

REVIEW OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Title: Reproductive Behaviour of Repatriates from Mongolia and Ethnic Kazakhs in Mongolia

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The reviewed doctoral research thesis conceptualises, identifies and investigates the differences and commonalities of reproductive behaviour of repatriates from Mongolia and those of ethnic Kazakhs living in Mongolia. Through detailed analysis of empirical data collected by the candidate through a sample based survey with a focus on a specific area of Kazakhstan, this thesis sets to explore in depth how migration experience affects reproductive behaviour.

I believe the research problem being investigated is topical, significant and deserves focused scholarship especially that this is an important research and policy issue in other countries that have been the recipients of migrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds and/or ethnic repatriates. Given that in Kazakhstan statistical data on reproductive behaviour and family formation patterns of repatriates from Mongolia and the ethnic Kazakhs in Mongolia is not yet available or limited, the importance of the presented doctoral research thesis is evident and should not be underestimated.

The purpose of the doctoral thesis and its main objectives are clearly identified, the outline of the thesis is logical and well thought through. This thesis is well structured, written and argued. It was easy to read and follow. The writing style is clear. I think the thesis develops a good argument based on thorough empirical analysis of different mechanisms of how migration can influence fertility and reproductive behaviour of repatriates and draws special attention to the reproductive behaviour of the second generation of repatriates and young females residing in Kazakhstan, which may affect overall fertility trends in the future and require migration and social policy adjustments.

From the onset of engaging with this thesis the reader has an appreciation of a strong personal commitment and passion of the candidate to the project and for the research questions. Numerous photos in the text and in the appendices that document the fieldwork experience of the researcher are an additional testament of that.

The candidate has demonstrated a good understanding of the theoretical frameworks of the sociological and demographic analysis of the impact of migration on fertility in the context of the demographic transition and has applied it well throughout the thesis. It is clear that the candidate is well familiar with the relevant and up to date literature on the topic.

An in depth discussion of the social-cultural as well as historical background of the research topic presented in chapters 5 and 6 should be commended. However, one area that I think could have been improved is chapter 4, where the sociological and demographic theoretical concepts and frameworks are introduced and an attempt is made to critically discuss these in relation to some of the research findings. However, since at this stage the overall design of the survey instrument, sample size and its characteristics are not yet introduced in detail to the reader, some paragraphs of the chapter appear to be very sketchy and brief and the overall critical discussion appears to be quite weak. The critical analysis would have been improved if the application of research data and findings to the theoretical concepts and frameworks presented in chapter 4 would have been discussed later in the thesis in a separate section or chapter under heading discussion of findings.

The data for the research project was collected within a specific timeframe - in July 2009. For this research project the chosen methodological framework of data collection and analysis is relevant and appropriate. The methodology formulation as well as developed hypotheses and models to test these were appropriate.

I felt the conclusion could have been stronger. The conclusion needed to draw the key themes out more and link the thesis into a wider theoretical and policy settings – it would have been good to discuss the value of the thesis research findings beyond a localized case study of Kazakhstan and in relation to other countries that have been the recipients of migrants of diverse ethnic backgrounds and/or repatriates. Also, the conclusion would have benefited from a discussion of directions for further research of the key thesis questions as well as possible policy implications of the thesis results and findings.

While I have mentioned the areas that could have been developed and improved in this thesis, overall I think that it is a solid piece of work. The candidate has clearly shown that she is able to engage in a sustained and scholarly manner with a complex research question and provide strong empirical analysis of a substantial data set. She has addressed her research questions and research objectives. She draws on existing theories and research and adds to it in an original and considered fashion. This is a substantial example of original empirical study and analysis that makes a good and novel contribution to the discipline of demographic analysis at its level.

This thesis will definitely be a useful resource for other postgraduate students interested in the topic, public policy practitioners as well as for researchers and scholars interested in exploring further this area and build upon the extensive and rich empirical knowledge base that the candidate has established.

Overall, I think the candidate was able to create a cohesive, coherent and detailed argument throughout the thesis. My comments and suggestions for improvement are presented just to encourage the candidate to think more critically in her future academic and research pursuits and should not detract from the overall strength of the candidate's thesis. Both Kuanysh and her supervisors and advisors should be congratulated for producing a thought provoking and generally well written doctoral research thesis and I wish Kuanysh all the best with her future career.

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