



A nurse working for the Third Reich: Eva Justin, RN, PhD

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Abstract

Eugenics underpinned the Nazi race theories which saw the murder of over 10 million people from “undesirable” groups, including Sinti (referred to in Nazi times as “Gypsies”), during the Holocaust. Eva Justin, from Dresden, completed a doctoral dissertation which examined a group of Sinti children of St Josef’s Home in Mulfingen, Germany. She aimed to prove the racial inferiority of these children; her work was done with no informed consent, and the children were sent to Auschwitz after her experiments. The study was supported by senior Nazis, supervised by Nazi “scientists” and examined by committed Nazis. We argue that her work was biased, poorly designed, and ultimately unethical, but was in keeping with methods of the emerging disciplines of anthropology and racial hygiene, in Germany and other countries, at the time. It is not possible to say that her work caused the children to meet their deaths (of the 39 children she included, only four survived); however, she did reinforce the Nazi racial theories. It is unfortunate that one of the first nurses in the world to receive a PhD did so through research attempting to prove that a group of children were “racially inferior” in support of National Socialism.

Keywords

Nursing, Nazi, Holocaust, history, ethics, Gypsy, children, Sinti

Introduction¹

Nursing as a profession first started to educate nurses to the doctoral level in the 1950s in the United States of America and later in other countries.² The role of nurses in the Nazi era has been ignored until recent times,^{3,4} but is now receiving the attention it deserves. This includes their roles in research.

In the early 1940s, there were very few doctorally prepared nurse researchers anywhere in the world. Eva Justin was an exception and earned her PhD by researching “racial hygiene” with Dr Robert Ritter, a prominent scientist in the Third Reich. It is useful to examine her life and career as exceptional in terms of academic achievement during that time, as questionable in terms of scholarship, and as problematic in the exploitation of children who were members of one of the Nazis’ persecuted groups, designated by the National Socialist government as “racially inferior.” Using both primary sources including her personnel file from the city of Frankfurt am Main, her doctoral dissertation, and her “de-Nazification” documents and relevant secondary sources in both German and English, this paper examines Eva Justin’s actions, and in particular her work with the Gypsy children of

Sankt Josefspflege (St Josef’s Home) in Mulfingen, in south central Germany.

Justin was born in 1909 in Dresden, trained as a nurse in Tübingen, graduating in 1934,⁵ and became a member of the German Red Cross and the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF)* (German Workers’ Front) (Justin, *Lebenslauf*, no page number, *Lebensschicksale artfremd erzogener Zigeunerkinde und ihrer Nachkommen*).⁶ Little is known about her personal life other than that she remained single and adopted two children, Hannelore, born 16 January 1940 and Beate, born 30 June 1941.⁷ After graduating from her nursing program, she worked in the Tübingen Youth Center Clinic where she met Robert Ritter, then head physician at the clinic. When

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Ritter was transferred from Tübingen to the Race Hygiene and Population Research Office at the Reich Health Agency in Berlin-Dahlem in 1936, he immediately arranged for Justin's transfer to the same agency and is reported to have kept Justin as his "mistress."⁸ From 1936 until 1945, she was employed as a research assistant in the criminal health division of the agency.⁹

Nazi racial policy and the Gypsies

Nazi racial policy was founded in the "science" of eugenics which was widely adopted not only in Germany but in the US and throughout Europe as well. The term "eugenics," meaning a good birth, was introduced by Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, in 1883. Eugenics was defined as a science studying heredity and developing a stronger race. Positive eugenics was the encouragement of the transmission of positive traits through "racial purity" whereas negative eugenics discouraged the transmission of negative traits through decreased fertility including sterilization of individuals believed to have these traits. The term "*Rassenhygiene*" (racial hygiene) was introduced in 1885 by the German eugenicist, Dr Alfred Ploetz in his book "The Excellence of Our Race and the Protection of the Weak." In this, Ploetz presented the view that the protection of the "weaker" members of a society threatened the overall quality of a race.¹⁰ This view concurred with that of Galton expressed in "Hereditary Genius," published in 1869, where Galton stated that "the incompetent, the ailing and the desponding" were threats to society because their children would be sick, miserable, and poor.¹¹

In the early 1900s, German anthropologist Eugen Fischer became a leader in eugenics and carried out much of his research in the African country of Namibia (known then as German Southwest Africa). Between 1904 and 1908, up to 100,000 Herero and Nama people were subjected to observation, measurement, incarceration, and murder in what, in many ways, became a blueprint for the Nazi era. Fischer published his findings in 1913 in a book entitled "*Die Rehoboter Bastards und das Bastardisierungsproblem beim Menschen*" (The Rehoboth Bastards and the Problem of Miscegenation among Humans). In this, in addition to objecting to marriage between blacks and whites, Fischer objected to those who were colored, Jewish, and Gypsy mixed race people, known as *Mischlinge* ("cross breeds").¹²

An important link is established here between the early days of eugenics and the ultimate fate of the Sinti children studied by Eva Justin. First, Fischer specifies Gypsy mixed race people as being objectionable, as did Robert Ritter later. Also significant is the fact that Eugen Fischer became the mentor of Dr Josef Mengele, the Auschwitz physician who experimented upon many Gypsy children

and who, in fact, "liquidated" the Gypsy population of Auschwitz by sending them to the gas chamber.

Like the Jews, the Roma and Sinti were targeted by the National Socialists as being racially inferior. In addition to aspects of race, Gypsies were regarded as being prone to participating in criminal activities.¹³ In the autumn of 1935, Gypsies, like the Jews, were subjected to the Nuremberg Race Laws and the "marriage health law" which forbade marriage between Gypsies (and other "inferior" races) and Germans.¹⁴ Beginning in 1936, Nazi policy mandated the rounding up of Gypsies and sequestering them in Gypsy camps. In the same year, Dr Robert Ritter became director of the Race Hygiene and Population Biology Research Office, which was a part of the Reich Health Office in Berlin-Dahlem. It was Ritter's research that classified Gypsies according to their physical characteristics, health, genealogy, criminal activity, and other factors.¹⁵ This research attempted to provide a "scientific" basis for the concentration of the Gypsies in camps and later their extermination.

Upon starting his new position in Berlin, Ritter declared that there was not "a single useful study about the Gypsies living in Germany" and it was essential "to supply the documentation for the radical measures expected to go into effect soon."¹⁶ Thus, Ritter sought to provide the "scientific" basis for the sterilization, deportation, and elimination of the Gypsies. He championed the hypothesis that the Gypsies were "inferior" and, in a complete abrogation of good scientific principle (which requires that hypotheses are for testing and cannot be made to fit a preconceived idea), sought the data to support this hypothesis.

Ritter's goal was to register and assess all Gypsies living in Germany. His work was regarded as important to the Nazi notion of the "racial inferiority" of the Roma and Sinti population and, along with Justin, received significant funding for the research. A particular goal of their research was to do genetic testing on "Gypsy cross-breeds, etc."¹⁷ The name of their study was "One breed of people-medical and genetic examinations of the ten generations of descendants of hobos, crooks, and robbers [*Ein Menschenschlag – ärztliche und erbgesundheitliche Untersuchungen über die durch zehn Geschlechterfolgen erforschten Nachkommen von 'Vagabunden, Jaunern und Räubern'*]."¹⁸

Ritter was able to obtain a list of "vagabonds" from Munich which contained 19,000 names. From Karlsruhe, he obtained a similar list with 5000 names. He and his research team, including Eva Justin, began by visiting Gypsy camps and measuring the physical features of the residents and obtaining their personal histories. They were able to access the populations by learning the Romani language and bringing small gifts such as candy (sweets); sometimes they even

posed as missionaries.¹⁹ In addition to their visits to Gypsy camps, they visited Gypsies imprisoned in concentration camps.²⁰ Their research gathered strength as a decree was issued in Himmler's name on 8 December 1938 entitled "Combating the Gypsy Plague."²¹ The regulation for the analysis of the "racial-biological assessments of the Gypsies" was decreed on 7 August 1941 and consisted of the following categories:

1. Z (*Zigeuner*)—a full-blood Gypsy
2. ZM+ (*Zigeuner-Mischling*)—predominantly Gypsy-blooded mixed breed
3. ZM (*Zigeuner-Mischling*)—Gypsy mixed-breed
4. ZM- (*Zigeuner-Mischling*)—predominantly German blood
5. NZ (*Nicht-Zigeuner*)—non-Gypsy

By spring 1942, 30,000 Gypsies and "mixed-breed" Gypsies had been registered.²²

Ritter's own bias is seen in the following quotes:

It would be best to gather and categorize those families in yards from where the police should put them into enclosed colonies. There, a family life would only be allowed after previous sterilization of those persons still able to reproduce. . . . The primitive human being won't change and cannot be changed. . . . Instead of implementing punitive actions we need to establish facilities which are able to prevent further creation of primitive asocials and criminals from crook families by means of gender separation or castration.²³

Ritter and his team of other physicians and district nurses found that many of the Gypsies were not racially "pure"; that is, many had intermarried. This became particularly significant on 16 December 1942 when Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler ordered the deportation of all Gypsy "mixed breeds" to Auschwitz concentration camp.

Families are supposed to be deported as complete as possible, including all children who are not economically independent. If there are children who have been institutionalized in public welfare facilities or otherwise, their reunification with their clan is to be arranged prior to the arrest if possible. The course of action is similar for Gypsy children whose parents are deceased, housed in concentration camps or other facilities.²⁴

German Gypsies who were "racially pure" as well as those consistently employed had a permanent residence and/or those who had served in the military were exempt from this deportation. All remaining Gypsy individuals over 12 years of age who were not deported

were ordered to be sterilized.²⁵ Of those who were sent to Auschwitz, 19,000 died of starvation or disease or were killed in the gas chambers.²⁶

Eva Justin's research

The so-called Homing Decree issued by the Württemberg Secretary of the Interior on 7 November 1938 called for the relocation of Gypsy and "Gypsyish" children from their homes to St. Josef's Home, a Catholic orphanage, in Mulfingen. Many of these children were taken from their families by police who arrested the parents and sent them to concentration camps such as Buchenwald for men and Ravensbrück for women. It was these children who were the subjects of Justin's research and they were kept in the orphanage until she completed her doctoral degree at the University of Berlin.²⁷

Justin had not had a traditional university education and Ritter did not have a university appointment; however, she was admitted to the University of Berlin in 1939.²⁸ Thus, her admission to PhD candidacy was entirely in recognition of the importance to the Reich of the research on Gypsies, one of the populations targeted as "inferior." Justin's admission was supported by Eugen Fischer, a renowned proponent and researcher of racial hygiene (previously described for his "research" in Namibia), as well as three leaders of the Third Reich: Hans Reiter of the Reich Health Office, Herbert Linden of the Reich Ministry of the Interior, and Paul Werner, Deputy Chief of the Central Office of the Reich Detective Forces.²⁹ Ethnologist Richard Thurnwald, known as one of the founders of racial hygiene, sponsored, that is formally recommended, Justin's enrolment into a doctoral research program.³⁰ The title of Justin's dissertation was *Lebensschicksale artfremd erzogener Zigeunerkinde und inhrer Nachkomen* ("Life fates of alien-raised Gypsies and their descendants").³¹ (The dissertation is available in German online).³²

Although many public foster care authorities and personnel pointed out the "inferiority" of Gypsy and "Gypsyish" children, according to Meister³³ this was not the attitude held by the nuns and personnel of the St. Josef's Home. There, teachers and caregivers enabled the children to "live as complete equals in their community."³⁴ The children of St. Josef's Home became the subjects of Justin's doctoral research project because the foster home was instructed by the authorities to "support the scientist and to give her any information desired."³⁵ The children were initially spared deportation to Auschwitz, possibly at the request of Ritter, so that they could be Justin's research subjects. In the introduction to her dissertation, Justin clearly indicated her bias:

May this study in accordance with his [Ritter's] beliefs also be a small contribution to the solution of the

asocials problem and may it offer our lawmakers further background for the upcoming eugenic regulation which will prohibit the continued infiltration of the German Volk by inferior, primitive genetic material.³⁶

For six weeks, Justin lived at St. Josef's Home. She stated

I observed all Württemberg Gypsy children who had been removed from their parents. They are raised under relatively favorable conditions together with *jeniche*³⁷ children and a small fraction of German children in the welfare system. I conducted psychological tests and observed in particular their reactions to the upbringing alien to their species.³⁸

The questions that Justin was attempting to answer—albeit with the aforementioned bias—were “To what extent are these primitives able to adapt? And to what extent can we even – especially in our own interest – integrate them?”³⁹ Given that Himmler had already ordered the deportation of the Gypsies to concentration camps, the second question seems rhetorical at best.

Meister interviewed a former teacher at St. Josef's, Johanna Naegele, who recalled Eva Justin's visits to the home where Justin, who gave herself the title of *Versuchsleiterin* (Examiner-in-Chief) (VL),⁴⁰ critically observed the children and discussed them with the nuns and teachers. According to the teacher, Justin regarded the children as “nothing but ‘research objects,’ thus a mere means to an end.”⁴¹ Indeed, Justin “strongly opposed the upbringing (of the Gypsy children) which was ‘alien to the species’ identical to that of the children who had been living at the home for years.”⁴²

Justin, the VL, described one of her visits to the children:

When the VL visited with the Gypsy children they were initially very shy, reserved and tight-lipped. When she observed one of them for just a few moments, the child disappeared from her view like a weasel. She tried to strike up a conversation with two of the older children, Zweigerli and Dudela. At first this was not successful. Except for a whispered “yes” or “I don't know” they would not reply anything. When the VL then addressed them in their language, they laughed insecurely and embarrassed. They did not remember much of it, most words they had forgotten because they were only allowed to speak German in the facility. But the words they heard for the first time again after two years were familiar, they were theirs. While the older one, Dudela, more limited in her intellectual and mental constitution, remained unsure of the new situation and only slowly came to trust the VL, the intelligent, lively 14 year-old Zweigerli came to trust her within a

few minutes. The mask of the well-trained student came off and the little Gypsy regained his naive security quickly. . . .

They adored roundels. They got lost in the rhythm of the song and in the play of the bodies; so much that they didn't notice the observer with the feared camera anymore. Maila had put a white flower in her hair, which slowly came undone from her tight braids. The 12 year-old school girl had become a wildly dancing bayadere. “Gypsy blood” the caretaking nuns said, smiling embarrassed, as if to apologize, without being able to distance themselves entirely from the lure of this genuineness and harmony. That's when the child saw her audience. She blushed, her face took on a closed-off expression and she then only continued dancing in a detached, almost clumsy manner.⁴³

Although Justin's description is interesting, it seems devoid of the scientific content ordinarily expected in a doctoral thesis or dissertation today. Particularly puzzling—and without apparent scientific merit—was her potato-harvesting competition in which Justin observed the children and compared German, Gypsy, part-Gypsy, and *Yeniche* (*jeniche*) children for rapidity in harvesting potatoes, describing their efforts as “lame, diligent, somewhat superficial, steady, very orderly, eager, inconsistent, and exceptionally honest.”⁴⁴ To consider her assessment standards, how does one operationalize such terms as “lame” or evaluate “exceptionally honest”?

In addition to her potato-harvesting competition, Justin measured the heads of the children, noted their eye color and photographed them. She gave them prizes for winning in athletic games. In contrast to the nuns of St. Josef's Home who encouraged the children to be orderly and clean, Justin encouraged them to climb trees and “run wild in the woodlands as if they were primitives.”⁴⁵ From these behaviors, Justin concluded that the children's morals were “even worse” than those who had remained with their parents and nomadic tribes. She concluded that assimilation made no difference and that the only solution was to sterilize all of them, including most of those who were “half-Gypsy.”⁴⁶

Eugen Fischer, Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology (1927–1942),⁴⁷ and leading Nazi “racial scientist” was instrumental in facilitating Justin's PhD from the University of Berlin. She “supposedly studied anthropology, genetic psychology, race hygiene, criminal biology, and ethnology – although she could not provide evidence of a methodical program of study when she registered for [i.e. submitted] her doctorate in 1943.”⁴⁸

The title of Justin's dissertation was “The Fates of Alien-raised Gypsy Children and their Progeny” (*Lebensschicksale artfremd erzogener Zigeunerkinde*

und ihrer Nachkommen) and attempted to document the “limits of educability” of the Gypsy children.⁴⁹ Justin concluded that the Gypsy children “could not ever become socially well-adjusted adults even if they were removed from their families and sent to special schools, and that they too must be sterilized.”⁵⁰ Justin successfully completed her oral examination on 24 March 1943. Examiners were Eugen Fischer, Richard Thurnwald, Robert Ritter, and Wolfgang Abel and, interestingly, the oral examination was held in Ritter’s home.⁵¹ Why these highly placed Reich scientists would accept this study as a favor to Robert Ritter is at least partially explained by Justin’s letters of recommendations from prominent Nazis including Hans Reiter (President of the Reich Health Office), Herbert Linden (Hitler’s Reich Deputy for Sanatoriums and Hospitals and a prominent figure in the Nazi “euthanasia” program), and Paul Werner (Deputy of the Central Office of the Reich Detective Forces).^{52,53} Despite “not meeting basic scientific standards,” Justin’s dissertation was awarded by the University of Berlin on 5 November 1943 and published in Spring 1944.⁵⁴

Shortly after completing her research, the perilous bombing of Berlin by Allied forces compelled Justin and Ritter to move to Fürstenberg, not far from the women’s concentration camp at Ravensbrück. They worked as assessors at the “*Jugendschutzlagern*” (youth protection camps) at Moringen and Uckermark camps for males and females, respectively, where their racial theories began to be put into practice. Ritter arranged the camps according to racial status, and between February and October 1944 he and Justin signed 1320 reports about persons’ racial status.⁵⁵ These reports decided the fate of the young prisoners, which included forced sterilization, and transfer to Auschwitz or Ravensbrück.

The fate of the Gypsies

Upon completion of Justin’s doctoral degree, the 39 children who had been her research subjects were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau on 9 May 1944.⁵⁶ The deportation process for the Gypsy children began in January of that year when officers from the Criminal Investigation Department came to St. Josef’s home to finalize the deportation order for every Gypsy child; however, the officers were told to not let “the Gypsyish person know that their arrest was impending.”⁵⁷ Children were questioned alone, without the presence of any of the home’s staff who were not informed of the reason for the interviews. Afterward, the children laughingly described the fingerprinting procedure to the staff saying that “the men had made their fingers black and pushed them on paper.”⁵⁸ It was only in March 1944 that the staff were told that all Gypsy children would have to be

deported to a Gypsy camp and there was nothing they could do other than prepare the children. Staff decided to tell the children that they would soon be going on a big trip to visit their parents in a Gypsy camp. The smaller children were excited at the prospect of seeing their parents, but the older ones were more doubtful. One girl asked “Why do we have to go to a camp? We can’t just work like our parents since we are still so little.” A 16-year-old girl cried “Why do I have to die? I’m still so young!”⁵⁹

Days elapsed before the actual deportation, and the staff of St. Josef’s attempted to keep the children’s lives as routine as possible. Classes continued and, even though they were too young, children were prepared for Holy Communion by the community priest. On the Sunday before their deportation, all the Gypsy children celebrated their first Communion.⁶¹ On 9 May, very early in the morning, a postal bus collected the children, accompanied by the Mother Superior and their teacher, Johanna Naegele, who were both allowed to accompany them part of the way.⁶⁰ The children and the two staff members were transferred to a prisoner-train, and they questioned why the train had barred windows and was accompanied by police. During the many waits in transit, the children recited the poems they had learned for the Mother Superior. At the Crailsheim train station, Naegele and the Mother Superior had to leave the children who continued on to Auschwitz.⁶¹

Auschwitz (including Birkenau, also known as Auschwitz II), the Reich’s largest concentration camp, had a section, BIIe, especially designated as the Gypsy Camp (*Zigeunerlager*). It was completed in February 1943 and consisted of 32 residential barracks, barracks for washrooms and toilets, two barracks for kitchens, and even a kindergarten and a nursery.⁶² Upon special order of Himmler on 16 December 1942 (the so-called *Auschwitz-Erlass*) and based upon the instruction to apprehend Gypsies living in the Third Reich, over 20,000 Gypsies (10,097 males and 10,849 females, including babies born in Auschwitz) were housed in the *Zigeunerlager*. The first of these arrived on 26 February 1943, even before the completion of construction.⁶³

Although marked as “asocials” by the black stars sewn on their clothing, the Gypsies were treated differently to other prisoners. The Gypsies did not have their hair shaved, nor did they wear camp uniforms, and they were allowed to wear their few civilian clothes and live as families. One family could occupy one bunk bed in the barracks.⁶⁴ Even though the living conditions in Auschwitz-Birkenau were horrific beyond description, those in the Gypsy camp are widely acknowledged to have been the worst. Prisoners were ravaged by contagious diseases including typhus and noma⁶⁵ to the extent that within six months of arrival over 7000 had

died. It was into this environment that the children of Eva Justin's research were sent.

On 2 August 1944, approximately 1400 Gypsies from Auschwitz-Birkenau were loaded onto an empty freight train and taken to Buchenwald concentration camp. Their lives were saved because, on the same day at Auschwitz, 2897 Gypsies from the family camp were rounded up by armed SS men and taken by truck to the gas chamber.⁶⁶ Only four of the children of Justin's research are known to have survived Auschwitz.

After the war, Justin worked as a youth psychologist in the Frankfurt municipal health service. In October 1948, a large number of Gypsy survivors convinced the public prosecutor of Frankfurt to open an inquiry into the wartime actions of Ritter against the Gypsies. As had been clearly stated at the time of his research, and that of Eva Justin, their goal was to "provide scientific and practical data for the measures taken by the state in the areas of eugenics and racial hygiene."⁶⁷ The findings of this research led directly to the shipping of Gypsies to concentration camps which many thousands did not survive. After two years, the public prosecutor closed the inquiry because of what he deemed to be insufficient evidence, and his stated belief that the Gypsies' testimonies were "notoriously unreliable."⁶⁸ Ritter was "denazified"⁶⁹ and went on to practice as a psychiatric assessor in Frankfurt am Main, where he continued to work with Eva Justin until his death in 1951, having reached the position of Chief Medical Councillor.⁷⁰ In 1959, an investigation was opened concerning Eva Justin's actions. She was accused by several Gypsies as having ordered involuntary sterilizations and deportations, many of which resulted in death. After close to two years, the investigation was closed and Justin was absolved of charges against her. The prosecutor did determine that Justin's assessments had provided a basis for death or sterilization; however, it was impossible to determine if she could have known these were likely outcomes of her assessments. In addition, the fact that she was "young and inexperienced," strongly influenced by Ritter, and had "repudiated her views on the Gypsy question" were also elements in the decision.⁷¹ Justin continued to work as a child psychologist until her death in 1966. She was never punished for her actions with the children of St. Josef's Home.⁷²

The ethical aspects of Justin's research

Germany was not completely devoid of ethical guidelines for conducting research at the time of Eva Justin's studies. In 1900, the Prussian Minister of Religious, Education and Medical Affairs issued a Directive about human experimentation. This Directive forbade nontherapeutic research on minors.⁷³ In 1931, a Reich Circular was issued which contained most of the points

of the subsequent Nuremberg Code.⁷⁴ Whereas Justin was not a physician, her research was under the direction of a physician, Robert Ritter, who should have been at least aware of the latter of these two documents. Perhaps Justin did not consider her observations and potato-harvesting evaluations as falling within the domain of research but given that these observations were for a PhD dissertation that seems unlikely. However, even with the full knowledge that her observations were to be considered "research" in support of Ritter's attempt to find a "scientific" basis for his characterizations of Gypsies, consent of the orphanage's administrators had been secured by government officials as previously described.

Eva Justin acted unethically on several counts, quite apart from her attitude and beliefs (and subsequent bias) as they related to Gypsies. Given the state of knowledge in the 1920s and early 1930s, the prevailing cultural norms in relation to marginalized groups, and the dogmatic declarations as to genetic deficiencies and the dangers to the German gene pool, a young woman's failure to recognize the speciousness of the arguments or their political motivation is hardly surprising. We should consider, however, whether her research failed to meet the standards required of an ethical researcher.

First, it is apparent that she manipulated her research study in order to provide "evidence" to justify her preexisting belief that the Gypsy and part-Gypsy children were "inferior" and should not be allowed to reproduce. She encouraged the Gypsy children to "run wild in the woodlands," for example, "as if they were primitives."⁷⁵ This was in direct contrast to the behaviors that were taught by the nuns, and enabled Justin to document behavior that supported her hypothesis that the Gypsy children were unable to be assimilated and should be sterilized.⁷⁶

Although by today's standards any scholarly research designed in such a way would be immediately ruled as inadmissible, it is not surprising that it went unchallenged because anthropological-ethnographic research at that time remained methodologically unsophisticated, with the conduct of fieldwork left to the discretion of the researcher. As Eriksen and Nielsen⁷⁷ describe in their history of anthropology, apart from the role of Malinowski in the adoption of the method of participant observation, the development of a scientific methodology was largely done by non-German scholars. Furthermore, the distinctive German study of race (*Rassenkunde*)⁷⁸ was largely untouched by the wholesale renovation of the discipline effected during the late 1920s and 1930s by its founders.⁷⁹ Many of these had Jewish family histories and their writings were ignored in Germany; in addition, the universities had been starved of funds after the First World War, with a consequent shortage of high level ethnological and

anthropological scholars. During the 1930s, many of these scholars fled Germany, the policy of *Gleichschaltung* (alignment, co-ordination)⁸⁰ having shackled the discipline to the Nazi agenda. Even Justin's objectification of the children, and her manifestly negative behavior toward them, was likely a common feature of anthropological field research which sought to document the inferiority of certain "undesirable" groups. With hindsight, we see in the colonial attitudes of many European and American fieldworkers, for example, obvious paternalism, disingenuousness, and exploitation, even by those who are regarded as leading figures. Indeed, treating research subjects not as "participants" but as "objects to be studied" was widely regarded as necessary for "scientific" research and, bearing in mind the acculturation noted above, again it would be difficult to condemn Justin on such grounds.

An aspect of Justin's research that appears unethical in today's context was her failure to obtain any kind of informed consent and her use of coercion during the study. However, we must consider this within the context of the day and site. Most of the parents of the children of St. Josef's Home were either dead, missing, or incarcerated. Locating them would have been impossible. Just because one's parents are not available to consent for a minor does not eliminate today the need to obtain consent from a legal guardian. During the Nazi era, individual rights were not respected and the government mandated that this particular children's home "support the scientist and to give her any information desired."⁸¹ It is quite possible that the study was viewed by orphanage staff as entailing minimal harm and that resisting the order would have been dangerous for all concerned. The possibility that Justin had been involved in engineering this mandate also arises, in which case there was certainly a breach of the Guidelines (*Richtlinien*) which formed part of the 1931 Code. Second, the Guidelines state that "motiveless and unplanned experimentation involving human subjects shall obviously be prohibited"⁸² and it is difficult to consider Justin's potato-harvesting competition to be anything other than trivial and unscientific.

A more significant ethical breach is mentioned by Nichols who stated that Ritter and his assistants, including Eva Justin, would sometimes pose as missionaries to obtain information from the Gypsies.⁸³ "Interviewees who were reluctant to cooperate were threatened with arrest and incarceration in a concentration camp,"⁸⁴ and local police and officials were ordered to "render all possible assistance."⁸⁵ Thus, it is apparent that in at least some instances Ritter's and Justin's research included coercion, but it is not clear to what extent such threats attended the research with the children at St. Josef's.

There are accounts of other nurses involved in research during the Nazi era including nurses who

helped with the sterilization experiments at Auschwitz; however, these were prisoner-nurses who did not have the ability to decline without facing a certain death.^{86,87} Similarly, nurses who were employed by the SS at Ravensbrück concentration camp participated in the medical experiments conducted there.⁸⁸ Even though not prisoners, had they refused their assignment, there would have likely been dire consequences. A key factor distinguishing Justin's research from those studies in which the Auschwitz and Ravensbrück nurses participated is that Justin was the Principal Investigator of her study and received the highest academic degree for doing so. The full consequences of her research design and ethics are borne by her as Principal Investigator.

Conclusion

Eva Justin was one of the first nurses in Europe to attain a Doctor of Philosophy degree, albeit not in the discipline of nursing, but her scholarship was highly questionable, biased, and aimed at furthering the Reich's goals of sterilizing or exterminating the Gypsies because of their "racial inferiority." In the Nazi environment, racial theories readily became the basis for Justin's study, but she broke the first rule of scholarship and instead of supporting or not supporting a hypothesis by rigorous testing, she set her study so that the results supported the preconceived (and egregiously wrong) theories promulgated by the National Socialist regime. Bias completely overwhelmed any objectivity.

There is no doubt that Justin exploited the Sinti children to further her own ambitions, and that the design and conduct of her research was unscholarly, but perhaps the most relevant question is "Could Eva Justin have prevented the children from being shipped to Auschwitz?" Perhaps she could have, had she devised more scenarios for observation, and therefore delayed their transportation, but to do this also would have delayed receiving her PhD. A second question raised is whether or not Justin knew what would happen to the children if they were sent to Auschwitz. Justin visited Gypsies in concentration camps so she had an awareness of the conditions, and her subsequent role in assessing the racial status of inmates at Moringen and Uckermark would surely have removed any doubts as to the children's fate.

Today there are many nurses with PhDs who serve as Principal Investigators of their own studies. Indeed, to obtain a PhD, one must do so. In addition, there are many "research nurses" who are coinvestigators or who manage the studies of other Principal Investigators. It is often these nurses who explain participation in the studies, recruit subjects, obtain informed consent, and who monitor data collection. The capriciousness of Justin's design and deceitfulness of her data collection methods

would be disallowed and even severely penalized in today's research world.

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- Yeniche (jeniche) people are a group of travelers who live mostly in southern Germany and Switzerland. Their mobility is an important part of their culture, similar to that of the Sinti and Roma.⁹⁰
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61. Czech⁶⁶ noted that on 12 May, 39 Gypsy children from St. Josefspflege children's home in Mulfingen arrived. Twenty boys were tattooed with the number Z-9873-Z-9892 and 19 girls received the numbers Z-10629-Z10647. There were about 67,000 prisoners in Auschwitz-Birkenau at that time, including approximately 6000 Gypsies. In 1937, Wolfgang Abel had contacted Ritter to inform him of the supposed usefulness of fingerprints as a mean of differentiating between "purebred" Gypsies and "Gypsy mixed-breeds." This is a possible explanation for fingerprinting the children.
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