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IRIS Award Report

During the summer of 2023, I used the IRIS award money by traveling to conduct research and enrolling in language courses. As a sociologist of hierarchy who studies historical manifestations of transnational, phenotypic hierarchies (specifically, the roots and causes of white supremacist/nationalist violence in Central and Eastern Europe), it is difficult to find funding to support my research. This award not only allowed me to conduct archival research on primary sources, it also allowed me to strengthen my German language skills while conducting this research.

To begin, I enrolled in German language courses taught by either native German speakers or foreigners who have fluency. The German structure of education is a bit different than the American structure and the expectation from the instructors was a bit unnatural at first. But once I became familiar with the different pedagogical norms of German instructors, I was able to navigate the course well. We discussed intermediate language skills, such as forming relative clauses, word placement dependent on structure of sentence, and compound sentences for most of the sessions. The German language has strict rules regarding placement of verbs, nouns, adjectives, etc. and, depending on the meaning and word choice, the placement of these words will change. Also, when there are compound sentences (such as relative clauses) the placement becomes even more complicated. However, after some time, I was able to understand the rules and partially internalize them to discern the overall meaning of what I was reading. This instruction helped immensely with the research that I conducted.

I traveled to three different places to conduct my research: National Archives in College Park, MD; Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.; and a foreign language library while on the east coast. My research in the National Archives was the main purpose of my fellowship money. I traveled from Washington, D.C. to College Park, MD — about 25 minutes — and had to register within the archives, buy a locker key to place my materials in, request the archival materials, and use specialized computers to view the microfilms from Nazi Germany that I was examining. The purpose of my research here was to understand how the German people engaged with the Nazis pre- and postwar. I was able to see reports from German state officials postwar and read, in German, how they either continued to support or disparaged the Nazi regime for their role in the Second World War and the Holocaust, which was still being fully discovered at this time. I spent hours over the next couple of days in this archive exploring the different documents and statements of people who worked at different levels within the Nazi regime.

Next, I traveled back to Washington, D.C. and, on a day that I didn't go to the archives, I visited the Holocaust Museum. This trip was not initially part of my fellowship plan, but I decided to visit the museum to see if it would explain not just what happened during the Holocaust, but how the officials came to that decision (and how the German people relatively supported it). Luckily, the first floor of the museum explains exactly this phenomenon. The museum details

how the loss of the First World War created resentment in Germany and how that resentment was used, and then weaponized, against particular groups of people in German society. Paired with the archival research, which was largely about the postwar era, the information I gathered from the museum's numerous exhibits were invaluable in beginning to understand the prewar (or interwar) era of German society.

Finally, I visited a foreign language library while in Washington, D.C. and found a book entitled, *Die Tötengräber: Der letzte Winter der Weimar Demokratie* (Gravediggers: The Last Winter of the Weimar Republic). This book takes a deep dive into the last few months of the Weimar Republic — before the Nazis rose to power — and explains exactly what happened, how it happened, and who was influential in these events. This book, more than any other book I've found thus far, has opened a door for my dissertation research that was previously unknown. Without the IRIS award money that 1) supported my German language acquisition and 2) supported my travel and stay on the east coast, I would not have found this invaluable resource that has been fundamental in my continued dissertation research.