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Scott Kloeck-Jenson Pre-dissertation Travel Fellowship (2017)
Germany

Thanks to the gracious support of the Scott Kloeck-Jenson Fellowship, I conducted preliminary dissertation field research in Germany for ten weeks, from June 18 to August 24. The fieldwork was a valuable opportunity and extraordinary experience to hear the firsthand stories of Iranian migrants in Germany.

I have had the privilege to volunteer with refugee resettlement organizations inside and outside of United States. Prior to attending University of Wisconsin – Madison, I volunteer-taught German to refugees from the Middle East in Wiesbaden, Germany. The refugees I encountered in this educational setting inspired me to do research project about their language and culture learning experience. Since coming to UW – Madison, I did research on immigration and education, especially language learning experience by adult immigrant learners.

This led me to my dissertation project, *Immigration and Multilingualism: An ethnography of Iranian Migrants in Germany*, for which I am studying how these migrants assimilate to the German society, how they learn the German language and culture, and how they feel about their lives outside of Iran. I will be looking at the personal stories that the research participants kindly shared with me from the perspective of second language acquisition: what educators and researchers should know about this group of migrants, and how they can better help them to learn a second language and culture.

During my stay in Germany I interviewed forty-seven participants who shared with me their life stories from the time they lived in Iran until now in Germany. The interviews were conducted in Duisburg, Cologne, Bonn, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden, Passau, and Magdeburg. The ability to be in country and meet with them in person was tremendous in helping me understand their situation and establish myself as an emerging scholar in the field. I especially developed a deep understanding of the conditions that refugees face in Germany and in Europe.

I visited refugee camps in Wiesbaden and Magdeburg. Here, I engaged in ethnographic research. I spent my days becoming intimately acquainted with the lives of these migrants and the educational staff who volunteer-taught German and also helped refugees to overcome their problems. I was constantly amazed by this deeply devoted and progressive group of educators. They were extremely enthusiastic and supportive, demonstrating their commitment to invest in each and every person to connect them to the Western society and help them start a new life. I had the privilege to teach at one of the language courses that was offered to the Persian and Arabic speaking learners. I was also given the opportunity to visit hospitals and participate in educational programs for refugee mothers with toddlers. I got the privilege to meet and interview the restless staff of the Entknoten, Counseling Center Against Everyday Racism and Discrimination, in Magdeburg. I met with Mr. Keywan Tonekaboni, one of the counselors who was doing an amazing job helping refugees in East Germany. He kindly gave me a tour of their center and organized a visit to two refugee camps.

This extraordinary opportunity and the information collected during my two months' stay in Germany in the summer of 2017 is extremely helpful for my dissertation project. I also think that this experience had a great impact on my personal life. I am immensely grateful for SKJ Fellowship. Without the generous support from the Jenson family, this could have not been possible.