

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA V PRAZE
Fakulta sociálních věd
Institut mezinárodních studií

PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ Magisterki PRÁCE
(Posudek oponenta)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Tereza Kamal

Název práce: “Immigrants or Refugees: A New Type of Exodus from Mexico to the United States”

Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce): György Tóth, PhD, Department of American Studies

I corrected and commented on the thesis in pencil in the bound hard copy thesis. Here I will only provide a glossary and a list of my most substantive comments and critiques.

My evaluation of this thesis is based on the widely used and standard Anglo-American argumentative essay writing style and academic practice, which I have acquired in my training at Eötvös Loránd University of the Sciences in Budapest, Hungary (MA, 2003) and subsequently at The University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa, U.S.A. (MA, 2008, PhD, 2012).

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle): [From the Abstract:] “The focus of my thesis is to analyze the transformation of Mexican migration [to the United States] since 2007/2008. I argue these years have been a turning point in the dynamics of migration for two reasons. Firstly, in 2007 the American economy turned into recession, which significantly affected the flow of unauthorized migration. Secondly, in 2008 the drug related violence in Mexico spiked dramatically. This had a deterrent effect on the unauthorized migration but also encouraged a new wave of primarily legal, wealthier migrants fleeing the violence from Mexico.”

[From page 4:] “On the basis of my research, supported by the central issue of the concept of human security, I suggest the primary push factors for relocation today are security concerns. Based on the human security concept, the state centered approach to security should be complemented by a focus on the security of individuals who at first seek “freedom from want” and later – once the internal security situation deteriorates, they seek “freedom from fear”, i.e., freedom from direct violence. Outbreaks of violence are a much stronger push factor than underdevelopment and may cause migration flows to turn into mass migration.”

[From page 5:] “The overall objective of this thesis is to demonstrate that the drug related violence in Mexico had a significant influence on the nature and character of Mexican migration to the United States.”

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.):
MATERIAL PROCESSING (complexity, creativity, reasoning, logic, theoretical and methodological anchors, work with sources and literature, suitability attachments, etc.):

Thesis and central arguments

Page 14 – “migration is simply a question of supply and demand.” This statement seems to be part of the author’s thesis argument. In this form, this statement is so general and sweeping that it would be very hard to prove in the body of the thesis. It is also too colloquial in its language – it is not in academic language. Even if taken at face value, the author would have a really difficult time proving that Mexican immigration is governed only by economic supply and demand, and none of the following things influence it to any significant extent: family ties; im/e/migration policy; cultural or social attitudes (prejudice, racism, etc.); domestic politics; national security; and others. In fact, the author repeatedly contradicts her central statement when in the body of her thesis she discusses the influence of some of these on Mexican migration to the U.S.

Page 21 – The author is not providing a scholarly analytical framework, but advocating an economics-based model for (government/immigration) policy. In this, she is not writing an academic research paper, but a policy paper. She should note and remember the difference for her future career.

Pages 21, 22, 75 – In these places, and especially in her “Constructing the Illegal Regime”, the author’s writing is strong, but it reads less like a scholarly thesis than a policy paper written by a think tank for a national government or an international organization. While this style and organization is truly impressive, for a Master’s thesis it is off-target.

Methodology and sources

The author uses as her primary sources statistics on Mexican migration to the United States issued on both sides of the border. This provides her with a strong quantitative methodology. She also surveys the security situation in Mexico. What would have rounded out her methodology is the use of quantitative evidence such as testimonies collected from old and new migrants, especially about their reasons for migration. Such testimonial/interview evidence could have been acquired from human rights organizations working in the border area, possibly even through the Internet. (For doctoral research, we expect first person research in the border region.)

Page 14-16 – In her “A Question of Supply and Demand: History of Mexican Migration to the United States”, the author relies on sources that are popular histories (including Internet sources) instead of scholarly literature. Please see my detailed comments below.

Conceptual and structural organization

I commend the author for the clear and tight conceptual and structural organization of her thesis.

Comments on specific content/parts

Page 14-16 – In her “A Question of Supply and Demand: History of Mexican Migration to the United States”, the author relies on sources that are popular histories (including Internet sources) instead of scholarly literature. The use of popular instead of scholarly sources resulted in the author’s rather generalized narration of the early period of Mexican migration to the U.S. This narration is historically inaccurate in that the author says nothing whatsoever about how and when the United States actually acquired the territories of its some of its southern states from Mexico – including that of Texas - by armed conflict, conquest and annexation. This history is fundamentally important to understanding the U.S. and Mexican attitudes towards crossing the border either way. For example, can it be that at least some Mexicans regard the border along Texas as territory belonging to ethnic Mexicans and not to U.S. Americans, since the U.S. ‘invaded’ Texas back in the 1840s? This history is NOT “simply a question of supply and demand” – it is a story of political conflict, trauma, and memory on both sides of the border. These are factors shaping Mexican immigration even today.

61-2 – In her “Target Groups”, the author claims that Mexican civilians have become “targets” of drug-related violence (by the cartels). Yet she also claims that civilians “g[e]t caught in a cross fire or [a]re in the wrong time in the wrong place.” This is a contradiction, and the author fails to explain the cartels’ rationale for targeting civilians.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.):

FORMAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING (language skills, accuracy quotations and references to literature, graphic design, formality work etc.):

I commend the author for her clear academic English – hers is a well-written thesis!

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z bakalářské práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.):

BRIEF COMMENTARY evaluators (overall impression of the thesis, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, meet targets, etc.):

Page 14-16 – In her “A Question of Supply and Demand: History of Mexican Migration to the United States”, the author relies on sources that are popular histories (including Internet sources) instead of scholarly literature.

Pages 21, 22, 75 – In these places, and especially in her “Constructing the Illegal Regime”, the author’s writing is strong, but it reads less like a scholarly thesis than a policy paper written by a think tank for a national government or an international organization. While this style and organization is truly impressive, for a Master’s

thesis it is off-target.

- What would have rounded out her methodology is the use of quantitative evidence such as testimonies collected from old and new migrants, especially about their reasons for migration. Such testimonial/interview evidence could have been acquired from human rights organizations working in the border area, possibly even through the Internet. (For doctoral research, we expect first person research in the border region.)

5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):
QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS Recommendations for detailed explanation in the defense (one to three):

5-6, 7-9 - Please discuss the limits of quantitative research on Mexican migration to the U.S., and explain the role and potential (and kind) of qualitative sources and the methodologies that could / have been used to study this topic. In other words, reflect/speculate on the potential of qualitative methodologies related to your topic – both the Social Sciences AND in the Arts/Humanities.

7, 10 – Please speculate about the contradiction between your sources: some claim that the narcorefugees are cartel criminals themselves, while others are more middle and upper classes. Why do you think they say what they do? What consequences do their divergent claims have for U.S. attitudes towards the new Mexican migrants? Can we separate data from its ideological interpretation in these cases?

11 – Please speculate on the political reasons on either side of the border for not studying the root causes of the new wave of Mexican migration to the U.S. Why would not these two national governments or the think tanks or universities of the region investigate the causality between the drug wars and the new migration? Is this purely a question of shifting and mutable data – or is there a lack of political will to uncover the causes/links?

68, 73 – As opposed to the booming maquiladoras of the 1990s and early 2000s, are there now vast zones of disinvestment in northern Mexico, along the border with the US? Is this likely to change or continue, depending on the economic recession and the levels of violence?

- Are the current trends in Mexican migration to/from the U.S. comparable to those during the Great Depression? Or are the two periods too different to compare?

- How does the author think she could apply her Master's research results in a profession? In which profession and how?

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA

(výborně, velmi dobře, dobře, nevyhověl):

Recommended / not recommended for the defense and suggested grade (excellent, very good, good, failed):

The author's thesis is overall well-organized and well-written. I recommend it for a defense, with a recommended grade of "very good" / "velmi dobře." Depending on the author's performance at the defense, I am open to lowering or raising the grade in an agreement with the other committee members.

Datum: August 14, 2013

Podpis: György Tóth

Pozn.: Hodnocení píše k jednotlivým bodům, pokud nepíšete v textovém editoru, použijte při nedostatku místa zadní stranu nebo příložený list. V hodnocení práce se pokuste oddělit ty její nedostatky, které jsou, podle vašeho mínění, obhajobou neodstranitelné (např. chybí kritické zhodnocení pramenů a literatury), od těch věcí, které student může dobrou obhajobou napravit; poměr těchto dvou položek berte prosím v úvahu při stanovení konečné známky.

Note: please write reviews on individual items, if you're writing a text editor, use of space at the back or attached sheet. In the evaluation work, try to separate those weaknesses which are, in your opinion, defending unrecoverable (eg lack of critical evaluation of sources and literature), from the things that a good defense student may be corrected; ratio of these two items, please take into account when the final grade.