Different emotions have different implications for adaptive actions (Frijda, 1986). This is particularly important for intergroup relations; some group behaviours are characterised by the tendency to move away from another group (out-group) when the presence of that group is associated with fear. On the contrary group behaviour may be characterised by a tendency to move towards an out-group if anger is elicited (Mackie et al., 2000).

Traditional measures of prejudice seem to obscure the rich texture of emotional experiences associated with a specific out-group and, as a consequence, the reactions that shape intergroup relations (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005).

The Roma are a stigmatised group of people who have suffered discrimination throughout Europe for centuries. However, the recent massive migrations of Roma from Romania to Western Europe have exacerbated this so called Romaphobia (Ljubic et al., 2013) and Antiziganism (Piasere, 2012) in host countries.

Empirical data (Ljubic et al., 2012) support the notion of Romaphobia as a qualitatively distinct type of prejudice.

**Aims**

The aim of this study is to map the feelings of a group of Italian citizens towards the Romanian Roma (RR). In addition, perceived threats, attitudes towards the RR and stereotypes attributed to the RR were analysed, focusing on the association between these feelings and the perceived threats.

**Participants and Instruments**

An on-line questionnaire was administered to 221 Italian residents. Most of the participants were women (87.7%) and students (89.1%) who reported little or no interaction with the RR.

Like most Italians, the participants had only learned about the RR from newspapers or television news (77.3%). Romaphobia was measured by means of a list of 16 emotions (8 positive and 8 negative). The questionnaire also included measures of general attitudes towards different ethnic groups (feeling thermometer), the RR stereotype (16 adjectives). In addition there were some questions about the extent to which the participant felt threatened by the presence of the RR in 5 areas of life.

**Results**

Results showed that the most negative attitude is towards RR (Tab.1).

It appears that the participants believe that the RR are dirty, poor, dangerous and criminal (stereotypes). The only positive characteristic associated to RR was musically talented (Tab.2).

With reference to the intensity of the threats perceived as a result of the presence of the RR, the most intense are: the threats to public health, personal safety and private property (Graph.1).

The participants expressed negative feelings more intensely than positive feelings. The most intense negative emotions elicited by the RR were mistrust, fear and anxiety. Interestingly, the participants were also curious and interested in the RR (Tab.2).

The results of the correlational analysis showed that negative emotions are strongly and positively associated with perceived threats. Among these feelings, irritation, disgust and anger showed the highest correlations with the perceived threats to public health, personal safety and private property (Tab.3). Moreover, there seems to be a specific pattern related to the threat to personal safety as it is associated also with mistrust, fear and anxiety whereas there was a high correlation between threats to health and private property and contempt.

**Conclusions**

The emotions elicited in our group of participants by the RR are both positive and negative. This might be a cue to the presence of a potential ambivalence in feelings. However, on the whole, the latter are more intense.

Theorists of emotion (e.g. Frijda, 1986) associate specific feelings with specific action tendencies. As a consequence, people have the urge to attack those who anger them, escape from those who frighten them, and to avoid close contact with those who disgust them.

The results of the present study showed that the RR elicited emotions that lead both to an avoidance of contact as well as to a desire to intimidate the people belonging to this ethnic group in order to force them to leave. This is in agreement with the conflictual intergroup relationships reported by the Italian press and media in the last few years. Moreover, it testifies the difficulty found by those who try to promote positive relationships between the RR and the Italian population.

This is the first study on the emotions elicited by the RR and the associations between these emotions and the perceived threats. Greater knowledge of these dynamics may help communities to plan actions. (with reference to the contact theory: Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) aimed at successfully integrating the RR into the Italian society.

**References**


