



Diploma Thesis Evaluation Form

Author: Kristýna Pelikánová

Title: Family Planning in the Development Policy of the United States:
Empowering Women or Instrumentalization of Women's Bodies?

Programme/year: MV/2024

Author of Evaluation (second reader): Anna Kotvalová

Criteria	Definition	Maximum	Points
Major Criteria			
	Research question, definition of objectives	10	8
	Theoretical/conceptual framework	30	13
	Methodology, analysis, argument	40	28
<i>Total</i>		80	49
Minor Criteria			
	Sources	10	7
	Style	5	5
	Formal requirements	5	5
<i>Total</i>		20	17
TOTAL		100	66



Evaluation

Major criteria:

Regarding the postulation of the topic, research questions and research objective the author decided for a relevant and highly interesting topic that indicates that the author should engage in a critical/feminist/postcolonial/decolonial IR debate and that she contributes to the debate about prevailing postcolonial power (and economic, societal, and other) structures in connection to women's rights and equality. At least the title suggests this: "*Empowering women or Instrumentalization of women's bodies?*" Unfortunately, the thesis does not deliver on this promise.

Throughout the text I detected several extremely interesting topics which I think could have been the main focus of the thesis. One of the examples can be found on the page 27/28 where the author discusses the possible population growth in non-western countries as a threat to US foreign policy. That is an interesting (mind-blowing) hypothetical topic for a discussion/topic which might have been discussed more or mentioned in the conclusion as a future direction.

I see the main problem in the missing/lacking theoretical chapter which could have provided the author (and the reader) with a clear focus and theoretical background in feminist argumentation and postcolonial studies. Moreover, the interconnection between gender, race, and class (intersectionality) should have been part of the conceptual chapter. Although the Part 3 is titled Theoretical foundation, the text does not engage in a theoretical debate, it rather discusses the aspects of the 4 hypotheses the author postulates. Therefore, the topic is not framed within relevant IR theoretical context. This is also connected to the literature review due to the lack of the theoretical foundation; the literature review could not have delivered the overview of relevant IR existing research on the topic. Therefore, although the literature review does mention some relevant feminist research, it does not deliver feminist/postcolonial IR theory.

The methodological section could also have used a bit more "care". Although the author obviously engages in a quite challenging methodology, the specific method of the estimation should have been better explained and described in the section for the reader to understand properly what the specific advantages of this method are (in connection to the topic) and why not to use other (maybe more suitable) methods for this subject. My main problem is that this topic suggests (and I would argue specifically requires) a more critical approach since it deals with postcolonial/feminist topic and also because of the ongoing IR debates on this matter. One specific (ontological) issue in this regard might be the fact that the author treats 66 different countries as a "class" (without debate or an argument why it can be treated as such) and does not distinguish between the societal, historical, political, and geopolitical contexts of these countries.



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Additionally, it is also problematic that we do not know which countries are being included into the data sample, we only know the number: 66 “developing countries”. It might be argued that it is not that big of a mistake and that the quantitative methods have been developed specifically for these cases, but I think that since the topic falls heavily into the critical subjects of IR, it would be more suitable to select more inclusive methodology which would take these aspects into consideration. Especially, since this is exactly one of the postcolonial critiques towards the positivist research. Either way, the limited theoretical chapter is not (ontologically) in line with the methodological part.

Moreover, I missed any profound debate and interpretation of the results/hypotheses. Both “discussion” and “conclusion” parts are only 2 pages long (and in the discussion only limitations of the method are debated) and the author fails to frame the results of the analysis into a broader context of IR debate around gender, feminism, instrumentalization of women’s bodies (currently highly relevant and discussed topics within the US in regard to reproductive rights) and critiques of development policies through postcolonial/decolonial studies. The author engages in the debate over the hypothesis only on the surface and does not challenge the hypothesis more deeply and what is even more important does not connect the results of the analysis back to the title/main aim of the thesis.

Minor criteria:

Regarding minor criteria, the thesis does not have any major issues. Apart from the lack of theoretical sources and lack of the list of the countries selected as the data set, the style and other formal requirements uphold.

Assessment of plagiarism:

The similarity protocol of the final thesis concluded only 6% similarity with other documents.

Overall evaluation:

Presented thesis aspired to explore family planning in the development policies of the US and posed a question whether it is a tool for empowering women or rather instrumentalization of women’s bodies. I believe this subject to be extremely relevant to the ongoing IR debate surrounding gender, feminism, and intersectionality unfortunately, the thesis fails in several aspects. Mainly, in its theoretical coverage of the relevant concepts and theoretical argumentation which is an issue firstly because this topic must be connected to the prevailing theoretical debate and secondly because the title of the thesis itself refers to a theoretical concept (instrumentalization which refers to both poststructuralist and feminist theoretical concepts) which was not explored at all. Without the theoretical background the thesis (and its results) lacks theoretical footing, context and framing in a more profound IR debate.



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Secondly, the author fails to explain why she decided for the method of estimation and fails to properly explain the method and its advantages (in relation to the topic) in the methodological section. Lastly, the results of the analysis are not debated in the discussion/conclusion section. I believe that the discussion/conclusion section should provide the reader with some interpretation of the results and draw the attention back to the title of the thesis: empowerment or instrumentalization? That would be much easier if the thesis would be supported by feminist/postcolonial/decolonial literature.

Overall, author of this theses selected interesting and highly relevant topic but did not fully engage in it. I believe that there are much more interesting aspects of these issues and if the author would have explored fully the existing IR feminist postcolonial/decolonial literature these aspects would have been revealed. Unfortunately, without it, the thesis delivers interesting methodology/analytical model (to which I am sure the author dedicated a lot of time and energy) and some dive into the topic of the development policies but without a deeper understanding of the problematic.

Suggested grade:

D

Signature: