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IRIS funds enabled me to travel to and live in Mumbai, Maharashtra, for a period of 10 days in February 2020 to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in two sites for two research projects.

One project, Global StoryBridges (www.globalstorybridges.com), is an online platform that links youth across the world, enabling them to share stories of their lives and communities through digital communication as they learn English and technology skills. I am one among several transnational researchers in the research project. Per the project website: At each global site youth, with adult facilitation, collaboratively create, share and discuss digital stories. Youth participants live in communities of poverty and are English language learners. Participating youth represent their unique lives and communities through the creation of video stories, utilizing a full range of multimodal communication. Youth in each site work collaboratively; they decide what to represent and how to tell their stories, watch and discuss videos from other sites, decide together what questions and comments to pose and how to respond to questions and comments from others. IRIS funds enabled my travel to and from the Mumbai project site to conduct 2 semi-structured formal interviews, 3 informal interviews, 1 instance of participant observation as local youth in the project engaged with the digital stories of another international site. The benefit of this research is advancing theoretical and methodological scholarship on research with individuals in diverse transnational sites in cross-cultural communication with one another. We intend to use the data to publish in peer-reviewed journals and present at international conferences.

The second project is led by me and inquires into the languaging and literacy practices of Indian American youth in the US. Early fieldwork in the Midwest (not funded by IRIS) pointed at transnational, transcontextual connections in language and literacy materials used by Indian American youth and their families. IRIS funds enabled my conducting of 2 semi-structured formal interviews, 1 informal interview, and the collection of textual materials available only locally in Mumbai/India. The data were rich and will feed into my dissertation, fieldwork for which—as of this writing of this letter—is intended to begin in Fall 2020. However, the data also currently are being featured in an article I am currently writing that I intend to publish in an anthropology of education journal. This article is based on an (accepted) proposal for a conference presentation at the prestigious international Sociolinguistics Symposium in Hong Kong that was initially scheduled for June 2020 but canceled on account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is no doubt that neither the career-advancing opportunities nor the opportunities for first-hand training in qualitative research I have experienced in my graduate career would have been possible without the immensely generous gift of funds by IRIS. I am spiritually indebted to IRIS and express my infinite gratitude to them.