5. Romaphobia among Serbian and Dutch adolescents: The role of threat, nationalistic feelings and integrative orientations

This study examines the relationships between nationalism and integration attitudes on the one hand, and anti-Roma prejudice on the other. Using Stephan and Stephan's threat theory the study analyzes whether and to what extent these relationships are mediated by perceived economic and symbolic threats. Data were collected among 16 to 17-year-old students in Serbia and the Netherlands. A path analysis shows that perceived economic and symbolic threats mediate the relationships between nationalism and integration on the one hand, and Romaphobia on the other. Moreover, the findings show that these relationships are comparable between Serbian and Dutch youth. Levels of threat and Romaphobia differ between countries. Youth in the Netherlands, who barely have contact opportunities with Roma, are characterized by higher threat and Romaphobia scores than Serbian youth who have proportionally more contact opportunities. Explanations are discussed as well as implications for theory and prejudice reduction in diverse intercultural settings.

Keywords: Romaphobia, threat, nationalism, integration, adolescents
Introduction

According to socio-historical and linguistic research, the Roma people originated in North India, and have dispersed throughout Europe in the last eight centuries (Crowe, 2008). The European history of the Roma has been characterized by poverty and different forms of persecutions, including slavery and ethnic cleansing. The restrictions upon trade and shelter for Roma people, as well as prohibition of language and culture, continued in some countries until the 20th century (cf. Hancock, 1987). In the last two decades, the Roma were granted legal rights all over Europe and minority status in the countries with large proportions of Roma (e.g., Hungary, Romania, and Serbia). Nevertheless, prejudice and discrimination against the Roma remain widespread (Phillips, 2010). In recent years the re-emerging nationalist and anti-immigrant feelings have had major implications for the Roma population: an upsurge in physical violence, and semi-official measures, such as forcible evictions, police profiling and expulsions (Mirga, 2009).

Presently, around 10 million Roma live in Europe, mostly in the Balkans, South-Eastern and Central Europe. Precise figures are, however, unavailable due to the lack of official data. Ethnic mimicry, in other words, identification with other groups, and refusal to disclose one’s Roma origin due to fear of discrimination, but also cultural (including religious) diversity within the Roma community (Arayici, 2002) make official registration difficult. Nevertheless, regardless of territorial diversity and some cultural differences, the Roma people are considered a unique group, sharing not only the same origin and language, but also a similar – disadvantaged – status (exclusion, poverty, etc.) across Europe (cf. Prieto-Flores, 2009).

At present the Roma receive considerable attention in the media across Europe and they are the subject of intensive and in most cases negative discussions in the political and public arena. Yet, research on anti-Roma prejudice remains scarce. A few studies have been conducted in Southeastern and Central European countries with a large Roma minority (Burjanek, 2001; Sigona, 2005; Todosijevic & Enyedi, 2002). Even fewer empirical studies on anti-Roma attitudes were conducted in the countries with small proportions of Roma (e.g., Nordberg, 2004). An exception is the World Values Survey (1999) that shows that one-fifth of the Dutch population would not like to have Roma neighbors. The current study investigates negative prejudice towards
Roma among Serbian and Dutch adolescents. It analyses whether models or explanations for negative prejudice that were supported by research in countries with large proportions of Roma and ample intergroup contact opportunities also are valid in the Dutch context, characterized by a small proportion of and limited contacts with the Roma.

Hitherto we used the word “Romaphobia” for anti-Roma prejudice in order to avoid pejorative meanings associated with such labels as “Gypsy” and “anti-Gypsism” (Okaly, 1997). In the context of intergroup categorizations and prejudice, the word “phobia” refers to perceived threat to mainstream values, norms or customs (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006, for meta analysis). A scientific insight into factors preceding Romaphobia can shed light on psychological and socio-cultural mechanisms that play a role in its emergence, and may clarify what conditions or processes should be taken into consideration in attempts to prevent prejudice and discrimination against the Roma. The current study focuses on adolescents. Past research supports the importance of using an adolescent sample as a research population for studying attitudes towards immigrants (Torney-Purta, 2010), and historic minorities, such as the Roma people (Todosijevic & Enyedi, 2002). Basic outgroup prejudice develops at an early age and a school may be an ideal place to assess and correct negative categorizations and its behavioral consequences (e.g. teasing or discrimination) (Aboud, 2008).

Past research points to the exaggerated socio-cultural differences between the Roma and mainstream population (Dunbar & Simonova, 2003). In addition, it has shown that social insecurity intensifies competition for scarce resources, leading to negative feelings toward the Roma (Postma, 1996). Threat theory (cf. Stephan & Stephan, 1996) proposes that perceived threat linked to scarce and appreciated commodities is the main cause of outgroup prejudice. In previous studies, both perceived threat to material goods, i.e. economic threat, and to the world view of a group, that is to say a symbolic threat, predicted negative feelings towards ‘devalued’ minorities (e.g. Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt, 2009). A ‘devalued’ status is typically associated with unfavorable distribution of social benefits, whereas a ‘devalued’ culture refers to perceived discrepancies in morals and values between the ‘valued’ and the ‘devalued’ cultures (Montreuil & Bourhis, 2004). Research suggests that nationalistic feelings, ignorance about other cultures, and intergroup contact (or the lack of it) might fuel these feelings of threat (e.g., Li & Brewer, 2004). The
present study investigates the validity of these assumptions using survey data collected among Serbian and Dutch adolescents.

**Perceived threat, Romaphobia and their antecedents**

Besides providing evidence that intergroup threat leads to outgroup prejudice, past research demonstrates the need to investigate the antecedents of threat and the ways they relate to negative feelings towards the outgroups (e.g., Stephan, Dias-Loving, & Renfro, 2000). These antecedent factors have been shown to possibly have both a direct and an indirect effect on prejudice, acting through the threat variables (Riek, et al., 2006).

The first antecedent to be studied here is nationalism. In sociological literature, nationalism is viewed as a way of identifying oneself and classifying other people (Brubaker, 2009), that is a national identification (Dekker, et al., 2003), or ideology, primarily centered on affiliation with a nation, or in other words, ethnocentrism (cf. Weiss, 2003). Research suggests that one’s support for the national group functions as a device for maintaining a positive social identity, and may lead to outgroup derogation in case this positive social (i.e., national) identity is possibly threatened by other groups (Li & Brewer, 2004; Woodock, 2007). Serbian nationalism played an important role in the Balkan conflict (Pesic, 1996) and remained a relevant factor of political cohesion in post-conflict Serbia (Byford, 2002; Todosijevic, 2008). In the Dutch context, nationalism played a prominent role in recent immigration debates, reflecting both national pride and a desire to preserve the dominant group status in the face of ethnic diversity (Verkaaik, 2010). Nationalist preferences and ethnic diversity do not easily blend. The current study explores to what extent perceived threat mediates the relationship between nationalism and Romaphobia in a Serbian and Dutch sample. In addition the current study examines the relationship between nationals’ integrationist preferences and Romaphobia; two qualities that tend to blend more easily.

Because of power advantages and a higher status, the dominant group members may delineate, or even impose, acculturation strategies on minority groups (Bourhis, et al., 2009). Integration is presented by many scholars as the most favorable acculturation strategy (Turner & Crisp, 2010). It enables the minority group to maintain their heritage culture, but also to enjoy the socio-
economic benefits of participating in the mainstream society, including equal access to education, housing, healthcare and employment possibilities (Barany, 2001). In addition, past studies revealed numerous psychological benefits for integrated individuals, such as less subjective distress, anxiety and depression, but also more active and productive roles in society (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Moreover, integration is related to favorable intergroup attitudes and harmonious intergroup relationships (e.g., Bourhis, 2009).

Both in Serbia and the Netherlands, the Roma have benefited from integrationist policies. In former Yugoslavia (1943-1992), in which Serbia was one of the six socialist republics, integration of the Roma people was pursued under the umbrella of the socialist “brotherhood and unity”, which enabled the Roma to keep their language and to set up their own cultural organizations (Barany, 2001; Sekulic, et al., 1994). The post-Second World War communist history is often seen as a period of emancipation for Yugoslavian and Serbian Roma, primarily because of greater opportunities for education and employment in comparison to other countries (Crowe, 2008). Nevertheless, the economic discrepancy between the Roma and the majority populations was apparent and remained so in the post-communist era (Fraser, 1992). In the Netherlands, the integrationist policy towards ethnic minorities was introduced in the early 1980s (Joppke, 2007). It was manifested in welfare programs and antidiscrimination laws, but also in better housing, educational and employment opportunities for the minority group members, including the Roma and Sinti (Vasta, 2007).

A strong integrationist preference in majority group members entails hope for positive contacts between different groups and their members. Past research demonstrates that intergroup contact may have different implications for outgroup attitudes, depending on status or value dissimilarities between the groups concerned (Allport, 1954). Favorable contact conditions, for example equal status and common goals, lead to favorable outgroup attitudes, whereas unequal status and different goals lead to more threat and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). The notion of integration suggests that not only actual contact but also the willingness to accept or engage in intergroup contact leads to less threat and more favorable outgroup attitudes (Rohmann, Florack, & Piontkowski, 2006). The current study examines the mediating role of threat in the relationship between integrative expectations toward the Roma acculturation and adolescents’ Romaphobia.
Different countries, different circumstances, different levels of threat

According to the last available census data from 2002, the Roma minority is one of the largest in Serbia numbering 108,193 people, which is 1.44% of the total population (Raduski, 2007). Given the long history of coexistence between the Serbian and Roma people, and also the fact that a large proportion of Serbian Roma speak Serbian as their mother tongue, and share their religion with the nationals, we expect symbolic threat to play a minor role in Serbia.

Earlier research suggests that the threat to material resources, in other words the economic threat, should be the most important predictor of outgroup prejudice in unstable socio-economic circumstances (Riek et al., 2006). Although people may be reluctant to share national resources with “devalued” outgroups in different situations (Bourhis, Barrette, El-Geledi, & Schmidt 2009), it has been shown that the actual availability and distribution of scarce resources influences the degree to which outgroup members are perceived as threatening (Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma, & Hagendoorn, 2010). Because of a relatively unfavorable economic situation in Serbia (Lazic & Cvejic, 2010), we expect the economic threat to be clearly salient for Serbian adolescents. In particular, the youth from the lower social strata may be reluctant to share scarce resources, such as jobs, housing, and social benefits with the Roma (Raduski, 2007).

In contrast to Serbia, where the Roma form an old-established host population (Petrova, 2003), the Dutch Roma consist of heterogeneous immigrant groups, mostly from Central and South-Eastern Europe (Rodriques, 2006). The first group of Roma arrived to the Netherlands during the interbellum, followed by small groups of labor migrants in the 1960s and the Roma refugees from former Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Presently, most of the Roma immigrants come from the new EU member states, such as Romania and Bulgaria. In total, approximately 3,500 Roma people currently live in the Netherlands (about 0.00035% of the population) (Rodriques, 2006). The notion of threat reflects actual and perceived competition for scarce resources. As a minimum, the actual competition implies visibility of a ‘threatening’ outgroup. This visibility is greater in Serbia than in the Netherlands. From the perspective of threat theory therefore, prejudice against Roma would be expected to be more intensive and widespread in Serbia than in the Netherlands. The opposite expectation is suggested by contact theory (Allport,
1954), that is to say: the large minority proportion may enhance possibilities for intergroup contacts in Serbia. This is a well-known precondition for favorable intergroup attitudes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, one of the conditions for positive effects of contact is status equality, while status differences between the Roma and dominant group members are particularly transparent in South-Eastern Europe, including Serbia (Prieto-Flores, 2009), meaning that the possible positive effect of contact opportunities is offset by the lack of status equality.

In contrast to Serbia, the chance of actual contacts between Roma and nationals in the Netherlands is very small. Hence, the limited intergroup contact and general lack of familiarity with the Roma culture may lead to negative prejudice (see Savelkoul et al., 2010). Moreover, most information nationals receive about the Roma comes from unfavorable media reports. This is likely to fuel mistrust towards the “foreign” culture, but also a desire to preserve the dominant status of the mainstream culture in the face of immigration and immigrants (Lucassen, 2005). Moreover, in reaction to ten years of policy initiatives to reduce intercultural differences in the Netherlands (Sniderman, Hagendoorn, & Prior, 2004), the Dutch context is not currently supportive of cultural diversity. These circumstances lead us to expect that the symbolic threat is particularly salient for the Dutch adolescents.

**The current study**

The current study contributes to our knowledge with respect to a type of prejudice, Romaphobia, which has previously not been intensively studied. In addition, there is, to the best of our knowledge, no unified model for the study of Romaphobia in different countries. Hence, a comparative study of Romaphobia in the Netherlands and Serbia offer the opportunity to test the generalizability of the relations between threat and adolescents’ Romaphobia across different countries and intergroup settings. Furthermore, the present study investigates nationalism and integration expectations as the antecedents of perceived threat and Romaphobia. More specifically, we analyze whether and to what extent threat mediates the relationship between nationalism and the integration preferences of national youth and their Romaphobia and whether these relationships are comparable between Serbian and Dutch youth. In addition we will test differences in levels of threat and Romaphobia between Dutch and Serbian national youth.
The hypotheses that are tested are:

(1) Serbian students will experience more economic threat, whereas the Dutch students will experience more symbolic threat.

(2) Both in Serbia and in the Netherlands, Romaphobia is positively related to nationalism, and negatively to integration.

(3) Both in Serbia and the Netherlands, perceived economic and symbolic threat will mediate the relationships between nationalism and integration on the one hand and Romaphobia on the other

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 16- and 17-year-old students; of which 285 (64% female) were drawn from Serbian gymnasiats and 95 (46.3% female) from the Dutch pre-university high schools (VWO), a school type comparable to the gymnasiats. Both samples consisted of dominant group members (ethnic Serbs, and ethnic Dutch) only. The mean age of the Serbian sample was 16.73 (SD = .44), and for the Dutch sample 16.62 (SD=.48). Forty-eight percent of the Dutch students’ fathers and 40.4 % percent of the mothers had a university degree. In the Serbian sample, 36 % of Serbian students’ fathers and 36.8 % of the mothers had a university degree.

Procedure

Prior to the data collection in Serbia, ten gymnasiats were contacted, two of which promptly showed an interest in participating in the survey, and were surveyed first. Thereafter we secured access to two more gymnasiats thanks to recommendations from the schools that had already participated in the study. The directors of the participating schools had the authority to act in loco parentis to give permission for the students to take part. Data were collected anonymously in the classrooms, during regular school hours, and supervised by the researcher (or research assistant) and a teacher. The students were asked to participate in a study on “adolescents’ attitudes towards multiculturalism and the plural society.” All students participated voluntarily, and gave their consent prior to their inclusion in the study and no one refused to participate. Questionnaires were in Serbian and it took the students about 45 minutes to complete them.
In the Netherlands, two pre-university high schools were contacted (VWO; a school type comparable to the Serbian gymnasiums), and both agreed to participate. Prior to the data collection, the parents received a letter about the survey and were informed that a passive consent was requested. Data were collected anonymously in the classrooms, during regular school hours, and supervised by a research assistant and a teacher. The students were asked to participate in a study about “adolescents in intercultural settings.” All students participated voluntarily, and gave their consent prior to their inclusion in the study. Questionnaires were in Dutch and it took the students about 45 minutes to complete them.

**Measures**

Identical scales were used for the Dutch and Serbian sample. The scales were adapted using a translate–backtranslate protocol. The first part of the questionnaire contained *demographic questions* dealing with age, ethnicity, gender, school type, education and socio-economic background of the parents.

*Romaphobia* was measured with a four-item scale, based on Stephan and colleagues (1999, 2000). Participants were asked to indicate to what extent the words *empathy, warmth, sympathy and approval* (all reverse-scored), reflected their feelings towards the Roma. Responses ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (absolutely agree). Cronbach’s alpha for the Serbian sample was .77. For the Dutch sample, Cronbach’s alpha was .62.

The two threat scales were based on instruments used in previous studies on perceived outgroup threat (Stephan et al., 2002). The items of both scales were scored on a five-point scale ranging from 1 *(totally disagree)* to 5 *(absolutely agree)*. *Economic threat* was measured with a four item scale (sample item: “Too much money is spent on Roma educational programs”). Cronbach’s alpha for the Serbian sample was .81 and for the Dutch .84. *Symbolic threat* was measured with a six-item scale (sample item: “Roma do not understand the way non-Roma view the world”). Cronbach’s alpha for the Serbian sample was .80 and .73 for the Dutch.

*Nationalism* was measured with a four-item scale extracted from Dekker et al.’s scale (2003). Sample items: “In general, Serbs (Dutch) are better than people
with other nationalities”; “Serbia (The Netherlands) is the best country to live in”; etc. Cronbach’s alpha for the Serbian sample was .85 and .89 for the Dutch.

Integration expectations were measured with a four-item scale adopted from Berry, Phinney, Sam, and Vedder (2006). The five-point response scale ranged from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (absolutely agree). A sample item: “I want the Roma to keep their own culture, but also to adopt ours”. Cronbach’s alpha for the Serbian sample was .77 and .76 for the Dutch.

Results

Measurement invariance

We hypothesized mean differences between the Dutch and Serbian samples on the variables Romaphobia, economic threat and symbolic threat. In order to interpret mean differences, it is important to ensure that scales measure the same construct across samples, and that mean differences are due to differences in the latent construct as opposed to differences in scale use, in other words, scales need to be invariant across samples (Van de Vijver & Tanzer, 2004). We used multigroup confirmatory factor analyses to analyze to what extent scores were comparable across the Dutch and Serbian samples. It has been suggested that CFI is a useful fit index for analyzing measurement invariance, with a CFI higher than .90 indicating a reasonable fit (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). We found good support for strict invariance (same construct, equal factor loadings and, equal error variance) for Romaphobia (CFI = .92), symbolic threat (CFI = .94), and economic threat (CFI = .91).

We formulated hypotheses concerning mean differences between Dutch and Serbians in terms of threat only, not in terms of integration and nationalism. However, these variables will be used in a path model, and as such these variables should relate to the same construct in both samples (configural invariance). We found support for configural invariance for both integration (CFI = .97) and nationalism (CFI = .99), indicating that for both variables and both samples a unidimensional factor structure was supported.

Do Serbian and Dutch adolescents differ on Romaphobia, symbolic threat and economic threat?

To test for differences between the Serbian and Dutch adolescents on Romaphobia, symbolic threat and economic threat, a MANOVA was used. Because
there were more girls in the Serbian than in the Dutch sample, gender was included in the analyses. The MANOVA revealed that there were significant differences between the Dutch and the Serbians (Wilks’ lambda $F(3, 370) = 18.625, p < .05, \eta^2 = .131$), but not between boys and girls (Wilks’ lambda $F(3, 370) = 2.363, p > .05, \eta^2 = .02$), and there was no interaction between gender and nationality (Wilks’ lambda $F(3, 370) = 2.515, p > .05, \eta^2 = .02$). Follow-up univariate ANOVAs revealed that Dutch adolescents scored higher on Romaphobia ($F(1, 372) = 11.801, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$), symbolic Threat ($F(1, 372) = 5.391, p < .05, \eta^2 = .02$), and economic Threat ($F(1, 372) = 55.253, p < .05, \eta^2 = .13$). The effect sizes reveal that on economic threat the Dutch adolescents score much higher than the Serbian adolescents. The mean scores are reported in Table 1.

Table 1
Means and standard deviations between the study variables for Dutch and Serbian sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Dutch ($n=95$)</th>
<th>Serbian ($n=285$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romaphobia</td>
<td>3.18 (.73)</td>
<td>2.73 (1.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic threat</td>
<td>2.94 (.62)</td>
<td>2.65 (.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic threat</td>
<td>2.57 (.78)</td>
<td>1.78 (.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>2.43 (1.11)</td>
<td>2.58 (1.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>3.65 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.73 (1.04)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can the relation between antecedents, threat and Romaphobia be described by a mediated model in the Dutch and Serbian samples?

The correlations between the variables entered in the path analysis were in the expected direction, except for Romaphobia and nationalism in the Serbian sample, which were not correlated (see Table 2).

We used a multigroup path analysis, fitting the same model in the Serbian and Dutch samples to analyze whether a mediated model would fit a Dutch and Serbian sample. We first tested a model in which the antecedents’ (integration and nationalism) relations with Romaphobia were fully mediated by symbolic and economic threat. This model did not provide an adequate fit [$\chi^2 (6) = 17.673, p = .00, \text{RMSEA} = .14, \text{CFI} = .94$]. Previous studies have indicated that integration may be a partial mediator (Ljujic, et al., 2010); hence we tested a model in which integration was a partial, and nationalism a full mediator. This model provided a good fit to the
data $[\chi^2 (2) = 3.230, p = .20, \text{RMSEA} = .06, \text{CFI} = .99]$. The regression weights are reported in Figure 1.

Table 2

The intercorrelations between the study variables for Dutch and Serbian sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Romaphobia</th>
<th>Symbolic threat</th>
<th>Economic threat</th>
<th>Nationalism</th>
<th>Integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romaphobia</td>
<td></td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic threat</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>.36**</td>
<td>-.32**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic threat</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td></td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>-.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalism</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td></td>
<td>-.29**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>-.41**</td>
<td>-.31**</td>
<td>-.28**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The correlations for the Dutch sample are above the diagonal and the correlations for the Serbian sample are below the diagonal.

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

Figure 1. A multigroup path analysis for the Serbian and Dutch sample.
NOTE: Standardized regression weights for the Dutch and Serbian (in italics) samples. Explained variances for symbolic threat were $R^2=.18$ and $R^2=.19$, for economic threat $R^2=.21$ and $R^2=.16$, for Romaphobia $R^2=.21$ and $R^2=.18$ For the Dutch and Serbian samples respectively.

*Are the regression weights moderated by nationality?*

At face value, the regression weights between the Dutch and Serbian samples seem to differ. Integration seems to be more strongly related to threat and prejudice in the Dutch than in the Serbian sample. We analyzed a model in which the regression weights between integration and economic- and symbolic threat and integration and Romaphobia were constrained to be equal across the Dutch and Serbian model. This model actually provided a better fit than the unconstrained model [$\chi^2 (5) = 5.520, p = .36$, RMSEA = .02, CFI = .99]. As such, the regression weights of integration can be considered equal across the Dutch and Serbian sample. We ran the same analysis constraining the regression weights of nationalism across groups. Again we found that the constrained model fitted better [$\chi^2 (4) = 4.835, p = .30$, RMSEA = .03, CFI = .99]. We then analyzed whether relations between economic and symbolic threat and Romaphobia were equal across groups. When the relation between symbolic threat and Romaphobia was constrained, this resulted in a better model fit than the fully unconstrained model [$\chi^2 (3) = 3.890, p = .27$, RMSEA = .04, CFI = .99]. When the relation between economic threat and Romaphobia was held constant, this resulted in a slightly worse fit than the fully unconstrained model [$\chi^2 (3) = 5.247, p = .15$, RMSEA = .06, CFI = .99]. However, a chi square difference test indicated that the constrained model did not fit significantly worse than the unconstrained model [$\chi^2 (1) = 3.230, p = .15$], as such the regression weights between economic threat and Romaphobia may be considered equal for the Dutch and Serbian samples. Given these results, we tested whether a fully constrained model (all regression weights and correlations constrained) would also fit the data. A fully constrained model fitted the data better than an unconstrained model [$\chi^2 (11) = 9.235, p = .60$, RMSEA = .00, CFI = .99]. This indicates that both the models and the regression weights can be considered equal across the Dutch and Serbian samples.
Discussion

Romaphobia and perceived threat

In this study, the perception of economic and symbolic threat predicted adolescents’ Romaphobia in both Serbian and Dutch samples. Contrary to our expectations, the Dutch students were more Romaphobic and perceived more threat from Roma than Serbian students. The reason may be a non-supportive social context manifested in particularly controversial immigration policies in the Netherlands, which have made the outgroup threat a highly salient issue for the Dutch (Sniderman, et al., 2004). Perhaps, for young people, who do not have much contact with the Roma and are typically unfamiliar with the Roma culture, the perceived threat to culture and particularly economic resources may be regarded as conflicting more with self-interest than the actual competition for scarce resources warrants. The salience of negative prejudice regardless of the actual presence and visibility of the Roma in society may be compared to “anti-Semitism without Jews” (Glassman, 1975). Another possibility is that the encouragement given by media and schools in the Netherlands to adolescents to be political engaged means that young people should express their ideas and feelings about intergroup relationships even if they are “strong”. This notion of “oral liberalism” was sharply voiced within the immigration debate, particularly with respect to culturally unfamiliar and economically vulnerable groups (Houtman, 2008).

The perception of economic threat in the Serbian sample probably reflects the unfavorable economic situation in that country (Lazic & Cvejic, 2010). However, the magnitude of this feeling of threat may have been reduced by a general familiarity with the Roma, including status disadvantages (Ackovic, 2009). Moreover, one notion of group conflict postulates a certain degree of interactions and actual or perceived competition between the groups, which in the case of Serbian and Roma youth may not be very intense due to residential segregation and the almost complete exclusion of the Roma from the labor market (Raduski, 2007).

The symbolic threat in the Serbian sample may be attributed to a nationalistic conception of ingroup values, reflecting both an unfavorable evaluation of outgroup culture and a desire to preserve moral superiority over others (Mummendey, et al., 2001). However, it may be that the Serbian perception of intercultural differences appears to be less pronounced than in the Dutch sample because of a ‘familiarity
effect’. Alternatively, this pattern of results may reflect the different socio-historical status of the Serbian Roma as a long-standing ethnic minority, and the Dutch Roma as predominantly recent immigrants. In other words, in the Dutch sample the attitude towards the Roma may not be specific to the Roma as a group, but to immigrants in general, while in the case of the Serbian sample the answers may be directed specifically to the Roma. Also, sharing one’s existing own resources with an incoming, new group of people may be different from sharing resources with a historic minority, with which the majority group has been sharing resources for a long time, albeit with a very unequal outcome. In the latter case all actors have been present for centuries, in the former case there is a new actor asking for a share. As expected, Romaphobia was negatively related to students’ integrationism in both samples, and positively related to Dutch nationalism. Contrary to our expectations, Serbian adolescents’ nationalism was not related to Romaphobia. This is in line with the fact that in the Serbian sample, nationalism did not correlate with Romaphobia, but in the Dutch sample it did. In the latter situation it might be more closely akin to ‘immigrant phobia’.

Mediation analyses

The results offer support for the mediation hypothesis. It was shown that integration was directly related to Romaphobia, but also indirectly through the threat variables. These findings correspond to previous research showing that acceptance of social interactions with a culturally diverse minority correspond to less threat and more favorable outgroup attitudes (Gonzalez, et al., 2008). The combination of the direct and indirect relationships between the antecedent factors and prejudice suggests that Romaphobia may be akin to other factors besides the (lack of) intergroup threat. Past research has pointed to multiculturalism, accommodating favorable ideological and institutional conditions for ethnic diversity, as well as equal opportunities in pursuing individual and aggregate interests (Berry et al, 2006; Montreuil & Bourhis, 2004).

Nationalism was indirectly related to Romaphobia through economic and symbolic threat. For both Serbian and Dutch adolescents, nationalism reflected the fear that the Roma threaten national values, but also the anticipation that the Roma affect the competition for economic resources, for example, disproportional social benefits could be spent on the Roma. This is consistent with previous studies showing
that the reciprocal relationships between nationalism and prejudice may be limited to circumstances in which groups compete over scarce resources (cf. Brewer, 1999).

**Implications and directions for future research**

The results of our comparative study on Romaphobia among adolescents in Serbia and the Netherlands demonstrate two major findings. They show that perceived economic and symbolic threats mediate the relationship between negative feelings towards the Roma on the one hand and nationalistic and integrationist preferences on the other. The findings show that these relationships are comparable between Serbian and Dutch youth. Of course, the use of cross-sectional data implies a certain ambiguity with respect to causal interpretations of the findings, which should therefore be validated in an experimental or longitudinal study. Also, the use of self-reports may be vulnerable to social desirability bias, hence future research may benefit from the use of implicit attitude measures (Fazio & Olson, 2003). Nevertheless, the current study has important theoretical implications that are helpful when clarifying the generalizability of the mediation model between distinct national contexts.

It may be argued that threat theory may benefit from some refinements with respect to the antecedent factors. For example, a study on integration attitudes may complement existing research on the role of intergroup contact. Actual or direct contact may have both positive and negative implications for outgroup attitudes, depending on whether the optimal contact conditions, such as equal status and common goals are met, or not (Allport, 1954). For most Roma in Serbia, these conditions are still unattainable (Barany, 2001; Raduski, 2006; Rodrigues, 2006). In both Serbia and the Netherlands, the Roma occupy the lower social strata compared with the national population, and are likely to have different, if not conflicting, goals (Barany, 2001). The integrationists’ attitudes reflect less outgroup threat and more favorable outgroup attitude, regardless of whether optimal contact conditions are met or not (Rohmann, et al., 2006). Moreover, whereas optimal contact conditions pose a real challenge in some situations, such as social conflict, or small minority proportions, the advantages of integrationist orientations may easily be addressed (and achieved) using multicultural interventions that focus on recognition and appreciation of cultural differences, regardless of group status (Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). The multicultural interventions may also help to mitigate threat effects
associated with nationalistic ingroup favoritism, which promotes social comparison, leads to distinguishing groups through categorization and gives rise to feelings of threat. Past studies have suggested that such negative consequences of social categorization may be reduced by enhancing common goals between groups and promoting superordinate group identity (Brewer, 1999).

The current findings provide some indirect support for the contact hypothesis. Given more contact possibilities, Serbian youth are more likely to have personal contacts with the Roma, and to be more familiar with the Roma culture than Dutch students. This argument is in accord with the finding that Serbian adolescents are characterized by lower threat levels and less Romaphobia than Dutch youth. In the same vein, we could explain the relatively high levels of threat in the Dutch sample by referring to the low chance of contact between adolescents from the majority population and Roma youth. Particularly with regard to the situation in the Netherlands, however, this is a somewhat disappointing explanation from an educational perspective. In a sense it is a confirmation of the Roma people’s history of prolonged discrimination and derogation. Future research should investigate the role of hetero-ethnicization and infra-humanization (Tileaga, 2007; Vala, Pereira, & Costa-Lopes, 2009) in the process of scapegoating the Roma; the singling out of this group as carrying the blame for socio-economic problems (Barany, 2001; Postma, 1996) and how to counter it. This is particularly relevant in a country like the Netherlands with an extremely small proportion of Roma. Their numbers are so small that the fear of them resembles children’s fear of the bogeyman: it is a strictly subjective reality, a fiction, which is nonetheless is experienced as very real and overwhelming. This virtual reality in adolescents may be confronted and possibly resolved through reality checks or facts and knowledge about the Roma. These could be brought about by personal contacts with the Roma, but also through indirect contacts, via the broader social network (e.g. ingroup friendship) or exposure through stories and movies, as postulated by the extended contact hypothesis (Liebkind & McAlister, 1997; Vedder, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Nickmans, 2006). In the Dutch, as well as in the Serbian context, such types of proximity through indirect contact or media may counter negative expectations about the Roma, and facilitate a more balanced and likely more favorable evaluation of this minority.

The current study is the first to provide support for a common model of the relation between Romaphobia and its antecedents in different intercultural settings.
and it shows that this relation applies regardless of whether minorities are recent immigrants or an historic ethnic minority. This finding adds to the hope that the commonality of the explanation of Romaphobia could also point to a possible commonality in the conditions that may lead to a resolution.

References


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