Our proposed project aims to investigate the effects of religion on identity-making, social mobility, and health in Bulgaria and Romania. Situated at the intersection of Religious Studies,Cultural Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, Behavioral Sciences, and critical theories of race, ethnicity, and nationalism, our team will analyze a rich pool of new, non-publicly available data derived from the 2021 population censuses in both countries. We will focus on the ethnic minority groups in Bulgaria and Romania who are predominantly Roma (often racialized as "black"), Turks, and Hungarians as well as the religious minorities of Muslims, Catholics, Protestant, and Jews to identify whether and how different religious identities factor in the ethnic minorities' socio-economic status, mobility, healthcare, and health outcomes.

The scholarly literature on race, ethnicity, and minorities is abundant, but comparative studies are fewer. Work that combines qualitative and quantitative methods is even scarcer, especially in the context of Eastern Europe (see the attached appendix). In December 2022, we obtained unique access to the decennial censuses that include individual-level data on employment status, education, property ownership, medical records and history, household members, ethnicity, and religious affiliation. In the United States, getting access to such data that contains census surveys along with extensive administrative records is extremely rare. In collaboration with researchers from the University of National and World Economy (Bulgaria), the University of Exeter (U.K.), 2 the Bulgarian National Institute of Statistics, and the Romanian National Statistics Institute, we have the data and now together with researchers from Kaiser Permanente have outlined a program to launch a series of studies to delineate the socio-economic and behavioral utility of religion.