

2013 two years after:

studying electoral success of right-wing
extremism in Slovakia and what to do about it



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Supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society
Institute in cooperation with the Open Society
Initiative For Europe of the Open Society Foundations.

Introduction

The public discourse in Slovakia about socio-economic issues is strongly linked with the discussion about minorities and migration policies – and as such resonates strongly with the public. The way this discussion is being held only serves to deepen the ongoing polarization in the society. This is even more acute in the context of the growing tide of support for extreme right-wing organizations. The clearest manifestation of this recently was the election of Marian Kotleba to the post of governor of Slovakia's Banská Bystrica region in November 2013. At that time it has taken many by surprise, and since has raised numerous speculations as to its underlying causes as well as consequences for the future. At the same time, the election upset provided an impulse to start a research project with an aim of identify and analyze some of the underlying factors, which had led up to that point. It wasn't only about getting to the bottom of "why," we also set out to formulate recommendations that would help prevent further escalation of the tensions that were already present in the Slovak society.

This brochure holds 11 concise texts, each offering several diverse approaches to addressing the issue of increasing support for extreme right-wing parties. It also poses some much needed research questions – all written with an aim to find the reasons behind the growing support for extremist organizations and solutions. It includes not only in-depth analyses of the voter behavior, including the voter shifts and the distribution of support for Kotleba, but also the influence of the media and social networks on the success of this extreme right-wing party's leader. The authors also examine the process of shaping the attitudes towards the polarizing societal problems and ponder what can be done to mitigate their extreme manifestations.

The research project titled "Extremist Breakthrough in the Low Turnout Elections: A Lasting Momentum?" was carried out by the Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs (CENAA), in cooperation with the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University Bratislava. At the same time the project is truly a joint effort that was carried out in close cooperation with the project team members at the Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University Bratislava, Faculty of Social Studies, Masaryk University in Brno and Central European University in Budapest. It was supported by a grant from the Foundation Open Society Institute in cooperation with the Open Society Initiative For Europe of the Open Society Foundations.

A Right-wing extremist or people's protector? Media coverage of extreme right leader Marian Kotleba in the 2013 regional elections in Slovakia

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The analysis focuses on the portrayal of the right-wing extremist leader Marian Kotleba in the media during the 2013 regional elections in Slovakia. Through the exploratory study, the author examines how the media have formed the discourse and portrayed the candidate for the governor's office of the Banská Bystrica region, who transformed from a marginalized politician to the regional governor in a matter of several weeks.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The data were derived from an analysis of 359 articles on Marian Kotleba that appeared in the Slovak media in the period spanning 6 weeks – namely the following dailies: Nový Čas, Plus 1 Deň, SME, Pravda; TV stations: TV Markíza, TV JOJ, TA3, and RTVS, as well as online news portals: Aktuality.sk and Topky.sk. The monitoring was carried out 3 weeks before the run-off, two weeks between the run-offs, and 1 week following the election. Building upon frame analysis and covering the period between October 17th and November 30th 2013, we were able to identify a total of 1,095 claims, which we subsequently subjected to analysis.

DESIGN AND METHODS

The paper builds upon the framing theory. Media frames are considered as schemes for presenting and comprehending news, which turn meaningless and otherwise unrecognizable happenings into perceptible events. Through qualitative pre-study, we identified 10 issue-specific frames that problematize Kotleba in relation to either his general political actions or the regional elections. These were as follows: extremist threat, false protector, isolated politician, people's protector, legitimate candidate, the failure of authorities, election surprise and anomaly, frustrated people, anti-campaign, protest. We distinguish between the actor-related (emphasizing the politician's characteristics) and the structure-related (emphasizing the electoral circumstances) frames and characterize them in terms of credibility denoting Kotleba as unacceptable vs. legitimate politician. In the paper we have quantified the visibility of respective frames and analyzed the discursive techniques used to describe the candidate.

RESULTS

The findings show that Kotleba was mainly framed in terms of extremist threat and the failure of authorities. However, within the overall media discourse, he was almost equally covered by frames emphasizing his unacceptability and his legitimacy and similarly equally portrayed with frames on both actor-related and structure-related sides. Despite the emphasis on the extreme nature of the politician's candidacy, there was a considerable attempt at counter-framing, appealing to the legitimate side of the politician and pointing to the anti-campaign against Kotleba and his role as a people's protector. In terms of media attention, there was a rapid increase in visibility of Kotleba after the election's first round. Following a significant growth in media attention in comparison to the period prior to the election, a relatively high media interest remained throughout the whole duration of the elections, making him more salient in the public discourse and known to the wider electorate.

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We are talking about “us” versus “them” and you are listening: Extreme right party and its leader Marian Kotleba on Facebook

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The paper analyzes the online activities of the extreme right party People’s Party – Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) and its leader Marian Kotleba in the period of almost 2 years, during which the party participated in 3 different elections (regional, EU, local). Through the analysis of the websites and fans of the party and its leader on Facebook, it aims at answering how the party utilizes the Internet as a tool for diffusion of its ideas and who are its supporters. The paper focuses on the frequency of engagement of the party and its leader on Facebook and the online discourse, as well as the profile of its fans on this social network.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The data used to analyze the frequency of engagement and discourse are derived from the analysis of 547 statuses of the party (n=93) and its leader (n=454), published on the Facebook fan pages over the period of almost 2 years from July 2013 to March 2015. All statuses published over this period were subjected to analysis. Besides the content of the posts, the analysis also included the likes, shares and comments. The data used to analyze the fan profiles were taken from Facebook at the beginning of October 2014 – we focused on monitoring the activities of fans and which websites they have liked.

DESIGN AND METHODS

In the first part of the study, we employ descriptive quantitative analysis and frame analysis to arrive at the frequency of online activity and to reconstruct the party and its leader’s discourse on the social network. By adapting the diagnostic frames and problem attributions, we are able to comprehend how the presented issues were framed by the party and the leader and whom they have considered as perpetrators and victims of certain problems. We have applied the following issue-specific frames: abuse of power, discrimination, persecution of opponents, destruction of the society, destruction of independence, Roma menace, immigration menace, conspiracies. In the second part, we employ the Ataxo Social Insider approach to analyze the fan pages of Marian Kotleba and ĽSNS and their Facebook fans, focusing on “proximity” (similarities of different Facebook pages based on the activities of their fans) and “affinity” (how similar the Facebook pages are based on the structure of their fans).

RESULTS

Even though Kotleba was in terms of the shared content more active than his party, and also received higher level of engagement from his online fans, we can conclude that both websites enjoy a high level of support on the social network, especially when compared to other Slovak political parties. The number of fans of Marian Kotleba has increased significantly, particularly following the 2013 regional elections. The number of posts on both sites was higher during the elections, as well as prior to the referendum held at the beginning of 2015, as well as at the time of organizing of the anti-Roma protests.

These events have also resonated to a higher degree with the online audiences, while in the most resonant post the party leader thanked his supporters for votes he received in the regional elections. Both the party and its leader have mostly presented internal topics concerning their activities, as well as the relations with mainstream politics and the media, but also political issues, values and traditions, as well as the Roma minority. These issues were framed in terms of the so-called Roma menace, discrimination, abuse of power and the media propaganda, while blaming the Roma, the media and the government representatives and politicians for the problems. The party and Kotleba denoted as the main victims mainly the general public, their own party (namely Marian Kotleba), as well as Slovakia and Slovaks.

Among the closest websites to Marian Kotleba and ĽSNS (measured in “distance” – i.e. fan activity) we find mostly “alternative” news outlets, as well as those devoted to history (mainly of the wartime Slovak state), to a lesser extent various sites of party’s local branches. The highest up on the list is “ĽSNS Alternative news“ (for the ĽSNS fanpage) and the site called “Volím Kotlebu, volím správne” [I vote for Kotleba, I make the right choice] for the fansite of Marian Kotleba. We see a similar structure with the so-called affinitive sites, i.e. those that are close to that of ĽSNS and Kotleba in terms of fan composition. The highest on the list rank the site “Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko – Kysucké Nové Mesto” (for ĽSNS) or the site “Verní Sebe, Svorne Napred / Za Boha, Za Národ” [Fateful to ourselves, together ahead/ For God, for the Nation (for Marian Kotleba).

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Just a Roma issue? The Support for Marian Kotleba in 2013 Regional elections

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The research aims to analyze the support for Marian Kotleba in the 2013 regional elections at the level of the municipalities. The focus is primarily on the Roma, who represent a crucial theme for People's Party - Our Slovakia (ĽSNS).

The research looks at the effect of the Roma minority on the local level on the support for Kotleba in the gubernatorial race for the Banská Bystrica region. Based on the theoretical explanation of the support for the extreme right-wing parties and movements (mostly in western Europe), the authors claim that the higher share of the Roma population, as well as the remote nature of their settlement has a positive effect on the support for Kotleba. Besides that they analyze the potential effects on this support when it comes to the level of unemployment, education level, religious affiliation or entrepreneurship.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The data set includes all municipalities of the Banská Bystrica region, with the exception of those with the share of Hungarian minority accounting for at least 30 percent. The exclusion of these municipalities with an aim of arriving at more precise results is a standard approach to this type of research. The final research sample is 392 municipalities.

To analyze the presence of the Roma ethnic group at the local level, we used the results of the Atlas of Roma Communities 2013 project. This project, among other things, has mapped out the distribution of Roma in Slovakia, including the type of their settlement categorized as follow: integrated with the majority population, separated, but within the municipality, separated at the outskirts, or segregated in settlements. This data was incorporated into the research, also relying on the Atlas for the sizes of the Roma population.

DESIGN AND METHODS

The research uses quantitative methods - as the main tool we applied linear regression analysis based on the Ordinary least squares method (OLS). This enables to analyze the effect of individual factors and assesses the strength with which they affect the selected dependent variable - electoral support for Kotleba. The authors have tested out different settings, which gradually yield information on the effect of

these variables in connection with the Roma population, the variables on the socio-demographic characteristics of municipalities, and also the combined effects of both of these variables.

RESULTS

The analysis has shown that the presence or lack thereof of the Roma minority constitutes the crucial factor for understanding the differences in support for Kotleba across the municipalities of the Banská Bystrica region. On the contrary, it was found out that the socio-demographic features of the municipalities had, for the most part a limited effect. It was proven that in the municipalities with a growing share of the Roma population, the ĽSNS leader managed to gain higher share of the vote. On the whole, he was the most successful in areas where the share of the Roma population was 15 to 50 %. What's more, the type of the Roma settlement was found to play a significant role - separated Roma communities located on the outskirts of the municipalities, as well as segregated settlements had the effect of increasing the support for Kotleba. Thus, the higher the share of the Roma population and their separation from the majority population, the greater the support for Kotleba at the voting booth.

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Geographic distribution of votes in the 2nd round of 2013 regional elections in Banská Bystrica

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The research aims to elucidate the regional distribution of votes in the second round of the run-off gubernatorial race between Marian Kotleba and Vladimír Maňka. Out of all of the runoffs held in all of the 5 regions, it was this race that has attracted the highest voter turnout, which has translated to nearly one quarter of all eligible voters. In the remainder of the 4 run-off races, the voter turnout has not exceeded 18 percent. The author of the analysis has focused on the voter support for both of the candidates Marian Kotleba and Vladimír Maňka and compares the patterns that have emerged in the process. The analysis is carried out on 2 levels: the first looks at the election results broken down to individual municipalities, which constitutes the traditional approach to voter geography; the other takes the analysis one step further, capturing the differences in the distribution of voter support for either one of the rivals in the 6 biggest municipalities in the region.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The analysis of voter support at the level of the municipalities includes all of those in the Banská Bystrica region, in all 500 units. When it comes to the actual voter support for both candidates on the municipality level, the sample size used for the calculation differs; the author has taken into account the voting precincts. Discerning the differences in voting on the municipality level has thus required defining the minimum number of voting precincts, which was set at 10. Thus the research sample includes 6 municipalities: Banská Bystrica, Zvolen, Lučenec, Rimavská Sobota, Brezno, and Žiar nad Hronom.

DESIGN AND METHODS

The author refers to this study as exploratory with an aim to identify clear patterns, which could be of potential future use for the postulation of theories. In his analysis, the author has relied on the officially available data from the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. The calculations at the level of electoral precincts have required to first their inter-link them with their location, which was accomplished using the Nominatim tool.

RESULTS

The analysis on the level of municipalities has shown clear differences in the support for either one of the candidates. The victor of the elections, Marian Kotleba was more successful mainly in the northern parts of the region, including the biggest town of Banská Bystrica, as well as the more populous municipalities in the south of the region. On the other hand, his rival Vladimír Maňka has managed to pull off victory in his home town of Zvolen, as well as in the more southern areas of the region inhabited by the Hungarian minority. What's more, the author has, within this region, identified areas which have considerably deviated from one another – namely the districts of Banská Bystrica and Brezno, where the leader of the People's Party – Our Slovakia has received approximately 70% of the vote, and on the other hand the municipalities with Hungarian minority, where the support was equally as high for the candidate of the governing Smer party, Maňka. The calculations made within the areas of selected towns have also revealed a degree of differences, even if not as significant as those in the rural areas. On the whole, we can conclude that while Kotleba has achieved better results on the towns' outskirts, Maňka was more successful at reaching out to voters in the city centers.

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Who are Kotleba's voters? Voters' transitions in Banská Bystrica region in 2009-2014

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of the research is to identify the electorate of Marian Kotleba in the 2013 regional elections by employing an analysis of voter shifts. The author monitors the positions of the supporters of the ĽSNS leader in the 2009 Regional elections, the 2012 Parliamentary elections, 2014 Presidential elections, and finally the 2014 European elections. The study has the ambition to arrive at an understanding of the voter segments which have come together to elect Kotleba to the post of regional governor. The research does not have the ambition to delve into the composition of this group in terms of age, nationality or education, but instead sets out to elucidate this group's previous voting behavior.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The author uses data at the level of electoral precincts, with approximately 900 of them making up the Banská Bystrica electoral region. As a region with somewhat lower population, the majority of municipalities are single voting districts, while the bigger towns that are made up of several precincts allow for a more precise work with the electoral data.

DESIGN AND METHODS

To capture voter shifts, social science research readily relies on individual-level research, typically using surveys as the method of choice. Given that this type of data is not available when it comes to the elections under scrutiny, we have to look for an alternative approach. In our research, we've elected to apply the Bayesian ecology inference method, which allows us to use the aggregate data to model the potential voting behavior at the individual's level. Thus, even if the data about the voters themselves is missing, we are able to generate relatively precise predictions about the individual voter.

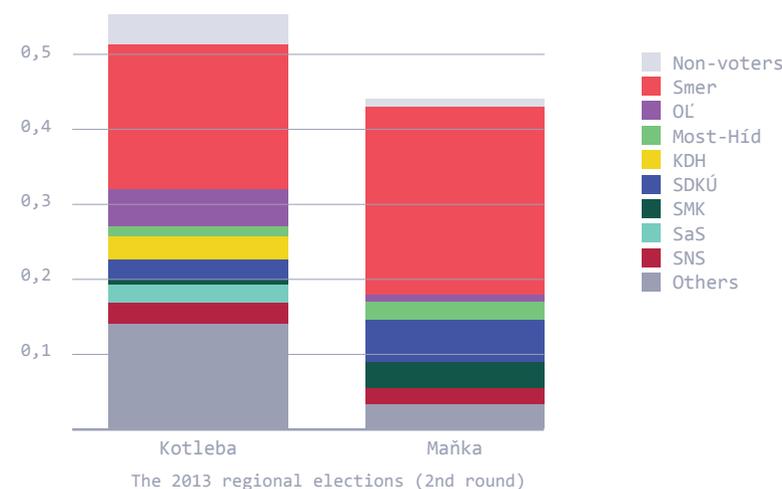
RESULTS

The results show that there is a distinct group of individuals in the Banská Bystrica region that continually ignores any election deemed of lower importance. It was this segment of the voter population that has cast their vote for Kotleba, putting him in office. The research further

proves that Kotleba was able to retain a high level of loyalty in his voter camp, which meant that those who have voted for him in the first round have also, almost entirely, cast their vote in his favor in his duel with Vladimír Maňka in the run-off. An important finding was that even though Kotleba stood in the second round against the candidate of Smer, both candidates were roughly equally successful at attracting the voters of this mainstream party to their side.

What's more, the analysis has shown that the voters of the mainstream political parties have exhibited different behavior in the regional elections. While in the case of SDKÚ-DS and both of the Hungarian parties, the majority has opted for Maňka, the majority of Smer-SD, OĽaNO, KDH, SaS and SNS have cast their vote for his rival, Kotleba. Of note are also the results of the other (smaller) parties, including ĽSNS, whose supporters had cast their vote for Kotleba, thus contributing to a considerable degree to the win of the candidate of the extreme right.

The 2013 regional elections (2nd round)
versus the 2012 National Council election



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Territorial distribution of electoral support for ĽSNS and Marian Kotleba

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

The analysis examined to what extent was the electoral support for ĽSNS and M. Kotleba concentrated in some areas and whether it differed in this respect from the support of other parties and candidates.

RESEARCH SAMPLE

The analysis uses parliamentary elections results from 2010 and 2012 and regional elections results from 2013, recorded on the levels of municipalities and polling stations.

DESIGN AND METHODS

- Residential segregation of voters was measured with the D index of segregation, also known as the dissimilarity index. In this context, the index measures segregation with the smallest fraction of votes that would have to be changed in order for the party or candidate to receive the same fraction of votes in all the areas.
- To compare the territorial segregation of the voters of ĽSNS and M. Kotleba to that of other parties and candidates, linear regression with normally distributed error was used. The degree of territorial segregation of voters was modeled as a function of the aggregate voter support.

RESULTS

In general, the parties less successful in the inspected elections had territorially more concentrated support (i.e., more segregated voters) than the more successful ones. The only exceptions to this trend were SMK-MKP and Most-Híd. Neither the support of ĽSNS nor of M. Kotleba diverged from the trend. In the parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2012 ĽSNS was out of the eight regions most successful in the Banská Bystrica Region. There, its support was also more evenly distributed than in the other two regions (Presov and Kosice) where it recorded comparable vote fractions. In short, the support of ĽSNS and M. Kotleba in the inspected elections was not attached to particular municipalities any stronger than that of other parties and candidates with comparable fractions of the aggregate vote.

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Moral foundations of political attitudes in Slovakia

AIMS

According to moral foundation theory (MFT), there are 5 intuitive and universal value dimensions, through which we make moral judgments: care/harm, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and sanctity/degradation. Using MFT, we have formulated the following research questions: do moral foundations predict attitudes towards social-political issues (immigration, status of minority languages, qualification for welfare), cultural-ethical ones (abortion, gender equality, same-sex marriages, adoptions by same-sex couples), and economic issues (ownership of strategic enterprises, free-of-charge health care)? Do moral foundations predict the right-left and liberal-conservative ideological self-identification? Do political attitudes predict ideological self-identification?

PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted on a representative sample of 1,051 respondents, selected according to their sex, age, education, nationality, region, and municipality size. The sampling and face-to-face data collection was carried out by Focus agency.

DESIGN AND METHODS

All respondents have answered questions about their moral foundations (e.g. "When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly."), political attitudes (e.g. "Which of the following statements represents the best your position on abortions?"), as well as socio-demographic information, ideological self-identification and voting preferences. We analyzed the data with generalized linear multi-level regression Monte Carlo.

RESULTS

Moral foundations are strong predictor of cultural-ethical attitudes, weaker predictor of social-political attitudes, and they fail to predict the economic attitudes. The care/harm and sanctity/degradation foundations significantly influence the attitudes. The respondents with higher scores in care/harm foundation tend to have more positive attitudes to cultural-ethical issues (e.g. they support more the adoptions by same-sex couples) as well as to social-political issues (e.g. they support more the reception

of welfare payments without the precondition of participation on public works). The higher respondents score in sanctity/degradation foundations, the more negative their attitudes tend to be (e.g. they reject more the adoptions by same-sex couples).

Moral foundations also predict ideological self-identification on the right-left scale. In particular, loyalty/betrayal and sanctity/degradation foundations are significant predictors. The respondents with higher scores in loyalty/betrayal foundation tend to identify themselves more as belonging to the political right. Conversely, the more they score in sanctity/degradation foundation, the more left-leaning they express to be. This is further corroborated by the fact that respondents' attitudes to cultural-ethical issues predict their right-left self-identification: the more negative their position (e.g. the more they reject the gender equality measures), the more left-leaning they express to be.

Moral foundations also predict ideological self-identification on the conservative-liberal scale. In particular, fairness/cheating, loyalty/betrayal and sanctity/degradation foundations are significant predictors. The respondents with higher scores in fairness/cheating foundation tend to identify themselves more as liberal. Conversely, the more they score in loyalty/betrayal and sanctity/degradation foundations, the more conservative they consider themselves to be. Respondents' attitudes to cultural-ethical and social-political issues predict their conservative-liberal self-identification: the more negative their position to cultural-ethical issues (e.g. the more they reject the abortions) the more conservative they express to be; the more negative their position to social-political issues (e.g. the more they reject the immigration) the more liberal they consider themselves to be.

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Can we like what we find disgusting? How the media representations of Roma change public attitudes

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

Disgust is the strongest negative emotion. It can negatively influence the attitudes towards people who elicit disgusting reactions. The members of marginalized Roma communities are often represented in the media with disgust-evoking terms and images (dirtiness, mess, and sickness). Do disgust-evoking media representations have a negative effect on in-group attitudes (Slovak) towards stigmatized out-group (Roma)? We test the following hypothesis:

Respondents who have read the disgust-evoking article will have a more negative attitude towards the stigmatized out-group (Roma), compared to those who have read the same article without disgust-evoking terms and images as well as those who have read a neutral article.

PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted on a representative sample of 358 online respondents, selected according to their sex, age, education, and region. Sampling and data collection was conducted by 2muse agency.

DESIGN AND METHODS

All respondents were randomly assigned to 2 experimental and 1 control groups. At first, they have answered socio-demographic and political orientation questions. Respondents in experimental group 1 have read article published in "Denník N" daily entitled "The bullied boys from the video have grown up. How's their life in the Luník ghetto?" Respondents in experimental group 2 have read the same article without the introductory paragraph, pictures and video. Respondents in the control group have read article entitled "Summer time frustrates many. A complete nonsense?" published in the same daily. Subsequently, all participants have answered questions about social dominance, frequency of positive and negative contact with Roma, feeling thermometer, and three questions about attitudes towards Roma. We analyzed the data with likelihood ratio test.

RESULTS

The hypothesis was partially confirmed. Respondents who have read the disgust-evoking article expressed less positive feelings towards Roma ("On

a thermometer scale from 0 to 100, how would you describe your personal relationship to Roma, where "0" stands for cold, negative feelings and 100 refers to warm, positive ones?") as well as lower level of trust towards Roma ("Most Roma can be trusted"). There were no significant differences between the groups in responses to the two remaining attitude questions and question on social dominance.

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The double moral standard: why do we judge Roma more severely as “ourselves”?

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

Is there a double moral standard in Slovakia? Do we judge differently the same actions if they are taken by the members of the majority population as opposed to the out-group (Hungarian) or a stigmatized out-group (Roma)? We test the following hypotheses:

1. The respondents are harsher in judging and punishing the same action if it is perpetrated by the members of a stigmatized out-group (Roma), than if it is carried out by members of out-group (Hungarian) and in-group (Slovak).
2. When judging morally ambiguous acts, the respondents attribute higher importance to the internal character of the individual, and lesser importance to external unfavorable circumstances (economic and social conditions), if they have been carried out by the members of the stigmatized out-group (Roma) than by the members of out-group (Hungarian) and in-group (Slovak).
3. The respondents tend to have more biased memory recollections about morally ambiguous acts if they have been perpetrated by the members of the stigmatized out-group (Roma) than by the members of out-group (Hungarian) and in-group (Slovak).

PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted on a representative sample of 387 online respondents, selected according to their sex, age, education and region. The sample was not representative for nationality - all respondents had Slovak nationality. The sampling and data collection was carried out by 2muse agency.

DESIGN AND METHODS

All respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental groups. They have all read an identical story about a parent who works illegally at a construction site and his family receives welfare benefits. For each group, we have manipulated the ethnic identity of the family: in group 1 it was the Kováč family (Slovak); group 2, the Nagy family (Hungarian); and in group 3 the Lakatoš family (Roma). Subsequently all respondents answered questions assessing their moral judgement, stereotypes, socio-demographic information and ideological self-identification. We analyzed the data with multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA).

RESULTS

Slovak respondents proved to be more stringent when judging and punishing the same acts if they were committed by the Roma than if by Slovaks or Hungarians. This double moral standard is closely linked with the stereotypes about the Roma, which happen to be significantly more negative than those held about either Slovaks or Hungarians. When it comes to the Roma, relying on social welfare is more often attributed to the person's lack of character, while when it comes to the Slovaks or Hungarians, it is more often conceived as a result of external unfavorable factors. The passing of more severe moral judgement and the presence of more negative stereotypes are related to the distorted memory about Roma family.

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Intuition and reasoning: what works in reducing extreme political attitudes?

AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

Do we know how to effectively reduce extreme attitudes to polarizing political issues? Is this reduction more effective when appealing to intuitive moral judgments, founded on fundamental values? Alternatively, does appealing to reasoning and its reflection of insufficient understanding lead to more effective interventions? We test the following hypotheses:

1. Respondents reading text arguing for desegregation of schools for Roma pupils children in “conservative” moral foundations (authority, loyalty) will have more positive attitude towards desegregation of schools for Roma children as respondents reading text arguing for desegregation of schools for Roma children framed in “liberal” moral foundations (care, fairness).
2. Respondents who provided mechanistic explanation for a policy „Children from Roma settlements will go to the same school classes as other children“ will agree more with this policy than the respondents who gave reasons for it.
3. Appeals to intuitive moral judgment will be more effective in reducing extreme political attitudes to polarizing political issue than the interventions appealing to reasoning and its reflective capacities.

PARTICIPANTS

The research was conducted on a representative sample of 768 online respondents, selected according to their sex, age, education and region. The sample was not representative for nationality – all respondents had Slovak nationality. The sampling and data collection was carried out by 2muse agency.

DESIGN AND METHODS

All respondents were randomly assigned to one of the 4 experimental and 2 control groups. All respondents answered questions about their socio-demographic information and ideological self-identification. Respondents in control group 1 have been asked to read a neutral article entitled “Vegetables on the green-grocer’s shelf: people confusing melons for pumpkins,” while those in control group 2 did not receive any text to read. Respondents in experimental group 1 read the text entitled “Every child deserves a chance for quality education,” framed in “liberal” moral foundations (care/harm, fairness/cheating). Those in the experimental

group 2 were asked to read the text entitled “Our country will thrive thanks to quality education for all children” framed in “conservative” moral foundations (authority/subversion, loyalty/betrayal). The respondents in the experimental group 3 were asked to give reasons supporting their position on de-segregation policy “Children from Roma settlements will go to the same school classes as other children” while those in the experimental group 4 were asked to give mechanistic explanation of de-segregation policy (how it works). All respondents then answered questions about their attitudes to de-segregation policies and statements. We analyzed the data with analysis of variance (ANOVA).

RESULTS

None of the hypotheses was confirmed. We were not able to persuade the respondents about the need to de-segregate Slovak schools neither by appealing to their intuitive judgments by framing the persuasive message in conservative moral foundations nor by invoking the power of their rational self-reflection vis-à-vis giving mechanistic explanation of de-segregation policy. The differences between the impact of interventions based on intuition and reasoning were not significant.

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— 2015

October 2015