

Ana Bracic
Research statement

I explore questions on identity, diversity, and individual behavior. My scholarship is primarily situated in comparative politics, but also extends into international relations and American politics. I am working on several interrelated projects with substantial policy implications. I explore how ingroup/outgroup dynamics affect discrimination, cooperation, and prosociality, and how human rights institutions—NGOs in particular—affect individual behaviors, both from a comparative (Roma project, *APSR* and monograph; refugee project with Isabela Mares) and an international relations angle (solo refugee project; political prisoner project with Amanda Murdie). I write on community engagement in research in the context of comparative (*PS: Political Science & Politics*) and American politics (*Oklahoma Politics*, with Mackenzie Israel-Trummel and Allyson Shortle). Similarly, I am exploring how gender and beliefs about gender affect individual behavior among the Roma (with Angéla Kóczé) and among Americans (*Political Behavior*, with Mackenzie Israel-Trummel and Allyson Shortle). Finally, I am beginning a project on democratic erosion in Hungary with Isabela Mares. The paragraphs below offer more detail on each of these projects.

Social Exclusion of Roma

Social exclusion of marginalized populations is an intractable problem of global relevance. It occurs when individuals or groups cannot participate in typical activities of the societies in which they live. For some, that means having to go to a segregated school. For others, it means not being able to get gainful employment; for others still, it means not having access to quality healthcare. Minority groups in a number of diverse nations contend with social exclusion. My book, under contract with *Oxford University Press*, develops a theory of how individual behaviors contribute to its persistence, and presents a possible solution. I introduce the “exclusion cycle,” which consists of four parts. Anti-minority culture (part 1) gives rise to discrimination by members of the majority (part 2). Members of the minority anticipate maltreatment and develop survival strategies (part 3). Members of the majority often disapprove of minority’s survival strategies and attribute them to the minority as such, and not the discrimination, and so commit an attribution error (part 4). Such errors feed the existing anti-minority culture and the cycle repeats. My book offers evidence that the cycle can be broken, showing that NGO-promoted dialogue and intergroup contact strategies can help reduce discrimination against marginalized populations. The empirical work in the book is centered on the social exclusion of Roma (derogatively known as “Gypsies”). I provide original evidence I collected over twelve months of fieldwork; the centerpiece are experiments conducted with a videogame I created to capture discrimination and survival strategies within a single, contained environment. In addition to the book, I plan to publish two articles showcasing the theory and the videogame as a method of gathering data in difficult settings, among vulnerable populations.

Findings from an earlier stage of this project were published in the *American Political Science Review*. The article examines the effectiveness of (1) the EU accession process, a powerful combination of incentives and norm promotion, and (2) bottom-up NGO-ed promotion of

intergroup contact in reducing individual-level discrimination against the Roma. I find that, contrary to received wisdom, the EU accession process does not appear to reduce individual-level discrimination against the Roma, but that ground level organizing aimed at improving Roma/non-Roma relations might. This suggests that formal policy change, even as powerful as that required by the EU, has limitations and that efforts by third-party organizations can sometimes be more influential on the ground.

Ongoing work: Much of my upcoming research agenda builds on the theory presented and illustrated in my book. Future projects will endeavor to comprehensively test and further refine the exclusion cycle in more dynamic and diverse settings. I have started to develop a study on very recent attempts at institutional ghettoization in Denmark (aimed at predominantly Muslim immigrants) and the ways in which individual behaviors interact with these new institutions. I hope to further examine the links between the constitutive parts of the cycle in the US context, looking at black and white Americans, redistributive preferences, and welfare stereotypes.

Refugees

Today, more people are displaced than ever before and xenophobic reactions to those who seek refuge abound, especially in the West. This article tests the effectiveness of a policy strategy that aims to curtail such reactions: raising the salience of an identity that hosts and refugees share. I examine how Serbian residents who were displaced during the Yugoslav wars in the 1990s react to Syrian refugees traveling the Balkan route. I manipulate the salience of their identity as displaced individuals and then capture their altruism towards a Syrian refugee family in need. While I succeed in substantially increasing the salience of their displaced identity, treated Serbian residents express neither higher nor lower levels of altruism. Participants who witnessed someone being hurt during the conflict, however, contribute significantly *less* to the family when their displaced identity is more salient. This finding speaks to research on relative identity salience and violence prevention among refugee and host societies, and cautions humanitarians aiming to exploit a commonality of hardship to exercise care in designing interventions. This article is under review.

Ongoing work: Isabela Mares and I are preparing to field a survey for a project exploring medium-term effects of exposure to refugees traveling the Balkan route. We will field the survey on the Hungarian side of the Hungarian-Serbian border, exclusively at sites of “green” (non-sanctioned) border crossings. In order to gain deeper insight into how and why intergroup contact might affect political attitudes and behaviors, and to inform policy decisions in this area, we aim to explore not only whether participants saw refugees but also how they think about the encounter. Examining whether and how attitudes and behaviors change when contact occurs in an explicitly unfriendly political environment will broaden research in this area, which has predominantly focused on positive contact.

Gender

Angéla Kóczé, a Roma scholar, and I are exploring whether women are better able to bridge ethnic cleavages in divided societies by studying levels of cooperation among Roma and non-

Roma men and women. Results from an iterated public goods game show that Roma women systematically contribute more to the common good than Roma men. For an explanation, we turn to traditional gender roles among Roma and the way they interact with an environment where anti-Roma sentiment and discrimination flourish.

In *Political Behavior*, Mackenzie Israel-Trummel, Allyson Shortle, and I study the relationship between sexism and presidential vote choice in the context of the 2016 general election. We argue that Hillary Clinton's candidacy and Donald Trump's sexist rhetoric implicated gender and activated gender attitudes such that sexism was associated with vote choice. Using an Election Day exit poll survey of over 1,300 voters conducted at 12 precincts in Oklahoma City and a national survey of over 10,000 white and black Americans, we find that a politically defined measure of sexism—the belief that men are better suited emotionally for politics than women—predicts support for Trump in terms both of vote choice and favorability. This effect is strongest and most consistent among White participants. This study uses exit polling data collected by students in the Community Engagement + Experiments Lab (CEEL), which we co-founded and co-direct.

Ongoing work: Sarina Reinhardt (an OU PhD student), Mackenzie Israel Trummel, Allyson Shortle, and I will use 2018 exit polling data, collected by CEEL, to examine the relationship between the Oklahoma teachers' strike, sexism, and vote choice. This article's proposal has been accepted for a symposium on state and legislative elections in *PS: Political Science & Politics*.

Community engagement

In *PS: Political Science & Politics* I argue that including members of the researched community in the research process can result in better science. Drawing on my research on Roma/non-Roma relations, I discuss the role community members can play in 1) identifying and correcting dominant but incorrect interpretations, 2) helping fine-tune a study design to better fit the local context, and 3) adjusting the method of delivery such that other community members are more comfortable participating.

In *Oklahoma Politics*, Mackenzie Israel-Trummel, Allyson Shortle, and I analyze our 2016 election exit poll data and find that racial attitudes explain opposition to a state measure to reclassify drug-related offenses as misdemeanors. We also outline the pedagogical benefits of community-based learning, detailing how we prepare students for fieldwork and how they respond to a hands-on teaching experience.

NGOs

Amanda Murdie and I explore whether attempts by repressive governments to discredit political prisoners affect individual support for a human rights organization (HRO) mobilizing on behalf of that prisoner. When governments respond to HRO claims by labeling the abused as a terrorist, participants are much less likely to be spurred into certain types of action, like signing a petition, and find the specific case less upsetting. We do not find that trust in

the information provided by an HRO is harmed by being associated with someone labeled a terrorist. This article is under review.

Democratic erosion

Ongoing work: In recent years, Hungary has experienced a dramatic erosion of its democratic institutions, including restrictions on the ability of NGOs to function, restrictions of press freedom, and restrictions of the ability of courts to challenge the government. Despite the dissatisfaction of some segments of the electorate, an overwhelming number of Hungarian voters have endorsed these policy changes and have not punished the incumbent party. Isabela Mares and I seek to understand the factors contributing to the absence of popular opposition to democratic erosion. Using survey-based experiments, we will examine how the political rhetoric used by the incumbent has blurred voters' perceptions about the long-term implications of the erosion of democratic institutions.