hungarian society*; or (7) *lack of negative statement*. Finally, we created a category including those negative statements that (8) do not belong to the abovementioned ones and another category for the (9) not meaningful answers.

Positive statements about the Roma were sorted into categories as (1a) unambiguously positive characteristics, (1b) cultural appreciation, (1c) family orientation, (1d) acknowledgement of effort; (2) heterogeneity; (3) humanization; (4) external causes of life circumstances; (5) cohesion; and (6) absence of positive characteristics such that the family member indicated (6a) lack of positive characteristics, (6b) lack of discussion on this topic, (6c) only negative characteristics.

An “other” category was also created to account for other responses provided that did not represent a meaningful answer to either open-ended question. More detailed examples of coded statements are provided in Section 1.2.

After creating the coding schemes, two independent raters were trained to code the data on the basis of the predefined coding categories outlined above. The coding system was slightly modified and clarified based on a preliminary analysis of open-ended responses from 50 members of the sample. This preliminary round of coding revealed acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability for coding of both negative and positive sentences ($\kappa_{\text{negative}} = 0.78$; $\kappa_{\text{positive}} = 0.88$). Raters agreed on 98.25% of the positive statements (5,954 out of 6,060 possible statements), and on 98.31% of the negative statements (14,894 out of 15,150 possible statements). Disagreement was discussed by raters until consensus was reached. Any ambiguity regarding unclear statements or overlapping categories was clarified with the support of the third expert. In these cases, all three coders talked through coding rationales and decisions until agreement was reached.

3 | RESULTS

3.1 | Content analysis—negative statements about Roma people

To begin to address our first research goal, we identified 856 negative statements that could be organized into nine main coding categories. In many cases, subcategories were also differentiated. The category system is described in detail below (also see Table 1).³ Note that each sentence could be coded as more than one category.

1. **Specific negative stereotypes** (44.9% of the responses). The category refers to negative stereotype content related to Roma people.⁴
 - (1a) **Criminality**: The subcategory represents frequent negative actions associated with Roma people, such as cheating, stealing, killing, and other types of criminal behavior (e.g., “They are criminals.”)
 - (1b) **Laziness** includes statements that refer to Roma as lazy people who do not want to make effort (e.g., “They don’t want to work.”).
 - (1c) **Poor personal hygiene**—includes references to Roma’s smell and lack of cleanliness (e.g., “Stinky bunch!”).
 - (1d) **Aggression, violence** refers to the hostile actions of Roma people (e.g., “They pick quarrels, and look for trouble”).
 - (1e) **Loudness** describes Roma as noisy (e.g., “There was a gipsy family sitting next to me on the bus and they were incredibly loud,” “In case of loud noises it must be them”).
2. **Threat** (15.8%). The category describes Roma people as threatening to the majority population which is related in a certain way to Romaphobia. Many forms of threat were revealed in the sentences, including threats associated with societal resources, demographic changes, and physical harm.
 - (2a) **Socioeconomic threat**. The category includes statements that describe Roma people as exploiters, who live off of the state, they get too much monetary support and benefit from the state at the expense of Hungarians (e.g., “Most gypsies only live on benefits and family allowance, they can’t stand work, but love aggression and stealing,” “Slugs, only waiting for the benefits to arrive.”)
 - (2b) **Demographic threat**. The category indicates that Roma people have too many children; their population is growing faster and will outnumber Hungarians (e.g., “In a few years there will be so many of them that they will become the majority,” “Gipsy population is getting bigger than the non-gipsy one.”)
 - (2c) **Physical threat**. The category refers to physical threat Roma people pose to Hungarians (e.g., “A fear of my family getting hurt by them (happened before),” “Majority of them . . . are dangerous to the everyday people.”).
3. **Dehumanization** (9.2%) refers to the denial of “humanness” of other people, which was captured by four subcategories: (3a)

³All negative sentences and their codings are provided in Supporting Information.

⁴Some categories seem to be similar (e.g., Criminality, Aggression, or Threat), although they convey different meanings. For example, *criminality* refers to illegal behaviour, whereas *aggression* does not include the violation of law. *Threat* involves perceived or actual threats to one’s groups access to resources, well-being, or way of life, whereas *aggression* refers to characteristics of individuals who are prone to engaging in violent behavior.

TABLE 1 Descriptive data on the negative sentences about Roma people

Category	Number of respondents mentioning this category	Percent of respondents mentioning this category ^a (N _{respondents} = 505)	Percent of responses belonging to this category (N _{responses} = 856)
(1) Specific negative stereotypes	384	76.1	44.9
(1a) Criminality	128	25.3	15.0
(1b) Lazy, do not work hard	113	22.4	13.2
(1c) Poor personal hygiene	68	13.5	7.9
(1d) Aggression	52	10.3	6.1
(1e) They are loud and noisy	23	4.6	2.7
(2) Threat	135	26.7	15.8
(2a) Socioeconomic threat	75	14.3	8.8
(2b) Demographic threat	33	6.5	3.9
(2c) Physical assault	27	3.8	3.2
(3) Dehumanization	79	15.7	9.2
(3a) Being primitive	44	8.7	5.1
(3b) Having animalistic traits	22	4.4	2.6
(3c) Being barbarian	8	1.6	0.9
(3d) Less than human	5	1.0	0.6
(4) Explicit discrimination	42	8.3	4.9
(5) Different cultural values	22	4.4	2.6
(6) Problems of adaptation to Hungarian society	26	5.1	3.0
(7) Had nothing negative to say	70	13.9	8.2
(8) Negative words that do not belong to previous categories	66	13.1	7.7
(9) No meaningful answer	32	6.3	3.7

Note. If one respondent mentioned more than one expression belonging to the same category we counted it as a single expression.

^aPercentages do not add up to 100% because individual's responses often included several phrases that were coded under multiple categories.

Primitive in terms of being uneducated or uncultured (e.g., "Most of them are uninhibited, amoral, uneducated rascals," "...use bad language, uneducated, primitive"). **(3b) Animalistic traits.** The category refers to Roma people as animals or insects (e.g., "Parasites," "Pigs"). **(3c) Being barbaric or savage** (e.g., "Gypsies are primitive things," "[They are]... barbaric, uncultured"). **(3d) Less than human.** The category refers to Roma people as being not fully human (e.g., "Gypsies cannot even be considered humans," "Doesn't matter what a gypsy might do, I still wouldn't consider him a human being").

4. **Explicit discrimination** (4.9%). The category represents explicit action tendencies toward Roma people and a desire that the Roma leave Hungary (e.g., "[They] should be deployed from the country," "All Gypsies should be casted away to the desert!").

5. **Different cultural values** (2.6%). Some of the respondents wrote (disparagingly) that Roma people have very different values than Hungarian people (e.g., "With my friends we say they should stick with their own culture ...," "Gypsy culture is different, they don't respect property of others").

6. **Problems of adaptation to the Hungarian society** (3%). The category refers to Roma people's unwillingness to assimilate or integrate. The statements emphasize that Roma people will never be a

true part of Hungary, because they have problems with integration and conformity, such as behaving according to the accepted norms (e.g., "unable to adapt and fit in," "They can't and don't want to fit in").

7. **Lack of negative statements** (8.2%). This category was relevant if the respondents had nothing negative to say, or if there was no such discussion or anti-stereotype sentence during family conversations (e.g., "We don't talk about this during our family conversations, we choose other topics," "There is no such thing"). This category also included sentences devoid of stereotypes or sentences that explicitly expressed general neutrality toward Roma people (e.g., "Among gypsies there are good and bad people just like among Hungarians").

8. **Negative words that don't belong to previous categories** (7.7%). Respondents listed negative words that did not clearly belong to any of the previous categories. These words are often insults or other negative phrases used to describe Roma people, such as: "ass-hole," "cunning," or "scums."

9. **No meaningful answer** (3.7%). Respondents did not have useful responses, for instance, they only used a dash, or a random sequence of letters or words that are not meaningful in any language, such as: "gg" or "-."

TABLE 2 Descriptive data on the positive sentences about Roma people

Category	Number of mentioning this category	Percent of respondents mentioning this category ^a (N _{respondents} = 505)	Percent of responses belonging to this category (N _{responses} = 570)
(1) Positive stereotypes	250	49.5	43.9
(1a) unambiguously positive characteristics	93	18.6	16.3
(1b) cultural appreciation	87	17.2	15.3
(1c) family orientation	41	8.1	7.2
(1d) acknowledgement of effort	29	5.7	5.1
(2) Heterogeneity	75	14.9	13.2
(3) Humanization	19	3.8	3.3
(4) External causes of life circumstances	12	2.4	2.1
(5) Cohesion	57	11.3	10
(6) Absence of positive characteristics	104	20.6	18.2
(6a) lack of positive characteristics	71	14.1	12.5
(6b) lack of discussion on this topic	21	4.2	3.7
(6c) only negative characteristics	12	2.4	2.1
(7) Not meaningful	53	10.5	9.27

Note. If a respondent mentioned more than one expression belonging to the same category we counted it as a single expression.

^aPercentages do not add up to 100% because individual's responses often included several phrases that were coded under different categories.

3.2 | Content analysis—positive statements about Roma people

Altogether there were 570 positive statements that could be organized into seven categories. The category system is described in detail in Table 2.⁵

- 1. Positive stereotypes (49.5%).** In the **(1a) unambiguously positive** (18.6%) subcategory some participants wrote sentiments that were unequivocally positive (e.g., "Clever, good student. Helpful" or "Every member of the gypsy family in our village is honest and hard-working."). In the **(1b) cultural appreciation** (17.2%) subcategory respondents indicated their appreciation regarding Roma culture in general or its different aspects as music, cuisine, dancing, or other artistic characteristics (e.g., "Gypsy musicians are really good" or "Gypsies have a wonderful culture!"). In the **(1c) family orientation** (8.1%) subcategory, some respondents mentioned that Roma people are family-oriented (e.g., "They love their families" or "When one of the family members is in a hospital, they whole family is there."). In the **(1d) Acknowledgement of effort** (5.7%) subcategory respondents reported that Roma people are trying to improve themselves and their environment (e.g., "They are trying to break out" or "They are trying.").
- 2. Heterogeneity (14.9%)** refers to the perception of Roma people as varied and not simply part of a homogeneous group. Respondents claimed that some of the Roma people are ok, there are a few exceptions among them, or not all of them are bad (e.g., "There are hard-working and helpful gypsies too but they are rare gems to find" or "Some people break out of the gypsy life, studies and motivates their family to work").

- 3. Humanization (3.8%).** Respondents wrote that Roma people are humans too, there are good and bad among them, just like in the case of Hungarians (e.g., "They are people, just like us" or "There is no difference between gypsies and Hungarians.").
- 4. External causes of trouble (2.4%).** Respondents claimed that the source of the problems that Roma people have are external and out of their control. They stated that Roma people are in an unfortunate situation, because other people are holding them back (e.g., "My gipsy friends were able to break out of the cage they were put into by society" or "Gypsies can't help their situation, it's us who caused this all.").
- 5. Cohesion (11.3%).** Some respondents expressed as a positive characteristic that Roma people stick together as a community and can count on each other in troubling times (e.g., "They keep together" or "Their coherence should be an example for Hungarians.").
- 6. Absence of positive characteristics (20.6%).** The category consists of statements about the lack of positive characteristics of Roma people. **(6a) Lack of positive characteristics** (14.1%). Respondents claimed that Roma people do not have any positive characteristics (e.g., "No such thing" or "No positives unfortunately"). **(6b) Lack of such discussion on this topic** (4.2%). Respondents did not have anything positive to say about Roma people, because the Roma are not a topic of discussion or concern for their family (e.g., "We don't usually talk about gypsies" or "We don't talk about gypsies as a separate topic."). **(6c) Only negative characteristics** (2.4%). Instead of positive words, participants responded with negative words (e.g., "There is nothing positive, I hate them!" or "Criminal lifestyle.").
- 7. Lack of meaningful answer (10.5%).** Respondents did not have useful responses, for instance, they only used a dash, or a random

⁵All positive sentences and their codings are provided in Supporting Information.

TABLE 3 Descriptive statistics of the included questionnaires and correlation between factors

Scales	Range	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social distance	7–35	22.35 (7.25)	–				
2. Modern racism	1–7	3.81 (2.03)	0.50**	–			
3. Age	15–75	44.37 (15.59)	0.04	–0.14**	–		
4. Gender ^a	1–2	–	0.12**	0.09*	–0.04	–	
5. Level of education ^b	1–4	–	–0.17**	–0.18**	–0.01	–0.15**	–
6. Place of residence ^c	1–4	–	0.05	0.10*	–0.02	0.12**	–0.16**

^a1 = male, 2 = female.

^b1 = primary level of education, 2 = vocational school degree, 3 = high school degree, 4 = higher education degree.

^c1 = capital city, 2 = county capital, 3 = town, 4 = village.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

sequence of letters or words that are not meaningful in any language, such as: “gg” or “–.”

3.3 | Predicting prejudice toward Roma people

To address our second research goal, we tested which aspects of one’s normative environment were most strongly predictive of one’s own anti-Roma prejudice. To do this, we examined how each of the coded statement categories (independent variables) predicted two measures of anti-Roma prejudice (dependent variables): Desire for *social distance* from Roma people and *modern racism* regarding the Roma.

Preliminary analyses first examined mean scores and correlations between social distance, modern racism, and the demographic variables (see Table 3),⁶ to identify relevant demographic controls for subsequent regression analyses. We found that social distance was significantly correlated with gender and level of education: women and those with less education expressed a desire for greater social distance from the Roma. Mean modern racism scores were correlated with all demographic variables: younger, female, less educated Hungarians living in the countryside tended to report higher levels of modern racism.

Coded statement categories were then used as predictors for either social distance or modern racism using two separate hierarchical multiple regressions. A three-step hierarchical regression analysis was used in each case. Since participants provided far more negative content than positive content, we included negative content before positive content in each hierarchical regression. Predictors were therefore entered into the regression through the following series of steps: the demographic variables (Step 1); the negative sentence coded variables (Step 2), and the positive sentence coded variables (Step 3). Only variables that displayed significant zero-order correlation with the outcome measure were used as predictors in the regression analyses.

3.3.1 | Predicting social distance

The first step of the model predicting social distance was statistically significant, $F(2, 502) = 9.56, p < .001$, explaining 3.7% of the variance in social distance scores (see Table 4). Both gender and level of

education were significant predictors, indicating that females and respondents with lower level of education reported greater social distance from Roma people.

In the second step, the negative sentence coded variables were entered, resulting in a statistically significant model, $F(8, 496) = 5.93, p < .001; F_{\text{change}}(6, 496) = 4.59, p < .001$, and raising the level of the explained variance to 8.7% ($R^2_{\text{change}} = 5.1\%$). In this model, education remained significant. For the negative statement variables, stereotypes about violence, “Roma not discussed,” distrust and hate added significantly to the prediction of social distance.

In the third step, the positive sentence coded variables were entered. This final model was also statistically significant, $F(12, 492) = 10.28, p < .001; F_{\text{change}}(4, 492) = 17.39, p < .001$, and more than doubled the variance explained to 20.0% ($R^2_{\text{change}} = 11.3\%$). The strongest predictor of social distance—controlling for all demographic variables—was “Roma people do not have anything positive,” followed by unambiguously positive characteristics, “Roma people are not topic of discussion,” negative stereotype violence, and negative statement as an answer to the positive characteristics question. The other variables in the model were not significant predictors.

3.3.2 | Predicting modern racism

Similar to the previous regression analysis, (a) demographic variables, (b) the negative sentence variables, and (c) the positive sentence variables were entered as separate steps in a hierarchical regression analysis as predictors of modern racism scores (see Table 5).

In the first step, the model was statistically significant, $F(4, 500) = 7.76, p < .001$, and explained 5.8% of the variance in Modern Racism scores. Age and level of education were related to Modern Racism, indicating that younger respondents and respondents with lower level of education reported higher modern racism.

The second step of the regression was statistically significant, $F(9, 495) = 7.82, p < .001; F_{\text{change}}(5, 495) = 7.46, p < .001$, and increased the level of explained variance to 12.4% ($R^2_{\text{change}} = 6.6\%$). In this model, age, level of education, animalistic dehumanization, aggression-related stereotypes, lack of a negative statement, and socioeconomic threat were significant predictors.

⁶For zero-order correlations between all coded variable and outcome measures, see Supporting Information Table S3.

TABLE 4 Regression analysis of social distance

	R ²	R ² change	B	SE	β	T
Step 1	0.037					
Constant			4.05	0.40		10.25
Gender			0.37	0.18	0.09 [*]	2.08
Education			-0.21	0.06	-0.16 ^{***}	-3.49
Step 2	0.087	0.051				
Constant			3.88	0.40		9.77
Gender			0.33	0.18	0.08	1.84
Education			-0.20	0.06	-0.15 ^{**}	-3.50
Negative: stereotype criminality			0.29	0.21	0.06	0.85
Negative: stereotype lazy			0.13	0.22	0.03	0.59
Negative: stereotype poor personal hygiene			0.49	0.26	0.08	1.88
Negative: stereotype violence			0.67	0.29	0.10 [*]	2.31
Negative: threat socioeconomic			0.39	0.26	0.07	1.54
Negative: had nothing negative to say			-0.56	0.27	-0.10 [*]	-2.09
Step 3	.181	.113				
Constant			3.63	0.38		9.45
Gender			0.31	0.17	0.08	1.83
Education			-0.15	0.06	-0.11 ^{**}	-2.64
Negative: stereotype criminality			0.24	0.20	0.05	1.21
Negative: stereotype lazy			0.12	0.21	0.03	0.59
Negative: poor personal hygiene			0.46	0.24	0.08	1.87
Negative: stereotype violence			0.68	0.27	0.10 [*]	2.48
Negative: threat socioeconomic			0.39	0.24	0.07	1.62
Negative: had nothing negative to say			-0.74	0.29	-0.13 [*]	-2.56
Positive: unambiguously positive			-0.79	0.22	-0.15 ^{***}	-3.63
Positive: lack of positive characteristics			1.52	0.25	0.26 ^{***}	6.13
Positive: lack of discussion on Roma			0.15	0.48	0.02	0.76
Positive: negative statement			1.27	0.54	0.10 [*]	2.34

Note. Predictors were entered into the model based on their zero-order correlation with the outcome variable. Gender was coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. Education was coded as 1 = primary level of education, 2 = vocational school degree, 3 = graduated from high school, and 4 = had higher education degree.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

In the third step, the model was significant, $F(14, 490) = 9.66$, $p < .001$, $F_{\text{change}}(5, 490) = 11.48$, $p < .001$, and the explained variance again nearly doubled to 21.6% ($R^2_{\text{change}} = 9.2\%$). In this case, the significant predictors were age, level of education, "lack of positive statement," "lack of negative statement," animalistic dehumanization, stereotype: aggression, socioeconomic threat, "Roma not discussed," humanization, unambiguously positive, and family orientation.

4 | DISCUSSION

In the present study, we aimed to identify the specific types of negative and positive sentiments about Roma people that Hungarians encounter in their home environment in a representative sample of Hungarians. The present mixed-method examination contributes a deeper understanding of the different aspects of Hungarians' views of the Roma people, which can inform approaches that aim to reduce anti-Roma prejudice and hostility. Among the negative statements, specific negative stereotypes were by far the most common, with 76% of people reporting negative stereotypes in their most commonly heard statements about the Roma. Additionally, almost 27% of the Hungarians mentioned hearing certain forms of threat, and nearly 16% reported exposure to blatantly dehumanizing statements about the Roma. Even among the positive statements, 20.6% of the respondents

reported hearing nothing positive. Responses to the outcome measures reflected the vehemence and negativity of the family sentiments. Consistent with previous studies (Balassa, 2006; Bernát et al., 2013; Erős, 2005, 2007; Murányi, 2006; Pataki, 1997; Political Capital, 2008; Váradi, 2014), Hungarians reported high levels of anti-Roma prejudice in the forms of social distance and modern racism. However, the primary goal of the present study was not just to enumerate the specific perceptions held about the Roma and examine mean levels of prejudice, but also to compare the two—to determine which normative statements were most strongly associated with racism and prejudice above and beyond demographic variables.⁷

Although the vast majority of respondents reported commonly hearing some kind of stereotype in their family environment, exposure to specific negative stereotypes was generally a poor predictor of the outcome measures. Instead, social distance was most strongly predicted (negatively) by exposure to unambiguously positive statements about the Roma, and (positively) by what people reported *not* hearing:

⁷Demographic variables were weak predictors of social distance or modern racism explaining only 1% of the variance of the social distance (lower level of education) score and 2.5% of the modern racism scores (lower education and lower age) indicating that these prejudice measures were very weakly related to these prejudice measures. Gender was not a significant predictor of the outcome measures in the final models.

TABLE 5 Regression analysis of modern racism

	R ²	R ² change	B	SE	β	t
Step 1						
Constant	0.058		25.70	1.89		13.58
Age			-0.06	0.02	-0.14**	-3.14
Gender			0.76	0.64	0.05	1.18
Education			-0.75	0.21	-0.16**	-3.56
Place of residence			0.47	0.30	0.07	1.59
Step 2						
Constant	0.129	0.071	25.01	1.87		13.36
Age			-0.05	0.02	-0.12**	-2.72
Gender			0.49	0.63	0.03	0.78
Education			-0.74	0.21	-0.15**	-3.57
Place of residence			0.46	0.29	0.07	1.58
Negative: stereotype criminality			0.68	0.73	0.04	0.93
Negative: stereotype aggression			2.63	1.02	0.11**	2.57
Negative: threat socioeconomic			2.36	0.88	0.12**	2.69
Negative: dehumanization animal			4.41	1.52	0.12**	2.90
Negative: lack of neg. statement			-2.50	0.93	-0.12**	-2.69
Step 3						
Constant	0.217	0.088	24.39	1.79		13.61
Age			-0.04	0.02	-0.09*	-2.23
Gender			0.66	0.60	0.05	1.10
Education			-0.60	0.20	-0.13**	-3.04
Place of residence			0.36	0.28	0.05	1.30
Negative: stereotype criminality			0.44	0.69	0.03	0.64
Negative: stereotype aggression			2.59	0.98	0.11**	2.64
Negative: threat socioeconomic			2.30	0.84	0.11**	2.75
Negative: dehumanization animal			4.60	1.45	0.13**	3.21
Negative: lack of neg. statement			-3.04	1.03	-0.15**	-2.95
Positive: unambiguously positive			-1.82	0.78	-0.10*	-2.34
Positive: family orientation			-3.39	1.09	-0.13**	3.13
Positive: positive humanization			-5.88	1.57	-0.15***	-2.27
Positive: lack of pos. character			-3.74	1.09	0.18***	-3.12
Positive: lack of discussion			0.17	1.72	0.01	0.98

Note. Predictors were entered into the model based on their zero-order correlation with the outcome variable. Gender was coded as 1 = male, 2 = female. Education was coded as 1 = primary level of education, 2 = vocational school degree, 3 = graduated from high school, and 4 = had higher education degree. Place of residence was coded as 1 = capital city, 2 = county capitals, 3 = towns, and 4 = villages.
p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

the Roma not being a subject of discussion, and nothing reported for positive statements about the Roma. Modern racism was also predicted (negatively) by unambiguously positive statements, and negatively by the irrelevance of the Roma to the family and the absence of positive statements, but also by more active perceptions, most notably by the (negative) dehumanizing perceptions of the Roma and (positive) humanizing perceptions of the Roma. This latter finding is consistent with reports of high levels of blatant dehumanization obtained in survey research (Kteily et al., 2015).

The period of time between 2005 and 2015 was marked as the “Decade of Roma Inclusion” in Europe, which was accompanied by information campaigns aimed at fostering positive perceptions of the Roma. But given the array of negative views, which perceptions about the Roma should be targeted by these interventions? These results highlight at least two important conclusions that are relevant to interventions aimed at decreasing anti-Roma hostility. First, since anti-Roma racism appears to be driven strongly by a complete lack of positive associations with the Roma—an inability to report even a single positive thing said about the Roma—it may be particularly helpful to build a set

of positive Roma perceptions or even stereotypes. The most common positive perceptions of the Roma revolved around their strong family values, so media information campaigns and depictions of the Roma in popular media (e.g., soap operas) may want to build awareness about this aspect of Roma society. In fact, shifting people from referencing nothing positive about the Roma to focusing on the family values in Roma communities may have a particularly strong effect, since Modern Racism was positively correlated with “nothing positive to say” and negatively correlated with mentioning “Roma family values.” However, it is important to be cautious regarding the seemingly positive stereotypes, as prior research indicates that heavily stereotyped perceptions, even if they are positive (e.g., good musicians, colorful dress; see Kende et al., 2017) may also serve as a tool to exclude the Roma from the national in-group.

A second aspect of the results relevant to de-biasing efforts lays in the importance of dehumanization relative to negative specific stereotypes. Although dehumanization and humanization expressions were reported by a minority of participants, they both emerged as significant, independent predictors of Modern Racism. Blatant dehumanization is a

strong and pernicious perception that can remove the dehumanized from moral consideration (Bandura, 1999; Bar-Tal, 2000; Kelman, 1973), and license aggression and harm (Bandura, 1999; Kteily & Bruneau, 2017). Blatant dehumanization has also recently been shown to predict particularly harsh forms of intergroup aggression (e.g., support for torture among Americans and the British), unwillingness to provide aid to the most needy (e.g., donations to Muslim civilian victims of drone strikes among Americans), and public policy decisions hostile to marginalized groups (e.g., Hungarians toward the Roma; Kteily et al., 2015). De-biasing efforts may therefore also benefit from targeting dehumanization of the Roma. For example, recent evidence suggests that dehumanization is associated both with “meta-dehumanization” (how dehumanized people perceive their group to be by the target group), including among Hungarians regarding the Roma (Kteily, Hodson, & Bruneau, 2016), and by simple versus complex categorization of the target group (Prati, Crisp, Meleady, & Rubini, 2016). Therefore, interventions that highlight Roma respect for majority culture (i.e., decreasing meta-dehumanization), or that provide complex categorizations of the Roma may be particularly successful at challenging the specific dehumanizing perceptions about the Roma that drive racism.

The results reported here also support direct intervention efforts. For example, in Hungary a recent study demonstrated that a “Living Library” prejudice reduction intervention—in which high school students as “Readers” have engaging contact with living “Books” who are trained volunteers from the Roma communities—resulted in reduced social distance and lower levels of modern racism (Orosz et al., 2016). Although the Living Libraries program provides a model for continued intervention, informal exit surveys with the “Readers” and “Books” suggest that the program could be enhanced with more information about the target audience. In particular, students after the interventions frequently asked how they can confront racist statements by others. The current study suggests that supporting a positive Roma stereotype and challenging the perception of Roma dehumanization (for example, by citing how “civilized” the Roma are with respect to hospitality) could be particularly important content to provide.

This study is not without limitations. First, the participant pool was limited to Hungarians who use the Internet at least once a week. Second, prejudice toward Roma people was only assessed using self-report measures in a cross-sectional design; therefore no causal relationships can be drawn between the statements and social distance or modern racism. Our work provides deep insights into views of the Roma that pervade Hungarian society—but given that the present study only assessed views of the Roma in Hungary, and not in relation to other groups in Hungary, this study cannot speak to the uniqueness of anti-Roma sentiment in the Hungarian context (Ljujic et al., 2012; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, & Cassidy, 2017). Future work should determine how well anti-Roma perceptions predict actual behavior. Third, there is a concern that people might self-censor responses about marginalized groups. However, given how negative the prevailing norms against the Roma are in Hungary, and that participants in the current study reported what they hear during family discussions (rather than what they believed), we suspect that respondents were not inhibited in reporting witnessed prejudice. Finally, it should also be noted that the

current research was conducted during a period when there was no salient negative or positive news about Roma people—future work could examine the impact of spikes in violence perpetrated by or against the Roma in response to news coverage.

5 | CONCLUSION

The present study illuminates the most common negative and positive expressions about the Roma, and then specifies which of these sentiments are most strongly associated with explicit measures of prejudice. Specific negative stereotypes about Roma people expressed by family members were highly prevalent, but were not the most predictive of own anti-Roma prejudice. However, the lack of positive statements, and the presence of unambiguous positive expressions and humanizing/dehumanizing statements about Roma people predicted outcomes more strongly than stereotypes. It is our hope that these results can aid the construction or honing of specific interventions aimed at decreasing anti-Roma sentiments.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research was supported by the Hungarian National Research, Development and Innovation Office (Grant Numbers: PD116686, FK124225) and the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Lendület Project LP2012-36) and ÚNKP-16-3 and ÚNKP-17-3 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry of Human Capacities.

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How to cite this article: Orosz G, Bruneau E, Tropp LR, Sebestyén N, Tóth-Király I, Böthe B. What predicts anti-Roma prejudice? Qualitative and quantitative analysis of everyday sentiments about the Roma. *J Appl Soc Psychol*. 2018;48:317–328. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12513>