

## **Tone and Threats on Television Over Time: A Longitudinal Analysis of News About Roma in Flanders (2003–2017)**

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Anti-Roma prejudice is characterized as a unique form of prejudice because of its blatant nature. News about Roma has been overlooked as a key explanation for anti-Roma prejudice. This study aims to offer insight into news messages about Roma in a systematic and longitudinal way. To this end, I conducted a content analysis of 15 years of all television news stories ( $N = 181$ ) about Roma in Flanders (2003–2017). Findings suggest a shift in patterns in news coverage of Roma. Although Roma are still underrepresented as a minority group on television and get a voice in only about one third of all news stories, uniformly negative news stories about Roma are on the decline in favor of more balanced news stories. Frames referring to blatant threats posed by Roma, such as criminal frames, are being replaced by more subtle frames. Journalists also more often portray Roma presence in society as a policy issue.

*Keywords: Roma, content analysis, Flanders, media representation, framing, news*

Intergroup relations literature has started to explore the origins of anti-Roma prejudice in a more systematic manner (Kende, Hadarics, & Láštiová, 2017; Loveland & Popescu, 2016). As with other outgroups, public opinion toward Roma is highly negatively skewed. Some have asserted that anti-Roma prejudice should be categorized as a unique type of prejudice because its pervasiveness: Prejudice toward Roma presents one of the most severe forms of bias in Western and Eastern European societies (Kende, Tropp, & Lantos, 2017; Ljujic, Vedder, Dekker, & van Geel, 2012). A 2016 study comparing individuals' appraisals of multiple outgroups verified that Roma tend to be the most negatively evaluated outgroup (Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016). Explanations are that Roma are considered a culturally distinct outgroup, making them a target for blatant expressions of prejudice and dehumanization and inhumanization (Kteily, Bruneau, Waytz, & Cotterill, 2015). Roma are perceived to pose both symbolic (i.e., adhering to distinct norms and values) and realistic (i.e., in terms of crime and economic pressure) threats.

Prejudice literature emphasizes Roma's position as a vulnerable group, but limited attention has been paid to the role of news in shaping anti-Roma prejudice. Whereas prior content analysis has mainly focused on immigrants and ethnic minorities in general, evidence on Roma news depictions remains anecdotal. Their portrayals have been mainly studied in a qualitative way, which offers valuable insights, but does not allow for the identification of broader patterns. This study adds to the scholarly debate on the

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origins of anti-Roma prejudice via conducting an in-depth study of television news on Roma. Prior evidence highlights that differences in target-specific prejudice (i.e., prejudice directed at a specific outgroup) can be attributed to distinct perceptions of outgroup characteristics (Hellwig & Sinno, 2017). Contextual factors are claimed to be powerful in affecting outgroup perceptions and may clarify why some outgroups are significantly more negatively evaluated than others (Lubbers, Scheepers, & Wester, 1998; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016). Distinct patterns in news can be a key contextual-level factor affecting outgroup attitudes (Schlueter & Davidov, 2013). Exposure to biased news messages has been recognized as contributing to the perpetuation of prejudice, stereotypes, and outgroup hostility in society (Meltzer et al., 2017).

To date, however, only a handful of studies has scrutinized news depictions of Roma in a comprehensive way. This study was designed to add to the debate on the origin of anti-Roma prejudice by documenting the results of an in-depth content analysis of 15 years of television news coverage of Roma in Flanders. The goal was to advance our understanding of Roma depictions in the news in multiple ways. First, television news was examined instead of newspapers of which the market share has significantly dropped. Even in times of online and social media, television news remains a key source for citizens to learn about current affairs (Nic, Fletcher, Kalogeropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018). Second, the dynamic nature of news production warrants a longitudinal approach (Lubbers et al., 1998; Vergeer, Lubbers, & Scheepers, 2000). This study content analyzed 15 years of television news from 2003 until 2017, offering unique insight into stability of patterns. Third, the population of all television news stories regarding Roma ( $N = 181$ ) for this observation period was examined instead of a sample. Fourth and finally, four key attributes of television news stories were examined: visibility, voice, tone, and framing. Tone refers to the presence of evaluative and/or affective elements in news about Roma (Sheafer, 2007), and framing deals with how issues and (groups of) people are depicted in the news, promoting certain aspects and downplaying others (De Vreese, 2005; Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Prior studies about framing Roma have concluded that victim and criminal frames are widespread (Kroon, Kluknavská, Vliegenthart, & Boomgaarden, 2016). I build further on these findings by studying a comprehensive set of frames, while simultaneously assessing their evolution over time. Is there a trend toward less negativity and less blatant threat frames in the news on Roma over time? In summary, this study offers a longitudinal and systematic analysis of news stories regarding Roma people, contributing to the debate about the pervasiveness, origin, and unique nature of anti-Roma prejudice.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Anti-Roma Prejudice***

Anti-Roma prejudice presents one of the most deeply rooted types of prejudice (Kende, Hadarics et al., 2017; Loveland & Popescu, 2016). Especially in Eastern Europe, Roma become victims of extreme forms of discrimination (Petrova, 2003). The history of the Roma is long and complex. Roma, sometimes derogatorily referred to as "Gypsies," are a diverse group in terms of ethnicity, language, and culture. They have a long history of discrimination in society, which knew its culmination with the Holocaust during the Second World War (Hancock, 2004). Their integration within Eastern and Western European societies has been rather unsuccessful. Since the 2004 eastward expansion of the European Union facilitating free movement of persons between EU member states, Roma have moved to Western European countries to escape discrimination and to build a better life. The issue of Roma rights received wide policy attention at

an EU summit in September 2010, following public outrage about the forced eviction of large groups of Roma by former French President Nicolas Sarkozy. Even now, the European Union is struggling to design a viable strategy aimed at ensuring Roma rights and facilitating their integration in society (McGarry, 2012).

For a long time, intergroup relations literature has neglected the idiosyncratic modalities of anti-Roma prejudice. Only recently has scholarly attention been paid to the uniqueness of anti-Roma prejudice (Kende, Hadarics et al., 2017; Ljubic et al., 2012). Although people are generally negative toward outgroups ("generalized prejudice"), studies have argued that a hierarchy in outgroup prejudice exists (Akrami, Ekehammar, & Bergh, 2011; Hagendoorn, 1995; Meeusen, Barlow, & Sibley, 2017; Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004). This refers to a collectively shared and essentially stable vision that particular outgroups are disliked more than others. Research has verified that Roma are, more than other outgroups, subject to prejudice and hostility (Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016). Research efforts that have been directed at pinpointing why this is the case have stressed that the social norms of egalitarianism that normally apply do not extend to Roma attitudes (Kende, Hadarics et al., 2017). Anti-Roma prejudice tends to be expressed in a more blatant way than other types of target-specific prejudice. Research has asserted that anti-Roma prejudice is permeated deeply in society to a point that it has been internalized by a majority of the native citizens (Kteily et al., 2015). A 2004 study on anti-Roma prejudice found that natives overwhelmingly agree with overt racist statements about Roma, agreeing with the statement that Roma have a natural inclination to criminal behavior (see Enyedi, Fabian, & Sik, 2004). In this article, I explore one potential influential source of why many natives hold these extreme negative attitudes toward Roma: (news) media portrayals of Roma people.

### ***News Media and Prejudice***

Systematic analysis of the representation of outgroups in mass media and in other expressions of popular culture has developed into a substantial subfield within communication studies. Often members of the dominant majority in society do not have the opportunity to sustain direct contacts with minority group members, meaning that media depictions of outgroups fill a gap, supplementing or substituting direct contact (Joyce & Harwood, 2014; Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). Particularly with regard to issues that individuals do not have first-hand experience with and cannot directly observe (i.e., unobtrusive issues), media reliance is larger, granting news media a role, among other factors, to shape individual attitudes (Fujioka, 1999; Graves, 1999; Joyce & Harwood, 2014). Many citizens, hence, learn about social reality via news. Without it, citizens would be largely ignorant of what happens in society, and this holds particularly when learning about unknown groups. Therefore, news messages can be powerful in swaying public opinion about minority groups in society (Fujioka, 1999; Graves, 1999; Holtzman, 2004; Joyce & Harwood, 2014). The focus lies on four main attributes of news about Roma: visibility, voice, tone, and framing.

### ***Attributes of News Coverage of Roma***

#### ***Visibility***

Outgroups have, for a long time, been invisible in the media, especially when compared with ingroup members. Tuchman (1978) refers to "symbolic annihilation," describing the absence of women from cultural products. This concept has since been applied to the nonrepresentation of other historically

marginalized groups as well, such as sexual and ethnic minorities (Gross, 1991). Lack of representation of minorities in the media can be explained by inequality in power relations, in which the majority population aims to maintain the status quo. The systematic ignoring of minorities in the media can—regardless of whether it is a conscious or subconscious process—strengthen their invisibility and, hence, prolong their exclusion from power in society. It risks consolidating a group's position as an insignificant minority, which may hinder this group's social mobility and integration. Clark's typology of evolutionary stages of minority representations in the media defines the first step as a "nonrecognition phase" (Fitzgerald, 2010). News visibility of Roma people may operate as a vehicle for the emancipation of the Roma community and as a facilitator in granting them rights, establishing their acknowledgment as a legitimate group. Prior studies have emphasized the widespread dehumanization and nonrecognition of Roma people in society (Dalsklev & Kunst, 2015). I therefore expected the overall visibility of Roma to be rather limited:

*H1: The overall visibility of Roma people on Flemish television news is limited.*

#### *Actors*

Not only is the visibility of Roma as an issue in the news relevant, but also the extent to which Roma get a voice is pertinent. Prior studies have shown that the staging of a larger variety of news actors benefits the diversity of debates (Benson & Wood, 2015; Masini et al., 2018). However, who gets a voice in the news is largely affected by power relations in society that are reflected in the selection of news stories, meaning that mostly elite actors (e.g., political figures) receive a platform (Grabe, Zhou, & Barnett, 1999). Similarly, minority voices (i.e., of vulnerable groups, such as immigrants) are largely neglected, even in news stories focusing on these groups (Benson & Wood, 2015; Masini et al., 2018). Minorities have less direct access to journalists and have a less powerful position, explaining their limited chances to speak in the news. A recent study focusing on Flemish television news found that political and government actors are the main news sources (Beckers & Van Aelst, 2018). To what extent are Roma granted a voice in news stories about them? Given their weak power position in society, I expected them to be less often granted a voice than non-Roma actors:

*H2: Roma actors are less likely to be given a voice than non-Roma actors in Flemish television news.*

#### *Tone*

The tone of the general direction (positive or negative) of news has received a central place in public opinion research, as it provides news stories with an affective component (Sheafer, 2007). The tone of news can affect the salience and interpretation of political issues (Balmas & Sheafer, 2010). Valenced news stories can, in this way, reinforce beliefs about particular groups. When news consistently depicts a group in a positive or negative way, this evaluation may nestle in individuals' minds, facilitating its activation when judging these groups (Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2009; Jacobs & Van der Linden, 2018; Zaller, 1992). Information about outgroups brought to individuals via the media has great potential to shape individuals' belief patterns in the direction of the dominant tone of news stories or the "information environment." As individuals are principally responsive to negative pieces of information (Jacobs & Van der Linden, 2018; Soroka, 2006), negatively biased news can be highly instrumental in shaping Roma attitudes. Repetition of negative information makes these messages easy to recall, creating a hostile news

environment. Evaluative news stories about Roma are thus expected to affect evaluations of Roma (Schemer, 2014; Schlueter & Davidov, 2013). Prior studies have shown that news about minorities is highly negatively biased, with only a small share of the news stories having a balanced or positive tone (Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016; Meltzer et al., 2017). I expected this to hold for news on Roma as well:

*H3: Flemish television news stories about Roma people more often have a negative tone than a positive or a balanced tone.*

#### *Framing*

Framing deals with how information is being packaged in the news (De Vreese, 2005). Frames are ideas that organize news messages, adding interpretation to specific issues reported in the news. Framing means that specific aspects of a news story are underlined, thereby promoting certain points of views over others (Pan & Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). This has been applied to (news) media depictions of outgroups: Because reality is complex, frames try to create order in news content by consistently underscoring specific traits of outgroup members, thereby overlooking other aspects and risking promotion of biased viewpoints (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

The way in which outgroup members are framed in the news has attracted substantial attention in the academic literature (Schemer & Muller, 2017). Ethnic minorities and immigrants tend to be portrayed as posing threats to society (Atwell Sate & Mastro, 2016; Van der Linden & Jacobs, 2016). However, again, these studies have largely overlooked Roma. The few studies that have included Roma have concluded that Roma people are framed as displaying deviant behavior (Kroon et al., 2016; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016; Vidra & Fox, 2014), as victims (Kroon et al., 2016), or as culturally distant outgroups that are reluctant to integrate (Schneeweis, 2012). Intergroup relations literature emphasizes that Roma tend to be associated with threats and blatant expressions of prejudice, such as crime and immoral behavior. News values regarding negativity and drama also mean that these blatant frames may be more newsworthy and, hence, less prevalent than more subtle frames. I therefore expected news coverage about Roma to be dominated by blatant frames, focusing on threats:

*H4: Flemish television news stories about Roma more often focus on blatant frames (e.g., linking Roma with crime) than subtle frames.*

#### *A Shift Over Time*

To date, however, studies that have assessed the evolution of news coverage of Roma people over time are virtually nonexistent. This study aims to remedy this. For at least two reasons, a shift in the dominant patterns in news regarding Roma may become evident. First, social norms regarding prejudice have evolved. Expressions of blatant prejudice have become socially undesirable. Research on the antiprejudice norm has asserted that a deeply rooted tendency has grown in modern-day Western societies where overt racist views are being less accepted (Ivarsflaten, Blinder, & Ford, 2010). Still, some have argued that the disappearance of public displays of blatant prejudice may have been gradually replaced by more subtle expressions of prejudice (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). This implies that compared with earlier times, ingroup members will

be careful to explicitly attribute unfavorable traits (e.g., being prone to criminal behavior) to outgroup members, but that they may still adhere to ideas that outgroups differ from ingroups and display undesired behavior. Second, the shift from blatant expression of prejudice to more subtle forms runs parallel to initiatives by news organizations in Europe where journalists have become increasingly aware of their responsibility to report about minorities in a balanced way (Jacobs, Meeusen, & D'Haenens, 2016). In Flanders, for instance, the public broadcaster has introduced a Diversity Charter, which institutionalizes its commitment to report about minorities in a nuanced manner (Van den Bulck & Broos, 2011). The reasons above suggest that news stories about Roma (in all its aspects) may have evolved over time. Hence, I hypothesized that

*H5: Over time, Flemish television news stories about Roma (a) have become more frequent, (b) more often grant a voice to Roma actors, (c) have become less negative, (d) are more balanced, (e) less often refer to blatant frames, and (f) more often refer to subtle frames.*

### **Context: Roma in Flanders**

From 2004 and 2007 onward, eastward EU expansion has facilitated Roma originating from Eastern Europe to freely move within EU territory. In many of these former communist and recently democratized countries, Roma have been targets of discrimination. Many Roma have welcomed the free movement of people within the European Union as an opportunity to leave for Western Europe in their search for a better future (Loveland & Popescu, 2016). Approximately 20,000 Roma live in Belgium. Although they are a small group, their presence has been strongly problematized (Vermeersch, 2014). Roma are perceived by the native population as culturally distinct outgroups, posing both symbolic and realistic threats (Ljubic, Vedder, Dekker, & van Geel, 2013). Roma in Flanders are, as in other European countries, often associated with immorality, criminal behavior, and degrading living conditions.

### **Data and Method: Manual Content Analysis**

#### ***Sample***

The data have been collected via the Electronic News Archive (<http://www.nieuwsarchief.be>). This is a Flemish digital news archive that stores all primetime television news broadcasts of the public (VRT) and primary commercial (VTM) broadcaster from 2003 onward. Its archives are free to consult by academics for research and education purposes. Whereas most studies on outgroup depictions have studied newspapers, I complement these insights with television data. Television news depictions closely resemble face-to-face interactions, granting the potential to create a news environment in which a uniform and consistent group image is constructed and disseminated on a large scale (Atwell Seate & Mastro, 2016). This holds especially in situations of limited direct interactions between ingroup and outgroup members. The VRT and VTM primetime newscasts attract high market shares with, respectively, 76% and 43% watching these newscasts at least on a weekly basis. From a comparative angle, both broadcasters occupy a strong position in the media landscape.

The news stories were coded by Electronic News Archive staff following a validated coding scheme developed by scholars with ample experience in manual content analysis. Generic variables were coded, including the topic of the news story, a general description, a set of keywords, speaking time of all actors,

and the function of the actors (see Appendix Table A1). Intercoder reliability tests were conducted, showing that overall reliability for the broad categories was sufficient (De Smedt, Wouters, & De Swert, 2013; see Appendix Table A2). All news stories about Roma were selected by applying a search string in the news story's description. This search string was developed after a rigorous process of trial and error. The resulting hits were manually checked to exclude noise (i.e., unrelated news stories). The search string was effective: All selected news stories dealt with Roma people and issues.<sup>1</sup> All television news stories were watched and manually coded using a specifically designed codebook. The 15-year observation period ran from January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2017 (i.e., the most recent data available at the time of data collection). This longitudinal time frame was vital to obtain reliable results as Roma tend to be underrepresented in the media. Furthermore, this selection maximized variation that was necessary to conduct statistical analyses and to study over-time variation in the portrayal of Roma. The search string resulted in 180 television news stories. Hence, these were all Flemish television news stories that explicitly dealt with Roma, meaning that the full population was studied instead of a sample.

### ***Unit of Analysis***

The unit of analysis was the news story level. In Flanders, newscasts are combinations of distinct news stories that are thematically demarcated with an average duration of one to two minutes. These news stories are always briefly introduced by the news anchor. For deciding on the coding for a specific variable, I used all audiovisual information that the news story provided. Krippendorff's alpha scores were assessed by double-coding 20% of the sample. The scores ranged from .71 (tone) to .85 (crime), with an average of .78 (see Appendix Table A2). Most variables were reliably coded and the scores were similar to other studies on outgroup portrayals (Bleich, Stonebraker, Nisar, & Abdelhamid, 2015; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016).

### ***Variables***

The codebook was based on theory about anti-Roma prejudice and prior media studies (Kende, Hadarics et al., 2017; Ljubic et al., 2012).

### ***Actors***

I followed the approach developed by Beckers and Van Aelst (2018) to categorize actors in Flemish television news stories. They identified four categories: government and politics (politicians, civil servants, law enforcement), professionals and experts (journalists, academics, business professionals), civil society (representatives of social movements, interest groups), and citizens (both involved and uninvolved). I supplemented these categories with a separate category for Roma actors. The Electronic News Archive coded whether these actors were given a voice (measured in speaking time); therefore, for each news story, I recorded which actors were granted a voice.

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<sup>1</sup> Despite the distinct meaning of the concepts *Roma*, *Sinti*, and *Gypsy*, all were used for the search string because journalists use these terms interchangeably, making these keywords necessary to construct a complete data set. Dutch: roma! OR zigeuner! OR sinti; English: roma OR gypsies OR gipsy OR sinti.

### Tone

Tone was operationalized as the direction (positive or negative) of a news story. Following prior examples (Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016; Schemer, 2014), it was indicated whether news stories focused on negative or positive aspects regarding Roma presence. A news story about a crime committed by a Roma person was coded as "negative"; a story about the richness of the Roma culture was coded as "positive." When a story reported in a mixed way about Roma, emphasizing both negative and positive aspects, the story was coded as "balanced." The question was "Overall, would you say that the news story has a positive, negative, or mixed tone?" (Van Klingeren, Boomgaarden, Vliegthart, & De Vreese, 2015).

### Frames

For the frames, a deductive strategy was adopted, implying that the frames were predefined based on theory building (Erjavec, 2001; Kroon et al., 2016; Ljujic et al., 2012; Schneeweis, 2012). Issue-specific news frames were identified that specifically applied to news about Roma (De Vreese, 2005). Factor analysis resulted in the identification of seven news frames.<sup>2</sup> A principal factor analysis was carried out with principal axis factoring using oblique (direct Oblimin) rotation, showing that the 14 items formed six scales: There were six components with an eigenvalue above 1.00 and the scree plot showed a clear point of inflexion after Component 6. Together, these factors explained 74.9% of the variance in the original items. All factor loadings, except for one, exceeded .60. Table 1 summarizes all factor loadings.

**Table 1. Rotated Factor Loadings Table (Pattern Matrix).**

Item	Frame					
	Illegality	Victim	Cultural	Trouble	Crime	Poverty
Illegal	<u>.710</u>	-.161	.088	.177	-.027	.475
Squatting	<u>.729</u>	.251	.118	.119	-.221	-.016
Roma not welcome	.362	-.010	-.093	<u>.767</u>	-.383	-.081
Lack of shelter/housing	<u>.583</u>	.136	-.142	.363	-.356	.337
Roma as nuisance	-.049	.104	.101	<u>.879</u>	.083	.026
Culturally problematic	.100	.052	<u>.770</u>	-.025	.322	-.062
Lack of integration	.166	-.101	<u>.749</u>	-.018	-.075	.156
Poverty	.309	.039	.031	.048	-.120	<u>.878</u>
Unemployment	.029	-.051	.202	.016	-.115	<u>.793</u>
Roma being victimized	.386	<u>-.639</u>	.104	-.194	-.052	.341
Racism	-.107	<u>-.876</u>	.058	-.065	-.048	-.016
World War II & Holocaust	-.143	<u>-.710</u>	-.121	-.026	-.183	-.096
Crime	-.165	.099	.080	-.166	<u>.954</u>	-.133
Roma as perpetrators	-.151	.187	.118	-.077	<u>.943</u>	-.120

Note: Underscored items indicate items with high factor loadings that form a component.

<sup>2</sup> No factor analysis was conducted for the policy frame: Only one item measured this.

*Crime frame.* Roma are portrayed as being disproportionately involved in crime and deviant behavior. Criminal behavior (mostly theft) by Roma is emphasized.

*Victim frame.* Roma are portrayed as victims. Their position as a vulnerable group in society is emphasized, and Roma are identified as victims of racism, discrimination, and prejudice. News about the Holocaust fits within this frame.

*Policy frame.* Political discussions and policy decisions with regard to Roma present the key topic.

*Poverty frame.* Roma are portrayed as being in an economically precarious state. Explicit references are made to poverty, deprivation, and unemployment.

*Illegality frame.* Roma are portrayed as illegal immigrants. The lack of shelter or housing for Roma is emphasized, including references to squatting.

*Trouble frame.* Roma are portrayed as a cause of trouble or nuisance, disturbing the normal life of society. It is stressed that Roma are not welcome (not even temporarily), and that their presence worries the native population, resulting in tensions and conflict.

*Culture frame.* Roma are depicted as unwilling to integrate and as culturally distant. It is stressed that Roma adhere to norms and values that differ from the dominant norms of the host society.

## **Analysis and Results**

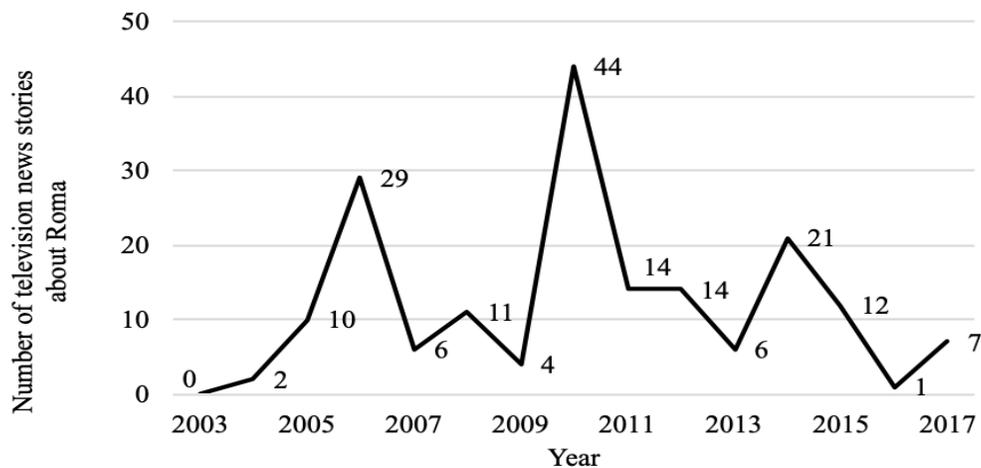
### ***Visibility***

From 2003 to 2017, 180 television news stories about Roma were broadcast in Flanders (see Figure 1). These included news on the commercial and the public broadcaster, which evenly reported about Roma. On average, 13 news stories regarding Roma were broadcast yearly in Flanders. With 13 news stories per year, the visibility of Roma on Flemish television was rather limited, which seems to confirm Hypothesis 1.<sup>3</sup> There was also no clear trend toward more news about Roma. Still, although not consistent, from 2004 onward news of Roma seems to have risen. This coincides with the eastward EU expansion; since the accession of Bulgaria and Romania in 2007, a slight upsurge in news coverage of Roma becomes evident as well. Despite these evolutions, news about Roma seems largely driven by key events. For the entire period 2003–2017, news about Roma is clustered around two core events in April 2006 and June–September 2010. Manual inspection suggests that the peak in 2006 can be attributed to a highly mediatized murder committed by a young Roma boy, which was highly stressed in the news. The 2010 peak seems due to news about France's forced repatriations of Roma led by former President Sarkozy to their countries of origin in Eastern and Central Europe. Hence, the higher news visibility for Roma seems mainly due to a small set of mediatized

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<sup>3</sup> The content analysis resulted in 180 news stories, meaning that the population size was modest. This is, however, a relevant finding in itself, attesting to the nonrepresentation of Roma. Still, one should be careful when interpreting the results and bear in mind that the small sample size limited more complicated analyses.

incidents. No linear evolution in the direction of more news for Roma is discernable over time. In some years (e.g., 2016), only one news story focused on Roma, whereas in other years (e.g., 2010), more than 44 news stories dealt with Roma. News visibility of Roma seems arbitrary and variable, driven by a narrow set of key, salient events. A bivariate correlation between the number of news stories and year ( $n = 15$ ) revealed a weak, nonsignificant correlation ( $r = .05$ ,  $p = .851$ ), confirming the lack of an upward trend in Roma visibility on television news over time. This correlation should be interpreted with caution given the small population size, but it confirms the visual analysis. Hypothesis 5(a) is rejected.

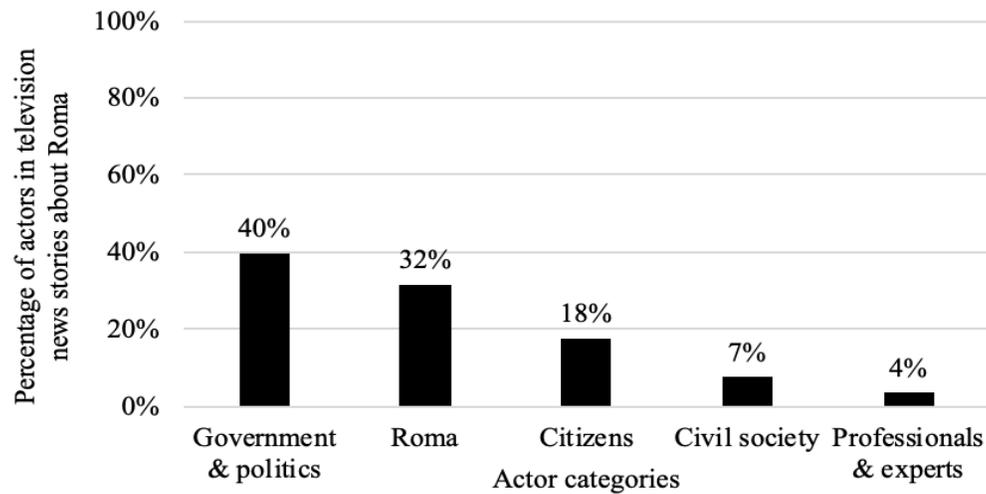


**Figure 1. The evolution of news stories about Roma on Flemish television news (2003–2017).**

#### **Voice of Roma Actors**

Next, I assess to what extent Roma were granted a voice. In 180 news stories, 310 actors were given a voice (see Figure 2). Government and political actors were most often given a voice (39.7%), followed by Roma (31.6%), citizens (17.7%), civil society actors (7.4%), and professionals and experts (3.5%). The majority of speaking actors in news about Roma (68.4%) were non-Roma actors, confirming Hypothesis 2. Binary logistic regression analyses were conducted to explore evidence of an evolution in which Roma actors were given a voice more often over time (see Appendix Table A3). The dependent variable was whether a Roma actor was given a voice in a news story (yes vs. no) and the independent variables were year, broadcaster, and duration. No significant evolution regarding the granting of voice for Roma actors was found ( $B = -.01$ ,  $p = .875$ ).<sup>4</sup> Hypothesis 5(b) is rejected.

<sup>4</sup> Effects of the control variables were not significant and are left out in the discussion of the findings. Results are available on request.

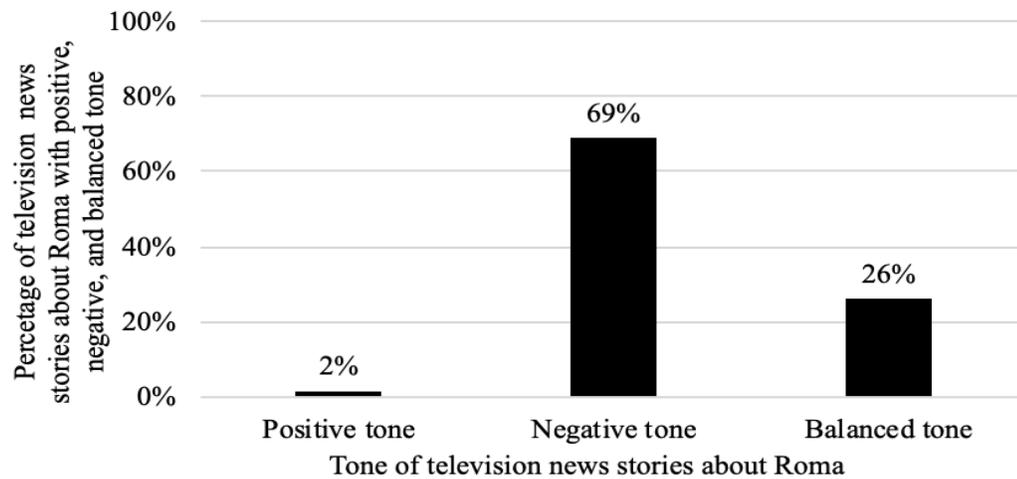


**Figure 2. Voice of Roma actors in news about Roma on Flemish television (2003–2017).**

### **Tone**

Next, the dominant tone of news stories about Roma is documented in Figure 3.<sup>5</sup> News stories about Roma on Flemish television tended to be highly negatively biased, which is confirmation of Hypothesis 3. Almost 70% (124 of 180) of all news stories had a uniformly negative tone, whereas the number of positive news stories was scarce (1.7%, or three of 180 news stories). Still, 26.1% (47 of 180 news stories) had a balanced tone, underlining both positive and negative elements regarding Roma presence. Positive and balanced news stories were more prevalent on the public broadcaster; negative stories were more widespread on the commercial broadcaster.

<sup>5</sup> The percentages do not add up to 100% because six news stories (3.3%) were neutral and were excluded. These brief news stories provided only strictly factual information regarding events.



**Figure 3. The tone of news stories about Roma on Flemish television (2003–2017).**

Does this negativity bias evolve over time? Binary logistic regression analyses were conducted to explore evidence of a shift toward less negativity and more balance (see Table 2). The dependent variables were binary referring to negative tone (yes/no) and balanced tone (yes/no). Broadcaster type and news story duration were also included as control variables. The same analysis could not be performed for the positive news stories because of the small sample size. The analyses for negative and balanced tone were similar, as there were few positive and neutral news stories. The findings in Table 2 lend support to Hypotheses 5(c) and 5(d): Uniformly negative news stories about Roma significantly decreased over time, whereas balanced news stories significantly increased. Longer news stories were less negative and more balanced. Finally, the public broadcaster was significantly less likely to report about Roma people in a negative way and was more likely to disseminate a balanced news story than the commercial broadcaster.

**Table 2. Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting the Evolution of the Tone of Flemish News Stories About Roma (2003–2017).**

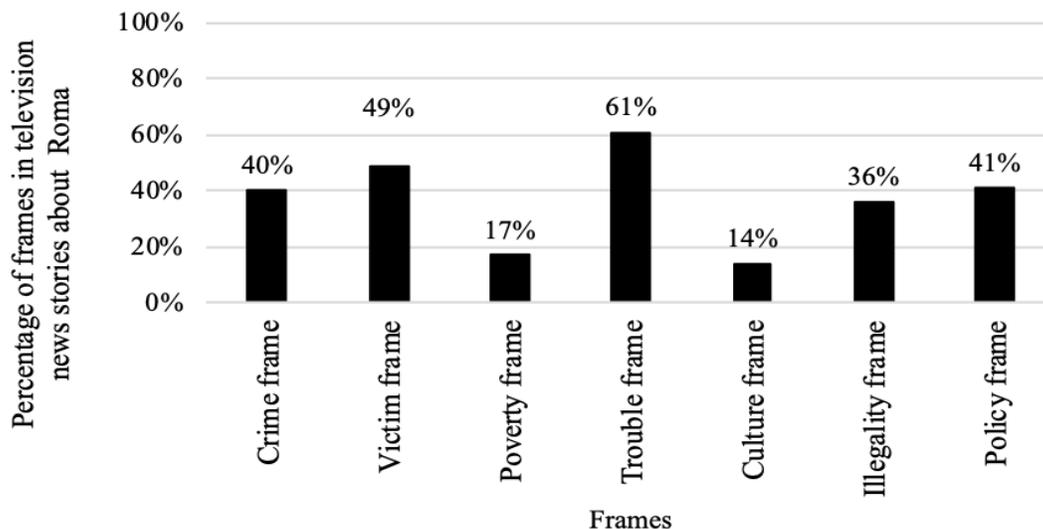
Variable	Negative tone		Mixed tone	
	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Exp( <i>B</i> )	<i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Exp( <i>B</i> )
Constant	384.464		-378.844	
Year	-.190 (.055)**	.827	.187 (.058)**	1.206
Duration (s)	-.007 (.003)*	.993	.008 (.003)**	2.124
Public broadcaster	-.862 (.350)**	.422	.753 (.367)*	1.008
Nagelkerke $R^2$ (%)	16.2		15.3	
<i>N</i>	180		180	

Note. Reported are logit coefficients, standard errors, and odds ratios.

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

### Framing

Lastly, the framing of Roma people on television news was assessed. Based on the literature, the presence of a set of deductive, issue-specific frames was assessed: crime frame, victim frame, poverty frame, trouble frame, illegality frame, policy frame, and a culture frame. Figure 4 shows how often these frames were present in television news about Roma people.<sup>6</sup> Findings demonstrate that, as an average percentage over the full time period, the most dominant frame was the trouble frame (61%), followed by the victim frame (49%), policy frame (41%), crime frame (40%), and illegality frame (36%). The poverty frame (17%) and culture frame (14%) were less dominant. Hence, Roma as causing trouble or as a nuisance were rather frequent themes. Hypothesis 4, which stated that blatant frames (i.e., linking Roma to crime as the most blatant threat) would be more prevalent than less blatant frames (linking Roma to trouble, illegality), is not supported.



**Figure 4. Framing of news stories about Roma in Flemish news coverage (2003–2017).**

Finally, evolutions over time in the type of frames are examined in Table 3. Binary logistic regression analyses (for each frame separately) were conducted with year as the main independent variable of interest and broadcaster type and news story duration as control variables. Some frames greatly fluctuated over time. The crime frame became less prevalent over time, whereas the trouble frame, the illegality frame, and the policy frame increased over time. The victim frame, the poverty frame, and the culture frame did not show a clear time trend and seemed stable ingredients of television news about Roma. Hence, I found partial support for Hypotheses 5(e) and 5(f) as the most blatant frame (i.e., the criminal frame) was on the decline, and the trouble and the illegality frames increased over time. Manual inspection

<sup>6</sup> The number of news stories that could not be attributed one of these frames was low (i.e., nine of 180 news stories, 5%). These news stories dealt with disasters or accidents in which Roma were involved.

shows that earlier news about Roma often emphasized their involvement in criminal activities (i.e., gangs, theft), whereas later news stories mostly focused on trouble caused by Roma in terms of nuisance, tensions, and illegality. Hence, despite the limited sample size, significant results were found, suggesting that a shift was indeed taking place.

**Table 3. Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting the Evolution of Frames of Flemish Television News Stories About Roma (2003–2017).**

Frame	Constant	Year <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Duration <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Public broadcaster <i>B</i> ( <i>SE</i> )	Nagelkerke <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> (%)
Crime	490.77	-.244 (.055)***	-.003 (.063)	-.619 (.331)	18.4
Victim	-114.06	.057 (.046)	.002 (.003)	.296 (.302)	2.1
Poverty	176.05	-.089 (.064)	.004 (.004)	.620 (.419)	6.0
Trouble	-474.94	.236 (.055)***	.005 (.003)	.435 (.328)	16.9
Culture	165.05	-.083 (.067)	.004 (.004)	-.049 (.431)	3.3
Illegality	-255.96	.127 (.050)*	.002 (.003)	.340 (.320)	6.0
Policy	-337.04	.167 (.051)**	.666 (.320)*	.004 (.003)	11.9

*Note.* Reported are logit coefficients, standard errors, and significance. *N* = 180.

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

### Discussion

This study examined the visibility and the quality of Roma portrayals on television news in Flanders. Prior studies have documented that anti-Roma prejudice tends to be highly persistent in Europe and seems to be one of the most deep-rooted types of outgroup hostilities (Kende, Hadarics et al., 2017). Still, a comprehensive and longitudinal investigation of trends in news about Roma as a potential contextual-level source of this hostility was lacking. This study aimed to fill this void. All news stories about Roma on Flemish television for a 15-year period were analyzed in detail to assess over-time variation regarding visibility, voice, tone, and framing.

First, results revealed no clear evolution with regard to the news visibility of Roma over time. Roma do not receive much attention in the news; news coverage of Roma is largely event-driven and, hence, highly fluctuates. Specific key events, such as the expulsion of Roma by French President Sarkozy in 2010 and EU discussions about Roma policy, have dominated the news, but after a short-lived intensive period, the attention for Roma in the news fades away. This corroborates similar findings in other contexts (Kroon et al., 2016). This conclusion fits in with journalism studies underlining the volatile nature of news, which is highly prone to media hypes that quickly appear and disappear again. This relative lack of news representation and absence of a linear trend suggest that Roma, unlike other outgroups (Garretson, 2015), remain highly marginalized in the host society. Relating this to Clark's typology of news portrayals of minorities (Fitzgerald, 2010), it seems that Roma still need to pass the nonrecognition phase. This conclusion seems confirmed when examining speaking actors in news about Roma: In one third of the news stories in my sample, Roma were granted a voice and this did not increase over time; most actors talking about Roma were not of Roma descent, meaning that the minority perspective was not always present. This result is unsurprising as it is in line with previous studies showing that noninstitutional actors and outgroups (e.g.,

migrants) are generally not often granted a voice in news (Beckers & Van Aelst, 2018; Benson & Wood, 2015). One might say that being given a voice in one third of all news stories is not even that low when interpreted from a comparative perspective, although the conclusion remains that more non-Roma actors are given a voice than are Roma actors. Lack of visibility and voice may have consequences as it risks hindering the recognition of Roma as a legitimate minority group. This could prevent Roma from putting pressure on the political agenda to advocate the strengthening of rights for Roma. Visibility of Roma in the news may stimulate viewers' familiarity with this group and could, as a substitution of real-life contact, encourage knowledge acquisition and tolerance (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005).

Second, in line with studies on other minorities (Jacobs & Van der Linden, 2018; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016), news about Roma is overwhelmingly negative. The share of uniformly positive news stories is alarmingly small. The negativity bias of news about minorities is thus confirmed (Eberl et al., 2018), although a subset of the stories in my sample was balanced, stressing both negative and positive aspects. A similar conclusion emerges when considering framing patterns. The most widely used news frames included the trouble, victim, policy, and crime frames. Hence, the main focus is on threatening narratives (except for the victim frame, which verifies prior findings; Kroon et al., 2016; Meeusen & Jacobs, 2016; Vidra & Fox, 2014). Frames in which Roma are portrayed as posing different types of threats, with a focus on deviance and problems in terms of shelter, squatting, and illegality, make up the majority of news on Roma (Tileaga, 2006). These narratives risk constituting an information environment in which Roma are stigmatized as a group and scapegoated. The only narrative in which this is not (or less) the case are the victim and policy frames, which focus on Roma's precarious and vulnerable position as targets of prejudice and racism and the need to find a common policy approach (Erjavec, 2001).

Still, news about Roma seems to become less negative and more balanced. The most threatening and blatant frame (e.g., crime frame) is on the decline in favor of less blatant and more subtle frames. Combined, findings suggest that news is gradually evolving, albeit slowly. More attention is paid to the necessity to combat racism and to adopt a comprehensive policy framework. The decrease in the use of the criminal frame over time may point to a shift in norms and values in which blatant expressions of prejudice (i.e., association with crime) make room for more subtle expressions. This could be a cautious indication that blatant expressions of prejudice are becoming socially less acceptable (Kteily et al., 2015; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). The increasing use of the trouble frame and the illegality frame is also illustrative of this trend. These frames may be less blatant, but they still spread the message that Roma presence in Flemish society is a nuisance, bringing tensions and causing intergroup conflict. In this regard, news and the actors speaking in it still seem to sketch an image of Roma as "deviant" by reducing Roma to troublemakers. The mechanism only seems subtler than before. This framing, we know, is mostly done by the actors in news stories, and may be linked to the fact that perspectives by non-Roma actors prevail.

Finally, this negativity bias and patterns in framing are conditional on the type of news broadcaster and the duration of a news story: A longer news story seems to be a guarantee of more balanced reporting, and news on the public broadcaster is also less negative, more balanced, and contains less blatant frames. The question is to what extent the changing media landscape with increasing commercialization and where less time is devoted to in-depth news may affect the dynamics in reporting about minority groups, such as

Roma. Future studies should, hence, keep monitoring Roma depictions (parallel to representations of other societal outgroups).

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the limited sample size ( $N = 180$ ) means that highly complicated analyses would yield unreliable results, which is why the models were kept as simple and parsimonious as possible. The modest number of news stories about Roma is, of course, a relevant conclusion in itself, suggesting that Roma are still in the nonrecognition phase. However, even with a limited sample size and power, significant results were found. Still, one should be prudent in drawing far-reaching conclusions and future analysis is needed. Future studies may want to assess interactions between broadcaster and year, as evolutions may depend on broadcaster type, which was not feasible in this study because of the lack of statistical power. Similarly, an avenue for future study would be to disentangle framing by journalists and other actors. For now, however, I cautiously conclude that negativity and blatant expressions of hostility regarding Roma in television news are on the decline, and seem to be replaced by more subtle mechanisms of exclusion and prejudice.

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### Appendix

**Table A1: Coding Scheme.**

Variable	Description, codes
Date of news story	MM.DD.YYYY
Broadcaster	0 = Commercial broadcaster VTM 1 = Public broadcaster VRT
Description	Description coded by Electronic News Archive (ENA)
Voice	0 = No 1 = Yes
Keywords	Keywords coded by ENA
Duration news story (s)	Duration coded by ENA
Actors	Actors coded by ENA and recategorized 1 = Political & government actors 2 = Citizens 3 = Civil society 4 = Professionals & experts 5 = Roma
Tone: Overall, would you say the news story has a positive, negative, or mixed tone?	1 = Positive 2 = Negative 3 = Mixed 4 = Neutral
Frames	Categories 0 = No 1 = Yes
Crime frame Does the news story link Roma to crime? Does the news story depict Roma as perpetrators of crime?	
Victim frame Are Roma represented as victims in the news story? Does the news story refer to racism and discrimination? Does the news story refer to the Holocaust of Roma during World War II?	
Poverty frame Does the news story depict Roma as living in poverty? Does the news story depict Roma as being unemployed? Does the news story depict Roma as living in bad housing conditions?	

Trouble frame	
Does the news story depict Roma as unwelcome?	
Does the news story depict Roma as causing trouble?	
Illegality frame	
Does the news story depict Roma as illegals?	
Does the news story depict Roma as squatters, with lack of housing?	
Culture frame	
Does the news story depict Roma as having a problematic culture?	
Does the news story depict Roma as reluctant to integrate?	
Policy frame	
Does the news story refer to policy?	

**Table A2. Intercoder Reliability of Variables Coded via Codebook.**

Variable	Krippendorff's alpha
Tone	.709
Frames	
Crime	.853
Victim	.810
Poverty	.710
Trouble	.723
Culture	.800
Illegality	.721
Policy	.833

**Table A3. Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Whether Roma Actors in Flemish News Stories About Roma Are Given a Voice (2003–2017).**

Variable	Voice for Roma actor in television news story	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Constant	19.708	
Year	-.010 (.037)	.990
Length news story (s)	.000 (.003)	1.000
Public broadcaster	-.056 (.247)	.946
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> (%)	.00	
N	180	

Note. Reported are logit coefficients, standard errors, and odds ratios.

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