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Zsuzsanna Vidra & Jon Fox

To cite this article: Zsuzsanna Vidra & Jon Fox (2014) Mainstreaming of Racist Anti-Roma Discourses in the Media in Hungary, *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 12:4, 437-455, DOI: [10.1080/15562948.2014.914265](https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2014.914265)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2014.914265>



Published online: 28 Oct 2014.



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## **Mainstreaming of Racist Anti-Roma Discourses in the Media in Hungary**

ZSUZSANNA VIDRA

*Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary*

JON FOX

*School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol,  
Bristol, United Kingdom*

*The article focuses on the rise and spread of racist language in public debate in Hungary. It investigates how radical right discourses—that is, the relegitimizing of the racist idea of “Gypsy crime”—have been transmitted by the mainstream media thus contributing to the decline of a short-lived political correctness in Hungary. The analysis explores how racism has become more and more accepted and how the mainstream has embraced the radical right’s propositions, turning them into a “digestible” rhetoric while “breaking the taboos” of antiracism.*

**KEYWORDS** *Antiracism, breaking of taboos, far-right, “Gypsy crime,” Jobbik, political correctness, racism, Roma*

The new Hungarian far-right party’s (Jobbik [Movement for a Better Hungary]) first electoral success came in the European elections in 2009; a year later they captured 16% of the vote in Hungary’s parliamentary elections, nearly edging out the former governing Socialists (who had received just 17% of the vote). At the same time, a growing number of racist hate groups and sometimes paramilitary groups have become active, some with close links to Jobbik. As some argue, Jobbik’s anti-Roma rhetoric was crucial to its electoral success. In the 2010 parliamentary elections, Jobbik successfully thematized the Roma question (Karácsony & Róna, 2010) by reviving and relegitimizing the previously discredited idea of “Gypsy crime”<sup>1</sup> (Juhász, 2010). These racist discourses were not challenged by mainstream politicians, however, but condoned by them. Indeed, in many respects, politicians from

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Address correspondence to Zsuzsanna Vidra, CEU Center for Policy Studies, Nádor utca 9, Budapest, 1051, Hungary. E-mail: vidrazs@ceu.hu

the governing center-right party but also to a lesser extent from the left opposition became complicit in the reproduction of these racist and racialized discourses on Roma issues. How did racism go mainstream in Hungarian political discourse? The aim of this article is to trace the discursive trajectory of these discourses from their origins in the radical right to their migration to the mainstream. In so doing, we show not only the movement of these discourses but the ways in which racism gains legitimacy in Hungarian politics.

We do this in three ways. First, we focus on a murder that took place in 2006 in a village called Olaszliszka where a teacher was lynched by a group of Roma. Next we turn to another case in Tatárszentgyörgy, where a Roma father and his son were murdered by a number of Hungarian men in 2009 who were later discovered to have neo-Nazi leanings. Both murders attracted unprecedented media attention, setting off in turn national political debates. In the third part of the article, we consider the media's handling of both of the incidents and the discussion on the Roma question that the murders spurred. Together, these analyses demonstrate how "Gypsy crime" makes a comeback into Hungarian political discourse.

Before beginning our analysis we first set the stage with a brief discussion of the rise of the radical right in Hungary. Next we introduce the methods we use before turning to the analysis of our two cases and the debates. We conclude with a brief discussion of some of the wider ramifications of our case for the political legitimization of racism.

## BACKGROUND: THE RISE OF THE RADICAL RIGHT IN HUNGARY

Support for the radical-right party Jobbik doubled between 2002 and 2009 (Juhász & Krekó, 2011). Jobbik was different in many respects from previous radical right-wing populist parties. The early 1990s saw a rise in neo-Nazi groups which, however remained marginal. More significant was the nationalist radical Party of Hungarian Justice and Life (MIÉP) party, which came into existence in 1993 and gained entry into Parliament in 1998. MIÉP professed anti-elitist and anti-establishment views and argued that the transition from communism was led by "anti-Hungarians" that had to be replaced by the "national forces of resistance" (Kovács, 2013). MIÉP gradually lost support as it did not manage to attract young voters. In response, a group of young intellectuals founded a radical movement in 2002 that would become Jobbik the following year.

There are numerous factors behind the rapid rise and success of Jobbik in Hungary. The consolidation of democratic institutions in Hungary since 1989 has only been partial: popular support for democracy and participation in civil activities remains weak, and low levels of trust in democratic institutions persist. Hungarians are critical of both the ruling elite and the government. Survey research reveals that high levels of popular

dissatisfaction with public safety issues is attributable in part to an expectation that the state should assume a greater role in such matters (itself a legacy of the communist past) (Gimes et al., 2009; Kovács, 2013). This is consistent with other research that demonstrates that a quarter of the population accepts and supports authoritarian views and political rhetoric (Gimes et al., 2009; Juhász and Krekó, 2011).

These features of public opinion help explain how the extreme right is able to fill these gaps by establishing independent organizations that promise to restore and maintain public order (Gimes et al., 2009). Another important factor is the high level of xenophobia and racism in Hungarian society, amongst the highest in Europe and on the increase (Gimes et al., 2009). Anti-Roma attitudes, already strong throughout the entire population, have been shown to be significantly stronger amongst supporters of extreme right parties. Indeed, anti-Roma attitudes are more powerful predictors of party affiliation than either anti-establishment or anti-Semitic attitudes. Jobbik clearly capitalizes on this support base by using anti-Roma rhetoric to differentiate itself from the more moderate governing party, Fidesz, whose voters tend to share similar attitudes as the Jobbik voters (except with respect to anti-Roma attitudes) (Karácsony & Róna, 2010).

The rise of the radical right can be understood from both demand and supply sides (Mudde, 2007). Jobbik's successes thus is not simply a reflection of its supporters' anti-Roma views (demand side); the reactions of other political forces and the mediatization of radical right politics (supply side) also need to be considered in order to understand how anti-Roma attitudes have been used to achieve political goals. Jobbik made anti-Roma themes (around the concept of "Gypsy crime") the centerpiece of its political rhetoric; but the mainstream media, for its part, made sure those themes remained on the agenda. Jobbik was thus able in certain respects to steer the direction the Roma question took on its journey into the mainstream. The mainstream political elite from both left and right have been complicit in this pursuit, disseminating and legitimating discourses that often have their origins in the far-right (Juhász, 2010). The media that have perpetuated these ideas are either unaware that the content they disseminate is stereotyped, or even racist, or they hold prejudiced views themselves (Bernáth & Messing, 1998, 2013; Ligeti, 2007; Tóth, 2011).

The trigger event—the murder of a Hungarian teacher in the village of Olaszliszka in 2006—contributed to the rise of racism in public speech. This spelled the end of political correctness in Hungary. In 1997, the ombudsman of data protection had issued a resolution that prevented the media from publishing the ethnic background of crime offenders. Media content analysis from that period revealed that until the early 2000s the mention of Roma in relation to crimes dropped significantly (Munk, 2013). The murder of a Hungarian teacher in 2006, however, brought an end to this short period of political correctness. The far-right Jobbik quickly interpreted the murder as an example of "Gypsy crime," tapping into public outrage by inferring that

Gypsies were innate criminals. For Jobbik, this “truth” of “Gypsy crime” had been suppressed by political correctness. Subsequent research on Roma-related media content shows that coverage of crime now openly reveals the ethnic Roma background, even though the 1997 resolution was never rescinded. There is also increasing evidence that far-right rhetoric has spread in the mainstream discourse (Bernáth & Messing, 2013).

The reasons behind the mainstream parties’ failure to denounce the radical right are varied. The previously governing Socialist Party, which in the past articulated and defended an anti-fascist platform, has become too feeble and riven by internal divisions to have a real impact on influencing political discourse. The Greens, a smaller opposition party, has been accused of not being straightforward enough in its condemnation of the radical right. Fidesz, the center-right governing party, has never really articulated strong antiracist discourses, again mainly for political reasons. Whilst both Fidesz and the Socialists do criticize the far-right, much of their energy is focused on blaming each other for the rise of the extreme right. Fidesz argues that the radical right’s activities serve the Socialists’ interests because it makes it easier for them to demonize the center right; the Socialists for their part portray the conservatives as in cahoots with the radical right (Gimes et al., 2009; Magyar, 2011).

Political correctness thus fell victim to the political aspirations of the new far-right party, which saw a political opportunity in tapping into the anti-Roma attitudes of the general population (Bernát, Juhász, Krekó, & Molnár, 2013) with its reinvigoration of “Gypsy crime.” The mainstream political elite have either condoned or adopted this far-right discourse for fear of losing votes from that large segment of the population that holds racist views on the Roma (Juhász, 2010). This in turn helps explain the growing popularity of the radical right. Jobbik was able to exploit the Olaszliszka murder in 2006 to reintroduce “Gypsy crime” into Hungarian political discourse. The failure of established parties to stop this process lent credibility not only to the Gypsy crime discourse itself but to the main purveyors of that discourse, Jobbik. Jobbik effectively shaped the contours of Hungarian political discourse on Roma issues and in so doing cemented its future within the mainstream institutions of the Hungarian political establishment.

## MAINSTREAMING OF RACIST DISCOURSES: ANALYSIS OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF ROMA-RELATED ISSUES

### Research Focus

Our interest is in how these radical right discourses found their way into the organs of mainstream politics in Hungary. Our study thus contributes to wider debates on the right-wing populism. In this article we apply discourse

analysis (Wodak, KhosraviNik, & Mral, 2013; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wodak & Reisigl, 2001) to account for the rise and spread of racist language and the concomitant decline of political correctness. We investigate how radical-right discourses have been received and ultimately transmitted by the mainstream media.

We take Wodak and Reisigl's (2001) premise that racism is a political "fighting word" as our starting point. Racism in this view is both a practice and an ideology that manifests itself discursively. Ian Law argues that two fundamental discourses, racist and antiracist ones, are in struggle with one another in the media (Law, 2010, p. 193). The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the emergence and rise of "coded racism" (that is, adopting a seemingly politically correct language) (Downing & Husband, 2005) that was, as Hall (1997) and Dijk (1987) observed, more dangerous since it was less noticeable and therefore more insidious. The 1990s could be regarded as a new phase in the postwar history of racism. In many countries at the turn of the century there was a backlash against antiracism, which was expressed as a need to "break taboos" (of antiracism) that had allegedly been forced upon society. Another concept, the concept of "new realism" stems from breaking the taboos that had been imposed upon societies by the politically correct or antiracist language of the previous decades; the idea of "no truth about minorities regarding their various negative cultural aspects" (like high rates of criminality, unwillingness to adopt to cultural norms of the majority, etc.) could be voiced publically. This "new realism," as its proponents liked to call it, presented itself as a frank and open discourse about ethnic and racial groups (Prins, 2007). This in turn has heralded a new era of open racism in public and media discourses.

We focus our analysis of media representation of Roma issues in Hungary around two important incidents involving Roma (cases 1 and 2) that proved decisive in reviving racist public discourse in Hungary in the first decade of the 2000s. In the first case, the Roma were the perpetrators of the murder of a non-Roma man and in the second the Roma were the victims of a racially motivated murder by non-Roma Hungarians. The incidents attracted widespread media and public attention and, as we argue, transformed the mainstream public discourse on the "Roma question" by opening the door to explicit and unapologetic racism. The media coverage of these incidents and the public discourse they created could be interpreted as the emergence of the "new realism" or the "breaking of taboos" in Hungary (Prins, 2007). But it was not only the media that contributed to the rise of racist language in public discourse but also mainstream public intellectuals from both the left and the right, who campaigned for the "end of political correctness." In so doing they wittingly or unwittingly provided the ideological support for the spread of racism in mainstream public discourse. In the third part of our analysis (case 3) we analyze a debate on "Roma integration" and "the end of political correctness" that appeared in a left-orientated paper and was

entitled: “Why don’t Hungarian Roma integrate?” The third case is different in genre from the first two in that it does not focus on a specific event and its media representation but on a particular debate. The debate was, however, inspired by these and some similar events serving as a good illustration of the transformation of public discourse. In sum, with the analysis of the cases we intend to explore how racism—either blatant or coded—has become more and more accepted in public discourse and how the mainstream has embraced the radical right’s propositions and turned them into a “digestible” rhetoric while “breaking the taboos” of antiracism.

### Research Method and Research Design

Ruth Wodak and colleagues (Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wodak & Reisigl, 2001) identify five different discursive strategies in discriminatory utterances: (1) *referential or nomination strategy*, which constructs and represents social actors as in-groups and out-groups; (2) *predication strategies*, which make use of “stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits, . . . labeling social actors in a negative or a positive way, deprecatorily or appreciatively” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 73); (3) *argumentation strategies* and *topoi*<sup>2</sup> which are used to justify positive or negative attributions, political inclusion or exclusion, and discriminatory or preferential treatment; (4) *perspectivation, framing, or discourse representation*, through which speakers express “their involvement in discourse and position their point of view” (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 73); and (5) *intensifying strategies* and *mitigating strategies*, which help “qualify or modify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of racist, anti-Semitic, nationalist, or ethnicist utterances” (Wodak & Reisigl, 2001, p. 386).

We analyzed four Hungarian media sources across our different cases according to the above methodology. For the first two cases we included *kuruc.info.hu*, one of the most important radical right-wing Internet websites in Hungary, the left-wing mainstream, moderate *Népszabadság*, and the right-wing (also mainstream) *Magyar Nemzet*. For our third case, we compiled a database from a debate published in the liberal-minded, economic-political weekly, *Heti Világ Gazdaság (HVG)*. For our first two cases we conducted key word searches for “Olaszliszka” and “Tatárszentgyörgy,” the names of the villages where the two killings took place, allowing us to compile a data set containing all relevant articles published since the day the incidents occurred. From this data set we selected opinion articles and examined discursive strategies employed in the articles. For our third case, we used all articles of the above mentioned debate launched by the editors of *HVG*.<sup>3</sup> The selection of the cases can be justified by the fact that each of the cases was a symbolic event generating unprecedented public debates, as well as serves as an eloquent illustration of how the far-right discourses trickled into the mainstream.

### Case 1: Roma as Perpetrators—The Murder in Olaszliszka

In October 2006, a middle-aged teacher was driving through a small village in the north of the country with his two daughters when he accidentally hit a girl crossing the road. As the man got out of his car to help the girl a group of local people including the father of the girl gathered concerned for the girl's well-being. In the ensuing melee, the driver was brutally attacked and killed, all in full view of his two daughters. The attackers were Roma. The girl, who had been hit by the car, had not been injured. Within two days, the police had arrested the perpetrators.

The main discursive trope favored by the radical right website, the *kuruc.info.hu*, to describe the murder was "Gypsy crime":

The Gypsy mob lynched a teacher to death. Another victim of Gypsy terrorism: It is a shame that the Gypsies, after having fucked the possibility for peaceful coexistence, are still free and are attacking us. Us, peaceful Hungarians. They forget to mention that Olaszliszka was not a unique case. In the last sixteen years Gypsy mobs have been attacking peaceful Hungarian citizens in more and more aggressive ways. Gypsy leaders don't want to stop this. (Retrieved from <http://kuruc.info/r/2/6487/>)

For *kuruc.info.hu*, "Gypsy crime" is a fact: deficient Roma attributes explain their criminal behavior. The genetic explanation for "Gypsy crime" can be seen in headings used on the website (e.g., the heading "Gene cemetery" marks the phenomenon of biological racism used in some far-right discourses).

Other strategies used by the website were nomination and predication: the out-group, the Roma, was attributed negative traits by using the expression "Gypsy mob." Other out-groups, such as those that defend the Roma, included "human rights activists" and "Roma leaders." The in-group, in contrast, the Hungarians, were depicted as the peace-loving victims of Gypsy crime. Presenting Hungarians as victims was one of the main strategies used by *kuruc.info.hu*. One headline, "Anti-Hungarianism," sums up the extremist understanding of intergroup relations: on the one side can be found "them," the genetic waste, the criminals, and on the other side "us," the "Hungarians," who are threatened, as the case of Olaszliszka proves, by "them."

The right-wing *Magyar Nemzet* in some cases acted as a mouthpiece for Jobbik quoting—for instance, the party's official response to the event:

Jobbik demands the immediate change of laws infringing legal equality by providing an unduly favourable situation for the Gypsy ethnic group. A radically new and systematically altered Roma politics has to be implemented . . . based on the recognition of the existence of Gypsy crime. (Retrieved from <http://mno.hu/migr/jobbik-olaszliszka-utan-uj-romapolitika-kell-473660>)

*Magyar Nemzet* thus aligned itself with Jobbik by quoting that “Jobbik was appalled to learn that a father who hit a Roma child with his car was beaten to death in Olaszliszka in front of the eyes of his two children” and by criticizing a politically correct official attitude according to which “the media and the authorities in the name of positive discrimination did not mention the ethnic background of the perpetrators” (Retrieved from <http://mno.hu/migr/jobbik-olaszliszka-utan-uj-romapolitika-kell-473660>).

In the same vein, the next day a long opinion article entitled “Gypsylyszka” appeared in the newspaper. Analyzing the article we find evidence of the same main discursive strategy favored on the far-right *kuruc.info.hu*—the characterization of the murder as an example of “Gypsy crime”: “The perpetrators were Gypsies. Several dozens. Several dozens of lynching people.” However, the author of the article aimed also to break the taboo of the prohibition against racial stereotyping in public discourse by delegitimizing those defending minority groups as following:

Now what is to come is that the unbearably abject “human rights defenders” will appear in the media with tears in their eyes. The script is the following: after a couple of days an article will be published that the slaughtered teacher was racist. Then it will be succeeded by a report from the village that reveals that poor Gypsy kids are always run over by cars, and so therefore the life of poor Gypsies in Olaszliszka is a never ending dread. The third report on Olaszliszka will disclose that racism rages in the village and poor defenceless Gypsies are exposed to constant bullying. It is no wonder that they went wild.

So, in this case, the aim is not simply to prove that Gypsies commit crimes, but at the same time to reveal how public understanding and reality has been “distorted” by an antiracist discourse protecting the Roma. The out-groups (nomination) are similar to those found in *kuruc.info.hu*: the Roma and the “civil rights activists”; the in-group is again the majority society (Hungarians). When labeling the groups (predication), *Magyar Nemzet* employs similar strategies, representing the majority society as a victim of the minority society:

We know very well that the state will not guarantee our safety. Similarly we cannot hope that the state will compensate us for our injuries. ... We should shout: the majority society does not have to tolerate this. We are self-destructive fools if we tolerate this. ... Zero tolerance. This should be the new catchword. Nobody will defend our rights. We can depend only on ourselves. (Retrieved from <http://mno.hu/velemenyciganyliszka-473730>)

On the other hand, we have the “unbearably abject human rights activists” and the Roma represented as innately brutal and aggressive, who “suckle criminality from their mothers’ milk and as soon as they become a

majority somewhere, they destroy everything. They abuse and hate Hungarians although they have never received as much money from the state than nowadays” (Retrieved from <http://mno.hu/migr/hvghu-kontra-magyar-nemzet-382895>). In addition, the author of the article aimed to break the taboo of the prohibition against racial stereotyping in public discourse. The “Gypsy crime” topos, however, features somewhat differently from the way it was used in *kuruc.info.hu*. There, “Gypsy crime” is simply taken for granted; there is thus no need to break any taboos.

The mainstream left-wing *Népszabadság* used different discursive strategies when reporting on Olaszliszka. “Gypsy crime” appears only in negation, with the claim that no such phenomenon exists: “This is not a Gypsy issue, but a criminal case” (Retrieved from <http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-421067>). Another strategy adopted by the newspaper is the use of predication. Articles dealing with the desperate situation of the region, where the murderous incident took place, were published in the weeks and months after the murder. Journalists wrote reports and did interviews with people living there, including the Roma. One Roma woman from the village complained:

This incident is disastrous for us. It is horrible what happened but most people generalise, they don't treat us as individuals. . . . The grandfathers and fathers of the new generation had jobs and worked. Now they can only hope for social assistance and public service work. . . . Children growing up in destitution will become desperate themselves. (Retrieved from <http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-421353>)

This strategy presents the Roma as victims of social reality, a socially disadvantaged group.

### Case 2: “Four Men, Nine Cases, Six Dead.” Roma as Victims—The Murder in Tatárszentgyörgy

A series of murderous attacks against the Roma that began in 2008 were later revealed to be racially motivated. The victims all lived in houses situated on the edges of small villages, and the villages were all close to major roads, thus facilitating the gunmen's escape. The gunmen prepared meticulously for their attacks choosing the village, street, and houses carefully. Each attack took place in the middle of the night or at dawn. Molotov cocktails provided the necessary light to make the targets easier to see. The actual victims, all Roma people, however, were randomly picked. In August 2009, four men were arrested by the police on suspicion of murder. The police found neo-Nazi symbols in the suspects' houses establishing the racial motivations of the crimes. The murder in Tatárszentgyörgy of a father and his 5-year-old son marked a turning point in how the police and authorities dealt with

these cases. It was then that the police began to consider possible racial motivations for the attacks. Before, their investigation had focused on the Roma as the perpetrators of the crimes on the assumption that the victims had been involved in some sort of Roma criminal activity or family revenge.

Similar to the Olaszliszka case, one of the most common strategies employed by the radical-right-wing *kuruc.info.hu* in the Tatárszentgyörgy case was nomination whereby the in-group, the majority Hungarians, were presented as the victims. They were the targets of an anti-Hungarian conspiracy: “Anti-Hungarianism: The funeral in Tatárszentgyörgy can be turned into an anti-Hungarian demonstration” (Retrieved from <http://kuruc.info/r/2/36281/>). Predication strategy was also used, with Roma and human rights activists characterized in pejorative, condescending terms: “The left-lib *Kisalföld* [a regional newspaper] wants people to feel sorry for the Moccas [a racialized term for Roma]. It published a timely and juicy Gypsy-pitying article so that our readers can feel even sorer for the persecuted Roma who live in fear” (Retrieved from <http://kuruc.info/r/35/38377/>). The predication strategy does not evaluate only the out-group (Roma) in negative terms but the mainstream media and press agencies as well. The media are depicted as presenting lies and being controlled by Jews: “The race defender, HVG, lies again about racist attacks.—We are used to HVG, which has an editor-in-chief who is a famous news-faker and which used to have a Zionist ex-editor-in-chief, who spread the most brutal Gypsy-coddling, race defender propaganda” (Retrieved from <http://kuruc.info/r/35/38081/>).

The major strategy found in the conservative right-wing *Magyar Nemzet* was the use of the topos “not a hate crime.” Its aim was to prove that the killing was not motivated by racial hatred: “Is it out of the question that racists committed the murder in Tatárszentgyörgy? No, this cannot be excluded, but it is the least likely scenario. Racist attacks everywhere in the world are committed by terrorists who are proud of their deeds and they want their victims to be afraid of them. They make their voice heard somehow, they want publicity” (*Magyar Nemzet*, April 25, 2009). This perspective was repeated not only by journalists writing for the paper, but also by different experts quoted in the paper giving, thus, the interpretation even greater importance and legitimacy. The topos “not a hate crime” constructed with the other topos “Gypsy crime” is a typical case of the “blaming the victim” strategy. The “not a hate crime” strategy proffered that the murder was motivated by “revenge” or “usury.” Conventional wisdom in Hungary holds that these types of crimes are committed mainly by Roma. The clear assumption is that the murderer must have also been Roma: “In Tatárszentgyörgy the perpetrator was most likely Gypsy. I spent a couple of weeks in the village and I know that the relatives of the victim had tense relationships with Gypsy criminals who have guns” (*Magyar Nemzet* 18.06.2009). The aim of *Magyar Nemzet* was to present various types of evidence suggesting that all the Roma in Tatárszentgyörgy, including the murdered man, were criminals.

In this way, *Magyar Nemzet's* coverage of the Tatárszentgyörgy murders harkened back to the "Gypsy crime" topos deployed in the Olaszliszka case: "Without any reason, the Roma attacked a young man in Tatárszetgyörgy. The instigators of the fight were all relatives of Csorba Róbert, the murdered man. . . . The motivation according to the attacked man was that they had drunk too much" (*Magyar Nemzet* 23.05.2009). *Magyar Nemzet* also posited that the Roma could also be guilty of committing racial hate crimes. This could nevertheless be interpreted as part of the "not a hate crime" topos. By turning the hate crime interpretation back on the Roma, the "Gypsy crime" interpretation gained further credibility. "I feel there is a contradiction here. While in case of the Olaszliszka murder where all relevant details are known, we are not supposed to talk about racist emotions or motivations in the name of political correctness. In the case of the Tatárszentgyörgy murder, as soon as we learnt about the ethnic origins of the victims, Roma rights activists immediately label the killing as racial hate crime" (*Magyar Nemzet* 28.03.2009).

The nomination strategy employed in the Tatárszentgyörgy case was used mainly to distinguish between the "human rights activists" and "left-liberals" on the one hand and "majority Hungarians" on the other. The most important "other" is thus the liberal left that advocates human rights and defends the rights of the Roma minority. One of the accusations made against these left-liberals is that they demand the murders in Tatárszentgyörgy and elsewhere to be investigated as racial hate crimes, but without, as *Magyar Nemzet* argues, having any proof. Moreover, the same left-liberals are also guilty of instigating hatred against the Hungarian majority by labeling them racist: "Iványi Gábor [a well-know methodist minister and an outspoken defender of the Roma minority] instigates hatred: He accused the non-Roma population of being accomplices to the murderers even though we don't know anything about the motivation or skin colour of these cold-blooded perpetrators" (*Magyar Nemzet* 05.03.2009). This can be understood as a predication strategy whereby the pejoratively labeled minister is accused of committing the same negative racist deeds that he claims to be criticizing.

In August of 2009, four men were arrested and charged with the Tatárszentgyörgy murders. After they were taken into custody it was announced that the suspects had all possessed neo-Nazi paraphernalia and had also expressed openly radical and racist views. From that point forward, *Magyar Nemzet* stopped reporting on the murders as its main topos, "not a hate crime," was proven to be false. The topic only resurfaced in the pages of *Magyar Nemzet* once the trial began a couple of months later. The tone and language of the articles at that stage became more factual.

The discursive strategies found in the left-wing *Népszabadság* were the opposite to those used by *Magyar Nemzet*. *Népszabadság* deployed the "hate crime" topos as its main discursive strategy. Expert opinions were published in the newspaper that gave credence to racial motivations behind

the crime before anything was actually known about the perpetrators: “It is possible that the family in Tatárszentgyörgy was attacked as a result of a previous conflict, but it is also possible that racism was behind the killing” (*Népszabadság* 23.02.2009).

Roma, the victims, were characterized in a positive light by the paper. Like in Olaszliszka, the predication strategy used by *Népszabadság* for the Tatárszentgyörgy murders called for compassion for the victims whilst expressing its concern for the Roma community given the possibility of future attacks. The victim and his family were portrayed as poor but peaceful and good: “The mayor of Tatárszentgyörgy reported that the murdered man worked regularly. [He] supported [his] family by relying on odd jobs. From the spring till the end of the autumn he worked in construction in the capital. . . . They received housing aid as do all poor families in the village. But they did not always ask for aid” (*Népszabadság* 26.02.2009). The flipside of the predication strategy depicted the right-wing in a negative light and insinuated that the right-wing media and assorted institutions were not doing their job responsibly (insofar as they weren’t taking the possibility of a hate crime seriously). *Népszabadság* was critical of politicians of all persuasions, including a circle of the left-wing intellectuals, for using racist discourses:

Part of the media lacks self-control and instigates hatred that becomes even more plausible in periods like we’re experiencing now. This is part of our media reality. While the right-wing deliberately borrows the rhetoric of the far-right, a segment of the leftist liberal side does the same thing more indirectly but while posing as the brave opponent of political correctness, thus endorsing the prejudicial beliefs of the wider public. (*Népszabadság* 07.08.2009)

### Case 3: The End of Political Correctness—The Roma Integration Debate

Olaszliszka and Tatárszentgyörgy left their imprints on the Hungarian collective consciousness through these diverse and in some cases conflicting representations of the “Roma other” found in the media. As we have seen, the right-wing *Magyar Nemzet* did not shy away from embracing racist discourses that shared much in common with those used by extremist-right-wing *kuruc.info*, while the left-wing paper attempted to establish a competing frame of interpretation. The extreme- and the mainstream-right-wing media influence would have been more limited had it acted alone. However, it was joined by commercial TV channels and to some extent even by the public service media when discussing “Gypsy issues” (Pócsik, 2007). In addition, many leftist papers and weekly magazines (*Népszabadság*, *Figyelő*, *HVG*) launched debates on the question of “Roma integration,” through which an important development began to take shape. Intellectuals with both left

and conservative worldviews participated in the debates and, although their voices were (mainly) moderate, they nevertheless created a new discourse that was not openly but still inherently racist. In the following paragraphs we will present some of the most typical discursive strategies that emerged in and through these debates.

The “Roma integration debate” in *HVG* involved various intellectuals of moderate political backgrounds and featured two main discursive topoi: the “end of political correctness” and the “peculiar Roma civilisation/culture.” The “end of political correctness” topos claimed that political correctness was a mistake and it was time to move beyond it in order to be able to talk about real problems: “PC is gone with the wind. This is not a big loss. Finally we can say what we want and it is not hate speech” (Retrieved from [http://img8.hvg.hu/velemeney/20091106\\_poczok\\_ciganysag\\_szegenysege/2](http://img8.hvg.hu/velemeney/20091106_poczok_ciganysag_szegenysege/2)). Declaring the end of political correctness is not unique to Hungarian politics. This has been termed the emergent “new realism” (Prins, 2007), a phenomenon occurring in a number of Western democratic (and multicultural) societies especially since the 1990s. Prins describes this “new realism” as a powerful discourse that claims to face facts and speak frankly about the truth that had been theretofore covered up by leftist censorship. In this sense it represents the *vox populi*, expressing popular anxieties as well. In Hungary, left liberals are portrayed as the main proponents of political correctness. From the “new realism” perspective, these left liberals have been suppressing the truth by forcing an artificial language upon the people. This “new realism” topos is used in conjunction with a predication strategy that constructs the “left liberals” and “social scientists” as the out-group. Both the validity and utility of the so-called pseudoscientific language of political correctness is called into question. For instance, in what concerns the question of Roma integration, the role of social scientists is directly challenged:

This topic is over-researched. I have been to a Roma settlement which has been invaded by sociologists every year for ten years. ... Their meticulous diagnoses are inconsistent with their proposed remedies: more education, more jobs, less residential segregation, more Roma intellectuals. To be sure, these general statements are politically correct. But digging deeper and asking uncomfortable questions puts them at risk of ideologically motivated attacks, be it about crimes, school segregation, social benefits, corruption, or what we might expect from people living in destitution and trying only to survive. ... It turns out that avoiding talking about these problems has serious consequences, such as the rise of the radicals. (Retrieved from [http://www.solyomlaszlo.hu/beszedek20091013\\_konferencia.html](http://www.solyomlaszlo.hu/beszedek20091013_konferencia.html))

The other topos that found favor in the debate was the idea that the Roma had a “peculiar civilization.” This topos, coupled with the idea of “deliberate

self-exclusion,” gained legitimacy when it found support from a Roma author writing on the topic. The author, Romano Rácz, defined “Roma culture” thus:

The Roma constitute not only a distinct ethnic group, but also a peculiar and particular civilisation that evolved during the long centuries of nomadism; this is a culture of “deliberate outsiders.” This culture included a very thrifty life style that provided very low and modest living conditions that would have been unimaginable for the majority society. At the same time, it also offered security for the community, united as they were in poverty by solidarity. (Retrieved from [http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014\\_roma\\_cigany\\_integracio](http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014_roma_cigany_integracio))

Rácz constructed a Roma identity that is based on essentialist understandings of his own culture. This proved useful to others participating in the debate since it was viewed as confirming their views that certain features of Roma culture are the main obstacle to Roma integration.

This debate in the mainstream-, moderate-, and even leftist-oriented media featured a new discourse on the Roma that gave increasing legitimacy to the idea that Roma culture is directly derived from nomadism. The Roma’s intentional self-exclusion from the majority culture is consequently regarded as a determining feature of the Roma, reinforcing widespread stereotypes that they still want to be outsiders because it is their culture’s essence not to want to integrate.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of the two murders and the Roma integration debate triggered by these incidents revealed key differences and similarities in the discursive strategies deployed by the media. This is summarized in Table 1.

The first case (in which Roma were perpetrators of a murder) shows how the far-right and the right-wing media adopted very similar discursive techniques when discussing the murder. The main difference was that the conservative newspaper borrowed the term “Gypsy crime” from the far-right to challenge the antiracist taboo of not talking about ethnic groups as criminal groups. In contrast, the left-wing newspaper reacted to this by using a “reactionary discursive” technique to directly challenge the notion of “Gypsy crime.” Our second case (where Roma were the victims of a murder) demonstrated how the left-wing newspaper was able to set the discursive agenda by characterizing the murder as a racially motivated hate crime. This time it was the far-right and conservative media that constructed a reactionary discourse by disputing the hate-crime interpretation of the murder. Their response reintroduced the concept of “Gypsy crime”: Roma were still criminals, it was just that this time other Roma were their victims. The

**TABLE 1** Discursive Strategies in Ideologically Different Print and Online Media

Type of Ideological Leaning of Media	Topos (Argumentation Strategy)	Out-groups (Nomination Strategy)	"Enemies" (Predication Strategy)	Interpretation of "Roma Difference"	Outcome of Discourse Strategies
Far-right (kuruc.info.hu)	"Gypsy crime" "No hate crime"	Roma, left liberals, left-liberal media, human rights activists	Hungarians are the liberal human rights activists	Biological and genetic difference	Straightforward racism (biological difference taken for granted)
Conservative right-wing ( <i>Magyar Nemzet</i> )	"Gypsy crime" "No hate crime"	Roma, left liberals, left-liberal media, and human rights activists	Hungarians are the victims of Roma and liberal human rights activists	Biological and genetic difference	Breaking of taboos (biological/cultural difference needs to be recognized)
Nonradical, mainstream, both left and right (Roma integration debate)	"End of political correctness" "Peculiar Roma civilisation" and "Deliberate self-exclusion" "No Gypsy crime" "Hate crime"	Left liberals, left-liberal media, and human rights activists	The majority society is the victim of the hypocrisy of liberals, human rights activists, and social scientists	Cultural difference	Breaking of taboos (cultural difference needs to be recognized)
Left wing ( <i>Népszabadság</i> )	"No Gypsy crime" "Hate crime"	Racists, far-right, anti-PC proponents	Whole society is the victim of the far-right and racism	Socially constructed "other"	Emphasizing the human rights discourse

third case (the integration debate) was triggered by the murders and the media and public debates that followed. The publication of the integration debate in a left-wing liberal weekly magazine was an attempt to invite public intellectuals to discuss Roma issues without succumbing to “extreme” discourses. As the editors explained, “We have had enough of talk about Roma issues that is either dominated by elite hypocrisy<sup>4</sup> or hatred” (Retrieved from [http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014\\_roma\\_cigany\\_integracio](http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014_roma_cigany_integracio)). The debate intended to establish the foundations for a new, more moderate discourse that was neither explicitly racist nor antiracist. But whilst the concept of “Gypsy crime” was carefully avoided, it was ultimately replaced by a new interpretation of “Gypsy culture” that still manifested itself as an exclusionary and ultimately racist discourse.

These findings point to an increasingly nontolerant public discourse that tends to spread to almost all corners of the political spectrum in Hungary. There are several political and social processes that have contributed to this growing trend of nontolerance. On the one hand, there is the rise of radical racist discourses that has accompanied the political successes of the radical-right-wing party, Jobbik. The party managed to set the political and media agenda by thematizing the “Roma question” and (re-)introducing the term “Gypsy crime” with a blatantly racist meaning. On the other hand, nonradical political and public figures from both the left and that right have responded to this thematization of the “Roma question” in a way that has not condemned nontolerant racist discourses, but, on the contrary, has been complicit in legitimating these. By acting as partners in “breaking taboos” they have been also breaking with the tolerant language that had supposedly accompanied those taboos. In the current nontolerant climate, accepting, recognizing, and embracing the (cultural) difference of other ethnic groups has become impossible. “Roma cultural difference” was, however, acknowledged, and even emphasized, but only as grounds for exclusion (via racism) not inclusion. Finally, in Hungary as in certain other post-socialist countries, nontolerance has troublingly become a rallying cry for a good number of political and public actors. State institutions, political parties, and the media have joined forces to fuel suspicion of Roma difference, be it represented in biological or cultural terms. Tolerance as a value has suffered, embraced by only a handful of actors increasingly marginal to the political mainstream. As a result, racism and discrimination have increased with vulnerable groups—mainly the Roma—often left unprotected by institutions.

The rise of radical-right-wing populism all over Europe is connected to many different developments including declining trust in mainstream politics and the rise of media populism. In spite of local variation in the rhetoric employed by extremists parties, radical right-wing parties tend to share the idea that xenophobic and racist views will mobilize otherwise apathetic electorates (Wodak et al., 2013). Thus, growing intolerance toward minorities is either generated or taken advantage of by the far-right. Specific histories of

course yield specific explanations for the success of the far-right in different countries. Thus, the political context and support of the radical populist far-right in postcommunist countries is different as these countries continue to struggle with the consequences of the transition and the different legacies of their communist pasts (Kovács, 2013). In the case of Hungary, all the ills of the democratic transition—a lack of trust in democratic institutions, a weak civil society, and strong authoritarian attitudes—contributed to the success of the new far-right. In addition, the high level of anti-Roma attitudes also contributed to the success of the far-right in Hungary. In fact, our case study exemplifies that the mainstreaming of the far-right's racist discourses could happen in large part because the mainstream society already shared and tolerated most of these views, perhaps in a bit less radical format. This is surely an important difference between postcommunist and Western countries, their political context and the far-right: racism can be found in countries of immigration as well, but whilst this racism typically only becomes explicit on the fringes in these other countries (claimed by the radical right or voiced on extremist websites), the Hungarian case shows how racism can easily go mainstream in a postcommunist country. The recent incidents we have examined in Hungary have been unscrupulously used to legitimate racism in ways that greatly expand the scope of intolerance.

## NOTES

1. "Gypsy crime" is a term that was used in criminology and police discourses in the 1970s and 1980s to refer to certain types of offenses that were recorded as being committed by people of Roma origin. The term was discredited in the 1990s and early 2000s but came into use again after the far-right party, Jobbik, revived it. It refers to crimes committed by Roma and it implies that Roma are innate criminals.
2. Topoi are defined as "content related-warrants or "conclusion rules" which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim." (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 74).
3. Retrieved from [http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014\\_roma\\_cigany\\_integracio](http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014_roma_cigany_integracio). The debate was published between October and November 2009.
4. The antiracists are viewed as hypocrites because they all live in nice bourgeois neighborhoods and talk about and defend Roma without ever meeting them or experiencing any neighborhood conflicts with them.

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