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# Victims or perpetrators? Explaining media framing of Roma across Europe

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## Abstract

Discrimination against Roma is a reality across Europe. The extent to which stereotyped, discriminatory beliefs of this minority group are reflected or reinforced by news media has received only limited attention. This study investigates media framing of Roma and explains variation in how European news media frame Roma in diagnostic and prognostic terms. We content analysed 825 news articles from newspapers in the Netherlands, Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom for the period 2010–2012. Results show that attention for Roma is clustered around key-events and differs considerably between countries. Our analyses of frame variation, based on multilevel modelling, indicate a duality in the use of frames, with Roma being both portrayed as victims and perpetrators. Variation in these portrayals could be ascribed mainly to sources and newspaper types. This study contributes to our understanding of the factors that account for problem-emphasizing portrayals of Roma in European countries.

## Keywords

Content analysis, cross-country comparison, issue-specific framing, multilevel modelling, Roma

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The persistent discrimination of Roma minorities<sup>1</sup> across Europe has, in recent years, prompted the issue on top of the European Union's (EU) agenda. Recent incidents, ranging from forced evictions in the United Kingdom and France to anti-Roma demonstrations in the Czech Republic, caused diverse international actors to repeatedly stress the issue's urgency (Stewart, 2012). Because Roma make up Europe's largest minority group, Western and Eastern European countries face a collective challenge in stemming the tide of their rising social and economic exclusion. In the past decades, several European countries have attempted to improve Roma's social position (Sigona and Trehan, 2009). However, recent reports indicate that both West and East European countries keep failing to improve the situation (Amnesty International, 2014: 30).

To explain public attitudes and beliefs towards minorities, news coverage is argued to matter (e.g. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; Vergeer et al., 2000). How news media evaluate immigrants and minorities influences people's willingness to categorize others (Boomgaarden, 2007) and may contribute to the reproduction of prejudice and racism and the maintenance of ethnic dominance and inequality in society (Richardson, 2014). Specifically, the more negatively news outlets cover minorities, the more problematic people perceive these groups (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009). Such assertions signal the importance of news representations for our understanding of how Roma are seen within European public debates. Yet, although minorities in media content, in general, have received ample scholarly attention (e.g. Van Dijk, 2000), very little is known about the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of news coverage of Roma, in particular, in a cross-national perspective, taking into consideration both Eastern and Western European countries. This study asks how Roma are framed in the news across European countries and how potential differences in such frame representation can be accounted for.

The significance of integration and inclusion issues of Roma beyond individual domestic political and social realms makes the topic interesting to investigate in a cross-country comparative approach. Previous comparative media framing studies mainly focused on news coverage of a single domestic event in different countries or political systems (e.g. Snow et al., 2007). The case studied here is unique in that integration issues of Roma are of perceived relevance in both West and Central–Eastern Europe. Therefore, possible confounding news factors such as the geographical proximity of the news issue (Harcup and O'Neill, 2001) are avoided. Moreover, in considering the influence of additional intra- and extra-media level variables, we acknowledge the larger structures wherein news coverage is shaped (Reese, 2001) and extend our knowledge of the factors that account for frame variation in a comparative context (Scheufele, 1999).

This study draws upon a content analysis of both popular and quality newspapers in two Central–Eastern (the Czech Republic and Slovakia) and three Western (Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) European countries in the time period 2010–2012. We draw on an issue-specific approach to framing theory to offer a detailed insight into both the prominence and valence of news coverage about Roma. Building on the knowledge that media representations of minorities are not stable, but vary across time and space (e.g. Lubbers et al., 1998), we trace the influence of content-specific, temporal and country-level factors. We argue that such an approach might be most informative to establish factors underlying news representations of Roma.

## Framing of Roma

To investigate how Roma are represented in news media, we build on framing theory. Framing refers to interpretive processes that render events and occurrences subjectively meaningful. Entman (1993) defines framing as '[selecting] some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation' (p. 55). Central to this definition is the articulation of diagnoses (problem definitions) and prognoses (solution definitions). Recognized by Benford and Snow (2000) as 'core framing tasks', previous studies adapted a diagnostic and prognostic approach to framing to trace variation in problem and solution attributions of several topics across various media contexts (e.g. Vliegthart and Roggeband, 2007).

In this study, we look at how different actors shape news coverage by highlighting certain problem and solution definitions in news coverage of Roma, while neglecting others. Precisely, we trace variation in three different clusters of diagnostic and prognostic frame elements as dependent variables. First, as an indication of the perceived level of problems associated with Roma, we look at variation in diagnostic framing, relative to prognostic framing. This is in line with previous research investigating framing of current political issues (Snow et al., 2007). Second, we are interested in the question under which circumstances diagnoses are attributed to the actions and behaviours of Roma (perpetrator framing), compared to when they are seen as the victims of their hostile environment (victim framing). Last, we look at variation in sets of prognostic frame elements. Here, we compare conflicting solutions within public debates about Roma. We contrast inclusion frames that emphasize the need of long-term integration and self-empowerment with exclusion or legal frames, characterized by short-term solutions, such as strengthening legal approaches or deportation of Roma minorities. Based on the knowledge that news coverage is affected by a hierarchy of influences (Reese, 2001), we trace the effect of variables located at different intra- and extra-media levels on these framing processes. In the following, these levels will be discussed.

## Intra- and extra-media influences on the framing of Roma

### *Source characteristics*

First, we look at how sources in the news shape frames of the Roma issue. We specifically focus on the extreme right and Roma themselves since these two groups of actors play an important role in the public debate about Roma communities. The extreme right, by focusing on an active construction of meanings about Roma in their discourse (Kluknavská, 2014), might affect both political and public debates about these communities. Extreme right movements and parties share a distinct hostility towards various outgroups by offering a clear populist identification between 'us' and 'them', translating this into a more extreme form of friend-enemy dichotomy (Caiani and Parenti, 2013). Among various actors with negative attitudes towards Roma minorities, the extreme right tend to be the most severe in both the rhetoric and action (Mudde, 2007). In contrast, Roma people, deprived of the means of positive identification due to negative stereotypes, tend to internalize negative images perpetuated in general society. When Roma try to reverse

this process of negative self-identification (Csepele and Simon, 2007), they may present themselves in the public debate as being victims blamed for the wrongdoings in society. For these reasons, we hypothesize that extreme right groups will more likely be associated with perpetrator frames and Roma will more likely relate to victim frames (H1).

### *Temporal characteristics*

Second, we consider the influence of temporal factors on frame variation. Specifically, we focus on two real-world key-events that occurred in our research period. First, in July and August 2010, France decided to repatriate thousands of Roma. The political debate leading to the expulsion of Roma to Romania and Bulgaria was dominated by highly negative attributions towards Roma. Second, during the months before and after the turn of the year 2012, a clearance order was executed at the large illegal encampment 'Dale Farm' in the United Kingdom. Nearly simultaneously (but unrelated), numerous anti-Roma protests took place throughout the Czech Republic. Also here, negative attributions towards Roma were salient. The decision of local authorities in the United Kingdom to execute a clearance order at Dale Farm was based on the argument that 'Travellers breached planning laws' (Basildon Council, 2014). In the Czech Republic, anti-Roma demonstrations were driven by the allegations that Roma are deteriorating the security situation due to their aggressiveness (Kluknavská and Zagibová, 2013). Perpetrator framing is expected to be more salient during these periods. Hence, we hypothesize that the likelihood of perpetrator frames will increase when the French repatriation (H2a) and the Dale Farm evictions/anti-Roma demonstrations (H2b) are more proximate in time.

### *Newspaper characteristics*

Third, we trace the influence of newspaper characteristics. Here, we compare tabloid and broadsheet newspapers. In his critical analysis of British news coverage of immigration, Van Dijk (2000) points to the negative language tabloids use to portray ethnic minorities. In line with this, KhosraviNik (2010) concludes that tabloids reproduce existing prejudices of out-groups. This negativity and problematization is more easily connected to diagnostic framing elements since these focus on problems specifically. Additionally, perpetrator frames resonate better with the portrayal of ethnic minorities as 'troublemakers'. Concretely, we expect that tabloid newspapers will be more inclined to frame Roma issues in terms of diagnoses (vs prognosis) (H3a), and rely mainly on perpetrator frames (vs victim frames) (H3b) compared to broadsheet newspapers.

### *Country characteristics*

On the contextual country level, we distinguish two variables. First, we look at the difference between the selected West and Central–Eastern European countries. In West European countries, stereotypes and negative images characterize Roma news coverage (e.g. Campbell and Clark, 2010; Richardson, 2006). The UK newspapers have been shown to portray Roma in a negative manner, emphasizing their otherness by, for example, frequently referring to criminal behaviours (Richardson, 2006). How the news media

in Germany and the Netherlands – that two other cases we consider – cover the issue is unclear.

In the two selected Central–Eastern European countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Roma are generally presented in a stereotypical and negative way, however, often with offering a positive, although sometimes stereotypical alternative (e.g. Kusá, 2001). Roma communities tend to be generalized and silenced in news coverage and usually referred to in collective terms (Nekvapil and Leudar, 2003) and in connection to criminality and violence with an emphasis on their ethnicity (Cangár, 2008), presenting Roma as a cause of social unrest (Nekvapil and Leudar, 2003). Based on these results, it seems in both the West and Central–Eastern European countries under study, news coverage of Roma is dominated by negative portrayals. We, therefore, *cautiously* expect no difference between both the here studied West and Central–Eastern European countries regarding the use of perpetrator framing (vs victim framing) (H4).

Second, we look at the ethnic diversity of the countries under study. Here, our expectations are rather straightforward. We expect that ethnically diverse countries focus less on Roma problems, either because issues related to other minorities might be more pressing or because those countries tend to be more tolerant due to a longer history of multi-ethnic reality. There is indeed some evidence that increasing ethnic diversity leads to more tolerance (Togeby, 1998). Moreover, media attention for different ethnic minorities differs significantly in highly diverse countries like the United States, with some groups oppressing attention of others (Poindexter et al., 2003). In more diverse countries, attention for problems related to Roma minorities is therefore likely being averted to other minorities. Hence, we hypothesize that countries that are more ethnically diverse will be less inclined to diagnostic (vs prognostic) framing (H5).

## Methods

### Sample

The data are derived from a content analysis of 825 articles on Roma that appeared in 15 newspapers in the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Slovakia and the Czech Republic in the time span 2010–2012. We selected those countries because we aimed at a West–East comparison of European countries and because we were constrained by our language repertoire of English, Dutch, German, Slovak and Czech. We selected both tabloid and quality newspapers, with the aim to compare these newspaper types. Specifically, we selected per country one tabloid and two quality newspaper titles that are national at scope and balanced on their political leaning, have among the highest circulation and were available in LexisNexis or Media Monitoring Database (see Table 1).

We searched the newspapers with the words Roma, Gypsies, Travellers or Sinti ( $n = 7909$ ). From this sample, we selected only articles in which the main focus was on topics related to Roma ( $n = 3310$ ). These articles primarily dealt with Roma-related topics in the first paragraph(s). Articles in which Roma were only mentioned ( $n = 4599$ ) were excluded from analysis. Second, the sample of articles that primarily reports about Roma was divided into two categories. We distinguish hard news articles ( $n = 2502$ ), dealing with news about current affairs and soft news articles ( $n = 808$ ), encompassing

**Table 1.** Newspaper and country characteristics.

Newspaper characteristics		Country characteristics			
Newspaper titles	Tabloid	Year	Population (millions)	Left–right position of governmental parties	Average estimate of Roma as percentage of total population <sup>a</sup>
<i>The Netherlands</i>					
<i>de Volkskrant</i>		2010	16.6	<b>CDA (6.29)</b> ; VVD (7.86); D66 (5) <sup>b</sup>	
<i>De Telegraaf</i>	x	2011	16.7	<b>VVD (7.86)</b> ; CDA (6.29) <sup>c</sup>	
<i>NRC Handelsblad</i>		2012	16.7	<b>VVD (7.86)</b> ; PvdA (3.86)	0.24
<i>Germany</i>					
<i>Die Tageszeitung</i>		2010	81.6	<b>CDU (6.13)</b> ; CSU (7.07); FDP (6.6)	
<i>Die Welt</i>		2011	81.8	<b>CDU (6.13)</b> ; CSU (7.07); FDP (6.6)	
<i>Frankfurter Rundschau</i>		2012	81.8	<b>CDU (6.13)</b> ; CSU (7.07); FDP (6.6)	0.13
<i>United Kingdom</i>					
<i>The Sun</i>	x	2010	62.6	<b>Labour party (4)<sup>d</sup></b>	
<i>The Daily Telegraph</i>		2011	62.7	<b>Conservative party (7.13)</b> ; liberal democrats (5)	
<i>The Guardian</i>		2012	63.2	<b>Conservative party (7.13)</b> ; liberal democrats (5)	0.36
<i>Slovakia</i>					
<i>SME</i>		2010	5.4	<b>Smer-SD (3.36)</b> ; SNS (7.85); L'S-HZDS (5) <sup>e</sup>	
<i>Pravda</i>		2011	5.4	<b>SDKÚ-DS (6.64)</b> ; SAS (6.79); KDH (6.83); Most-Híd (6.08) <sup>f</sup>	
<i>Nový Čas</i>	x	2012	5.4	<b>SMER-SD (3.36)</b>	9.02
<i>The Czech Republic</i>					
<i>MF Dnes</i>		2010	10.5	<b>ODS (7.74)</b> ; TOP09 (7.89); VV (5.89) <sup>g</sup>	
<i>Právo</i>		2011	10.5	<b>ODS (7.74)</b> ; TOP09 (7.89); VV (5.89) <sup>g</sup>	
<i>Blesk</i>	x	2012	10.5	<b>ODS (7.74)</b> ; TOP09 (7.89); VV (5.89) <sup>g</sup>	1.90

Political parties in bold delivered the prime minister. Values between parentheses indicate the left–right position of the political party in terms of its overall ideological stance, calculated based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey of 2010 (0 = extremely left, 10 = extremely right).

<sup>a</sup>Data are from 2012 and derived from the European Union. Variation per year is not available.

<sup>b</sup>Until October, 2010.

<sup>c</sup>Until April, 2012.

<sup>d</sup>Until May, 2010.

<sup>e</sup>Until June, 2010.

<sup>f</sup>Until March, 2012.

<sup>g</sup>Starting in July 2010.

news about Roma culture and history. For the framing analysis, a random sample of hard news articles mainly devoted to Roma was selected ( $n = 825$ ).<sup>2</sup>

### *Measurement instrument and coding procedure*

We developed our measurement instrument during a qualitative inductive pre-study on a sample of 100 news articles across all newspapers.<sup>3</sup> First, we analysed this sample of articles to identify the main diagnostic (what is the problem?) and prognostic (how should the problem be solved?) frames. Frame categories were refined through group discussions and repeated pre-testing on another set of articles. After establishing the final coding scheme, three coding assistants were extensively trained. Intercoder reliability yielded good results (Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  reported below). Each article can contain multiple diagnostic and prognostic framing elements.

### *Frames*

The following six diagnostic framing elements were distinguished, the first three attributing the cause of problems to Roma, the latter three emphasizing the victimized position of Roma ( $n = 1860$ ,  $\alpha = .94$ ):

*Criminality.* Problems are an outgrowth of criminal behaviour of Roma communities' members.

*Exploiters.* Roma live at the expense of society, take advantage of social welfare arrangements or perceive preferential treatment from the authorities.

*Problematic behaviour.* Cultural otherness and different moral or social code, hygiene standards and life priorities cause Roma to not follow the rules of society.

*Failure of authorities.* Inaccurate policies and unfair laws aimed at Roma, impairment of human rights, insufficient integration and unjust decisions (e.g. deportations) undertaken by authorities.

*Social status.* Problems are attributed to low literacy, education or conditions of housing and settlements.

*Discrimination.* Discrimination, stereotyping or hostility directed at Roma, leading to inequality and stereotyping, is perceived troublesome (see Table 4).

We identified six major prognostic frames, the first two emphasizing long-term social and economic inclusion and the second encompassing frames highlighting exclusion and legal solutions, achievable on the short term ( $n = 1093$ ,  $\alpha = .91$ ):

*Improvement of the social status.* Effective Roma projects or intentions aimed at better integration and the social status, countering social exclusion.

*Empowerment.* Cultural understanding, changing public perceptions about Roma, countering stereotypes and racism, self-empowerment and emancipation are needed.



*Law and order.* Changes in laws or policies, equal application of laws and more strict surveillance and supervision by authorities are proposed.

*Legal solutions.* Legal remedies for problems (legal proceedings, sentencing, legal verdicts and actions).

*Deportation and eviction.* The solutions are seen in relocation of Roma to different places or countries, demolition of their settlements or limitation of immigration.

*Anti-integration efforts.* Roma should be segregated from society or should adapt their lifestyle to the majority population (see Table 5). For an overview of the operationalization of our measures, see Table 2.

## Analysis

Our hypotheses are located at different levels of analysis. On the lowest level, we position our hypotheses about the influence of sources (H1). On the second level, we trace the effect of key-events (H2ab). Last, on the highest level, we have newspapers (that also capture countries). Both our expectations about the influence of newspaper (H3ab) and country-level variables (H4, H5) can be positioned here.

In line with this structure, we aggregated our data to monthly level observations for all sources for each newspaper. We chose the monthly level, since it limits the number of missing values that appeared on the weekly level but can still account for short-term variations. Our aggregated levels are hierarchically nested. On the lowest level, we position sources, which are clustered in different time periods, located at the second level. Due to our small number of countries and because variation in the newspaper level also captures country-level differences, we position the combined newspaper and country level on the highest level of analysis. To control for the dependency between these levels, we conducted mixed linear regression models with random intercepts.

## Results

Before proceeding to our analyses attempting to explain frame variation, we first discuss our results regarding attention for Roma in different countries and elaborate on the descriptive framing results.

As shown in Table 3, issue salience differs strongly between countries. Our results show that total issue salience, encompassing articles in which Roma prominently feature as well as articles in which they are only briefly mentioned, is highest in the United Kingdom ( $n = 2287$ ). This contrasts sharply with the limited attention in the Netherlands ( $n = 301$ ). A slightly different picture arises when focusing only on articles that primarily deal with Roma minorities. Compared to the other countries, attention for both hard main news ( $n = 915$ ) and soft main news ( $n = 333$ ) is highest in Slovakia and lowest in the Netherlands ( $n = 11$  and  $n = 12$ , respectively).

In line with expectations, attention in hard news articles is clustered around several key-events (see Figure 1). In the period around July 2010, there was extensive coverage on France's repatriation. Around the turn of the year 2012, attention peaks again, caused

**Table 2.** Measures.

Dependent variables	
<i>Diagnostic (vs prognostic) framing</i>	The percentage of diagnostic framing elements relative to all framing elements was calculated (see Note 3).
<i>Perpetrator (vs victim) diagnostic framing</i>	Diagnostic framing elements are divided into two categories: one encompassing frames that problematize the behaviours of Roma and the other including frames that highlight their troublesome position within society (see Table 4). The percentage difference between both categories is calculated.
<i>Inclusion (vs exclusion and legal) prognostic framing</i>	Prognostic framing elements are divided into two categories: one encompassing prognostic frames that emphasize the long-term social and economic inclusion of Roma and the other including prognostic exclusion and legal frames that emphasize short-term solutions (see Table 5). The percentage difference between both categories is calculated.
Independent variables	
<i>Source characteristics</i>	A source was coded for each framing element. For analysis, sources were clustered into seven categories: media, politics, extreme right politics, law enforcers, authorities, Roma and society ( $\alpha = .88$ ).
<i>Temporal characteristics</i>	<i>Proximity to the French repatriation.</i> A variable is created that indicates the month number, starting with '1' for the first month of the research period and ascending till July 2010 and descending after August 2010. <i>Proximity to the Dale Farm and anti-Roma demonstrations.</i> A variable is created that indicates the month number, starting with '1' for the first month of the research period and ascending till October 2011 and descending after January 2012.
<i>Newspaper characteristics</i>	<i>Tabloid newspapers.</i> A dummy variable is computed, having a value of '1' for tabloid newspapers and a '0' for otherwise (see Table 1).
<i>Country characteristics</i>	<i>East (vs West) European countries.</i> We created a dummy variable with the value '1' for the Czech Republic and Slovakia and the value '0' for the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. <i>Ethnic diversity.</i> We calculated the percentage of foreigners of the total population in the countries of study. <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Derived from Eurostat.

by the clearance of the encampment on Dale Farm (United Kingdom) and the almost simultaneous anti-Roma demonstrations in the Czech Republic.

Although Roma feature more often in hard news articles, a considerable amount of articles mainly dedicated to this minority group focus on historic and cultural topics (24.41% of all news articles mainly about Roma). This applies especially to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, where, respectively, 52.17% ( $n = 12$ ) and 41.52%

**Table 3.** Issue salience across countries.

	Hard news		Soft news (history and culture)		Articles in which Roma are briefly mentioned		Total issue salience	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	2502	100	808	100	4599	100	7909	100
The Netherlands	11	0.44	12	1.49	278	6.05	301	3.81
Germany	447	17.87	141	17.45	1124	24.44	1712	21.65
United Kingdom	300	11.99	213	26.36	1774	38.57	2287	28.92
Slovakia	915	36.57	333	41.21	898	19.53	2146	27.13
Czech Republic	829	33.13	109	13.49	525	11.42	1463	18.50

Hard news and soft news encompass articles that are mainly about Roma. Total issue salience encompasses both articles that are primarily about Roma and news articles that mention Roma, but are not primarily about them.

**Table 4.** Diagnostic frames.

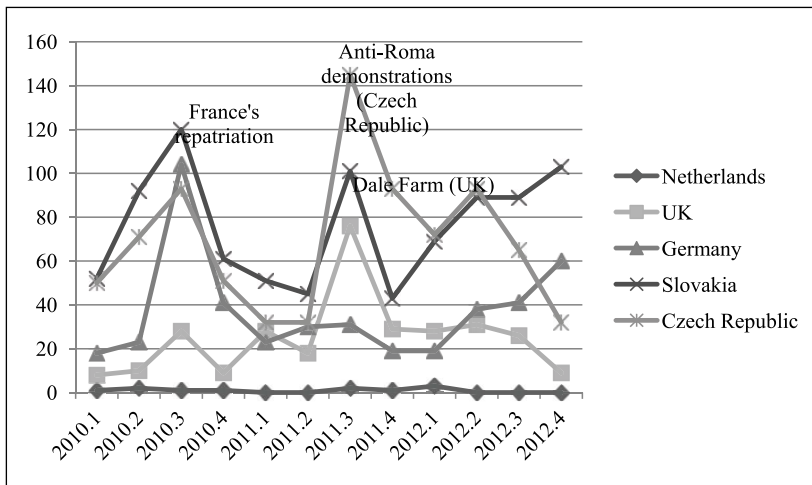
	Perpetrator frames						Victim frames						Total	
	Criminality		Exploiters		Problematic behaviour		Failure of authorities		Social status		Discrimination		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Total	463	24.89	90	4.84	264	14.19	349	18.76	252	13.55	442	23.76	1860	100
The Netherlands	6	22.22	1	3.70	8	29.63	5	18.52	2	7.41	5	18.52	27	1.45
Germany	47	11.08	8	1.89	32	7.55	134	31.60	80	18.87	123	29.01	424	22.80
United Kingdom	106	33.02	37	11.53	63	19.63	48	14.95	15	4.67	52	16.20	321	17.26
Slovakia	120	20.87	20	3.48	83	14.43	105	18.26	106	18.43	141	24.52	575	30.91
Czech Republic	184	35.87	24	4.68	78	15.20	57	11.11	49	9.55	121	23.59	513	27.58

( $n = 213$ ) of all main news articles in those countries focus on soft topics. Figure 2 displays that attention for soft news topic peaks in 2010 in the United Kingdom. This can be explained by the extensive coverage on the TV-program 'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding'.

We turn to the absolute prominence of different diagnostic framing elements. As shown in Table 4, overall the criminality frame (24.89%) and the discrimination frame (23.76%) are most prominent. The criminality frame is especially salient in the United Kingdom (33.02%) and the Czech Republic (35.87%). The discrimination frame received most attention in Germany (29.1%), followed by Slovakia (24.52%) and the Czech Republic (23.59%). In addition, there is on average considerable attention for the problematic behaviour of Roma (14.19%), failure of authorities (18.76%) and the social status of this minority group (13.55%).

**Table 5.** Prognostic frames.

	Inclusion frames				Exclusion and legal frames						Total			
	Improvement social status		Empowerment		Law and order		Legal solutions		Deportation and eviction		Anti-integration efforts		N	%
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Total	121	11.07	101	9.24	337	30.83	210	19.21	270	24.70	54	4.94	1093	100
The Netherlands							3	30	6	60	1	10	10	0.91
Germany	42	13.95	43	14.29	70	23.26	42	13.95	99	32.89	5	1.66	301	27.54
United Kingdom	7	4.32	14	8.64	23	14.20	61	37.65	57	35.19			162	14.82
Slovakia	46	14.02	29	8.84	126	38.41	28	8.54	68	20.73	31	9.45	328	30.01
Czech Republic	26	8.90	15	5.14	118	40.41	76	26.03	40	13.70	17	5.82	292	26.72



**Figure 1.** Issue attention for Roma in hard news articles.

Table 5 displays prognostic framing across countries. The law and order frame is the most prominent on average (30.83%), followed by the deportation frame (24.70%), the legal solution frame (19.21%) and improvement in social status frame (11.07%). The empowerment frame (9.24%) and adaption frame (4.94%) are least prominent. Again, between-country frame variation is evident. Most noticeable is that in absolute terms, the adaption frame is more prominent in Eastern compared to Western countries.

This brings us to the models explaining frame variation. Table 6 displays the explanatory models for our three dependent variables: diagnostic framing (Model 1), perpetrator (vs victim) framing (Model 2) and inclusion (vs exclusion and legal solution) framing (Model 3). The interclass correlation coefficients (ICCs) on the highest (newspaper)

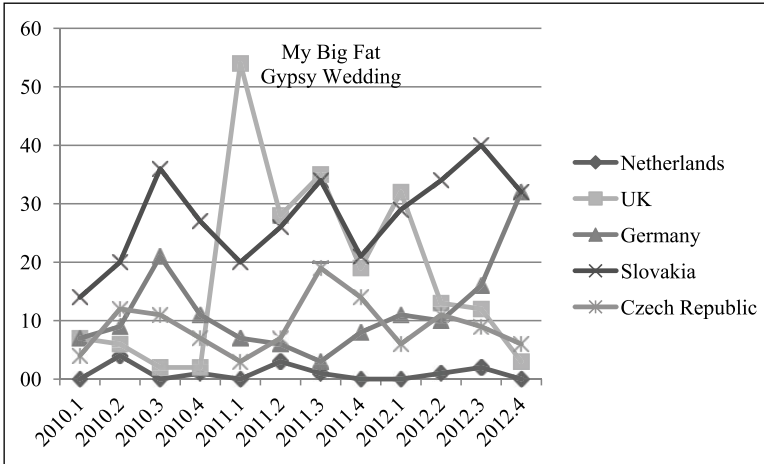


Figure 2. Issue attention for Roma in soft news articles.

level vary between .04 and .14, indicating that roughly between 4% and 14% of the variation can be explained on this level. Notice that on the second (months) level, the ICCs differ considerably per model: while only 0.3% in Model 1 (diagnostic framing) and 7% in Model 2 (perpetrator framing) of the explained variance can be attributed to this level, the structuring accounts for 17% of the variance in Model 3 (inclusion). Moving to the random part of the model, we find that intercepts on both the newspaper and monthly levels in our models are significant in almost all cases, meaning that overall between newspapers and time periods, there is variation in the types of frames used.

We now address our hypotheses. In relation to H1, and not surprisingly, Model 2 shows extreme politics to have a strong tendency to address Roma issues in terms of perpetrator framing. Keeping all other factors constant, extreme rights statements are 47.23 percentage points more often using perpetrator frames compared to other sources. Contrary and as expected, Roma actors are more inclined to victim framing, a perspective that is also advocated by public authorities. Frame variation can also be explained with other actor categories. For example, and unexpected, when law enforcers are quoted in the news, the likelihood that perpetrator frames are used increases with 16.45%.

We now move to level 2 (months) to assess our expectations about temporal influences. Model 2 displays that while the period covering the Dale Farm evictions and anti-Roma demonstrations significantly increased perpetrator framing, this is not the case for the French repatriation. Herewith, we find support for H2b but not for H2a. Additionally, we find that during the French repatriation, the chance decreased that inclusion frames were mentioned.

This brings us to the highest (newspaper) level. Here, we positioned our hypotheses about newspaper characteristics. As expected, tabloid newspapers rely more on perpetrator framing (Model 2) compared to broadsheet newspapers. However, we did not find a significant difference when it comes to diagnostic framing (Model 1). Hence, only H3b can be confirmed.

**Table 6.** Multilevel models explaining frame variation.

	Model 1 diagnostic (vs prognostic) framing	Model 2 perpetrator (vs victim) framing	Model 3 inclusion (vs exclusion or legal solution) framing
<i>Sources (ref. = unquoted statements)</i>			
Politics	-9.362 (2.726)***	-5.395 (3.507)	11.308 (3.710)**
Extreme politics	5.479 (6.667)	47.231 (8.073)***	-13.445 (10.535)
Law enforcers	1.241 (3.946)	16.447 (5.036)**	-12.058 (6.112)*
Legal and public authorities	8.439 (3.550)*	-31.365 (4.479)***	33.390 (5.471)***
Roma	11.599 (2.856)***	-41.227 (3.543)***	29.962 (4.719)***
Society	15.244 (3.133)***	-0.483 (3.893)	1.990 (5.470)
France's repatriation	0.019 (0.137)	0.319 (0.187)	-0.657 (0.214)**
Dale Farm/anti-Roma demonstrations	-0.382 (0.212)	0.764 (0.283)***	-0.286 (0.341)
Tabloid	5.111 (2.827)	19.216 (6.094)***	-5.621 (4.306)
East European countries	-18.718 (6.130)**	-10.549 (10.123)	15.504 (10.148)
Ethnic diversity	-3.926 (1.316)**	-3.847 (2.245)	4.666 (2.124)*
Constant	74.206 (3.923)***	50.580 (6.237)***	7.061 (6.276)
Intercept level 3 (newspapers)	1.600 (2.123)	7.668 (2.313)*	9.510 (.000)*
Intercept level 2 (months)	7.114 (2.128)	12.087 (2.480)*	13.406 (2.999)*
Level 3 <i>N</i> (newspapers)	15	15	15
Level 2 <i>N</i> (months)	320	318	267
Level 1 <i>N</i> (frames and actors)	864	796	561
LL full model	-4111	-3951	-2782
LL null model	-4151	-4069	-2831
ICC level 3	.026	.138	.042
ICC level 2	.033	.070	.176

ICC: interclass correlation coefficient; LL: log-likelihood.

In the fixed part, unstandardized coefficients are reported. In the random part of the model, standard deviations are reported. Standard errors are between parentheses. Key-events and ethnic diversity are centred at its grand means.

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Last, we address our cautious expectations regarding country-level characteristics. In support of H4, we find no significant difference between West and Central–Eastern European countries in perpetrator framing (Model 2), indicating that the relative reliance on this type of framing is comparable. Also with regard to the use of inclusion frames (Model 3), we do not find a significant difference. Diagnostic framing does differ across country location, indicating that the Central–Eastern European countries under study use diagnostic frames 18.72 percentage points less often compared to the West European countries, keeping other factors constant (Model 1).

Finally, it indeed appears that ethnic diversity has a negative effect on diagnostic framing (Model 1), confirming H5. Furthermore, we found that ethnic diversity has a positive effect on the chance that inclusion frames are stated (Model 3).

## **Discussion**

This study was set out to further our understanding of intra- and extra-media factors that account for variations in the way that Roma are framed in East and West European countries. Our descriptive findings show a dichotomy, both in terms of attention for the topic and in terms of prominent frames. First, regarding issue salience, Roma feature mostly in hard news articles, but also appear often in news articles focusing on culture and history. Attention for Roma in hard news articles was clustered around several key-events that occurred in our research period. Second, in terms of dominant frames, we found that Roma are framed both as perpetrators and victims. This dual representation indicates that public concerns about the socially excluded position of Roma are salient in news coverage, but that this perspective is contradicted by a significant amount of coverage in which existing stereotypical beliefs about criminal and problematic behaviours of Roma are highlighted (e.g. Amnesty International, 2014).

Our findings based on explanatory analyses revealed significant variation in clusters of frames across intra- and extra-media level variables. First, and not surprisingly, on the level of actors, we found support for the expectation that extreme politics are the main advocates of perpetrator frames that prevail in media coverage, emphasizing the criminal and threatening behaviours of this minority group, a perspective that is highly contradicted by framing activities of Roma themselves. Given the rise of right-wing populist parties over the last decades, these findings indicate a challenge in European democracies.

Second, we found mixed support for our hypotheses about the influence of temporal factors. First, the expectation that the proximity to the Dale Farm evictions and anti-Roma demonstrations would increase the likelihood that perpetrator frames were stated was confirmed. Second, contrary to expectations, the French Repatriation did not influence the chance that perpetrator frames are stated, although issue attention peaked around this time frame. This might be explained by the fact that the topic was non-domestic in the countries under study. Since proximity to news events is an important predictor of how meaningful an event is considered (Galtung and Ruge, 1965), possibly the geographic distance rendered the event less publicly meaningful and hence less intertwined with negative societal sentiments, causing journalists to refrain from portraying Roma as perpetrators in their coverage of the event.

Third, we found partial support for our expectations about the influence of types of outlets. Tabloid newspapers tended to highlight perpetrator frames. Based on the knowledge that readers of tabloid newspapers are more prone to consider minority issues as a threat (Vergeer et al., 2000), negative beliefs about this group are particularly likely being reinforced among readers of these types of newspapers.

Fourth, moving to the influence of country-level factors, we found no significant difference in perpetrator frames across the selected Central–Eastern (i.e. Czech Republic and Slovakia) and West European countries (i.e. the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Germany). This finding is interesting, given that our sample of countries differs

significantly in terms of social and political settings and numbers of Roma living there. Hence, irrespective of the location of the here-studied countries, representations of Roma as threats to society were salient. Since media portrayals about minorities influence subsequent attitudes and beliefs towards minorities (e.g. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; Vergeer et al., 2000), this finding can be regarded worrisome.

The investigated West and Central–Eastern European countries did, however, differ in their framing in terms of diagnoses and the use of inclusion as desired solution. More precisely, the here studied West European countries were more inclined to highlight problems and stress the importance of exclusion or legal solutions in public debates about the topic. Possibly, this can be explained by the finding that the public debate about Roma was generally less extensive in the selected West compared to Central–Eastern European countries. We found much higher attention (both in number of articles and in being the main topic of the article) for the topic in hard news articles in Czech Republic and Slovakia compared to the selected countries located on the Western part of Europe. This might indicate that public debates in, especially, Czech Republic and Slovakia were elaborate, moving beyond merely emphasizing problems, but seeking for solutions and considering policies that foster inclusion of Roma in society. Journalists in the investigated West European countries could learn from such a stronger solution-oriented approach. By taking a step towards discussing solutions instead of reiterating problems, journalists can pave the way towards a more nuanced debate about Roma. Especially, the relatively strong focus of Slovak newspapers on the necessity to improve the social status of Roma could serve as an example of how journalists can contribute to a more positive debate aimed at the inclusion of Roma in society.

Last, we found that ethnic diversity of countries accounted for significant variation in the types of frames used. Prognostic and inclusion framing was significantly higher in diverse countries. Conceivably, diagnoses related to Roma are less salient in diverse countries, either because other minority groups attract media attention or because these countries are more tolerant (see Togeby, 1998).

This study has a number of shortcomings. First, the selected countries constrain the generalizability of the here reported findings. As we only included a limited amount of countries, our findings may not be representative for news in West and especially Central–Eastern Europe. However, the selected countries are not a random sample and offer on some key characteristics a good representation. Results might differ if we would take other countries into consideration, which can be addressed in future research. Second, we are able to understand part of the frame variation, but a thorough understanding would require more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the cases, focusing on more specific particularities of the context as well as the interaction between actors in the debate. Qualitative approaches could add to our systematic overview and maybe reveal more nuances. Additionally, we did not analyse the subsample of soft news articles. With this, we might have missed out on other – potentially harmful – stereotypes in alternative media coverage. Most noticeable in this regard is the rise of the British hit TV show ‘My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding’, which has been shown to contain negative and marginalized representations of Roma (Richardson and O’Neill, 2012: 180–181). Last, we did not analyse debates about Roma in online and social media environments, in which negative images of Roma might be even further reinforced (Richardson, 2014).



Moving beyond a descriptive account of Roma representations in European news coverage, this study contributes to our understanding of the circumstances under which problematic images of Roma are most likely to occur. We know that discriminatory behaviours are rooted in prejudice (Cuddy et al., 2008) and that anti-minority attitudes can be reinforced or strengthened by news coverage (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009; Vergeer et al., 2000). Indeed, since news evaluations influence how problematic people perceive minority issues (Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart, 2009), systematic associations between Roma and criminality and problematic behaviour may strengthen adverse beliefs towards this group. As such, our findings are a further step in understanding the factors that underlie and potentially reinforce adverse beliefs about Europe's largest minority group, which must be considered in today's and tomorrow's attempts to foster inclusion of Roma across Europe.

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### Notes

1. Following European Union (EU) policy documents, in this study we use the term Roma. With this term, we refer to diverse groups like Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Sinti and Boyash.
2. Because of the difference in issue salience in the countries under study, we took samples of different sizes with the aim to achieve a balanced sample. First, we took a census of the Dutch articles. Second, regarding the United Kingdom and German sample, 50% of all hard news articles were randomly selected. Last, with respect to the Slovak and Czech sample, a random sample of 25% was selected.
3. The following formula is used: 
$$\text{Diagnostic framing} = \frac{\text{Diagnostic frames}}{\text{Diagnostic frames} + \text{Prognostic frames}} * 100$$

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