

Annex 7: Habilitation thesis reviewer's report

Masaryk University

Faculty Faculty of Social Studies, MU
Habilitation field Sociology

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Habilitation thesis The Boundaries of Belonging: Symbolic Boundary Work Among Immigration Activists in the United States

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Reviewer's report (extent of text up to the reviewer)

Generally, I think it is a very well written book that carries out a strong methodological analysis. The arguments used in the book are also convincing and well supported.

My first criticism is that even though the author in many ways writes very well, she seems to take for granted that the reader will be an expert in the field, which greatly limits the potential audience for the book. For example, the book is filled with abbreviations without explaining many of them. In the beginning the author does not even explain the abbreviations IR and IC, although she explains these abbreviations later on in the book; but such basic abbreviations should be explained immediately. The reader can also easily get lost when it comes to the abbreviations of the different movement organizations, so sometimes it was not even clear if an organization was IR (immigrant rights) or IC (immigrant control). Thus, it would be very helpful to have a list of abbreviations at the beginning of the book. In addition, the author often discusses laws, referendums, etc., without explaining them to the reader, which again means that the book makes the assumption that the reader is already an expert on the topic. For example, I did not have the slightest idea what the proposition in California was about, although it gets mentioned many times throughout the book.

My second criticism is that the division of the two social movements into different subgroups does not always make sense to me and it is not clear how it contributes to the analysis in the book. The book focuses on the differences between IR and IC groups and shows that they usually choose the same topics, but interpret them differently. The analysis rarely if at all points to differences between IR organizations or between IC organizations, which makes the divisions into subgroups seem unnecessary. Perhaps the author simply wants to show that she chose a wide-range of groups rather than focussing on only one kind. In that case she could make this explicit, because I was expecting her to use the subdivisions as a way of differentiating between the arguments that the different subgroups used. Concerning the actual subgroups, it is not clear whether the subdivisions are based on their strategies/methods or on their origins. For example, for IR she uses 3 subdivisions: Lobby & Lawsuit, Direct Action, and Call to Faith. But one would expect religious groups to either use lawsuits or direct action, so it is not clear why they are a separate group. The first two groups seem to be based on choice of strategy, while the third is based on the origin of the group. Similarly, the differences between Expressiveness and Information Sharing among IC groups is not clear to me. She writes that the Expressiveness groups “seek above all to make their positions known” (page 24). Isn't making one's position known the same as sharing information?

A third point is that although the author claims to want to link cultural sociology to social movements, the book is mostly about the discourse and the link to social movements only comes out rather strongly in the conclusion. It would have been good to see a more thorough analysis of the connection between the discourse, strategies, mobilizations, successes and failures of the groups. For example, how does culture interact with the framing, resource mobilization and political opportunity structures?

Similarly, although she states in the beginning that she will not conduct a causal analysis, it would have been good to see more discussion about just WHY the groups chose the arguments/frames that they did. Since this was a cultural analysis, it would be good to link the frames that the groups chose more to an analysis of why some issues are important in American society rather than other issues. One also wonders why the two groups often chose similar themes even though they interpreted them differently (such as the importance of the family). This implies that there are cultural reasons for why just the family is so important for these groups. Otherwise, one could imagine that the IR groups would choose completely different topics than the IC groups – unless they chose similar topics because they are debating each other and want to show the other side's arguments are faulty. It would also be good to have more discussion as to how changes in society influence the discourse. She hints at this in pointing out that globalization and the rising dominance of neo-liberal ideology probably induced the IR groups to emphasize the economic contributions of immigrants more than the human rights aspect. So more of this type of analysis would have been good and a deeper analysis of the interplay between the changing cultural environment and the framing of social movement organizations would have strengthened the book.

Finally, post-structuralists have often discussed discourses in terms of a battle over the interpretation of terms. It seems that something similar has taken place between the IR and IC movements, so it would have been good to have some discussion on how the cultural approach differs from this discursive approach.

Reviewer's questions for the habilitation thesis defence (number of questions up to the reviewer)

- 1. You claim that you want to tie cultural analysis to social movement theory, so I was wondering what role you think other factors commonly used in social movement analysis played in the success or failure of the immigrant rights movements and immigrant control movements? More specifically, what role did resource mobilization, political opportunity structures and framing play?**
- 2. Why did the movements choose the frames that they chose and why do you think that they often chose similar topics (such as the importance of the family) but interpreted these topics differently?**
- 3. In what way did America culture in general influence the frames that the**

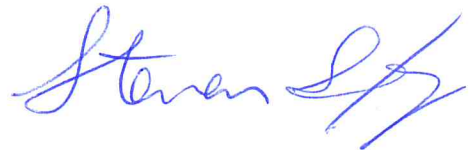
organizations chose?

4. How does your analysis differ from the kind of analysis that post-structuralists would have done when they analyze the battle over how to interpret certain phrases like “family” and “justice”?

Conclusion

The habilitation thesis submitted by Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky entitled “The Boundaries of Belonging: Symbolic Boundary Work Among Immigration Activists in the United States” **meets – does not meet** the requirements applicable to habilitation theses in the field of Sociology.

In Brno on May 16, 2016



Steven Saxonberg
(signature)