

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

Reviewer prof. Andrea M. Voyer
Unit Pace University, New York

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

In *The Boundaries of Belonging: Symbolic Boundary Work among Immigration Activists in the United States*, Bernadette Nadya Jaworsky conducts a Strong Program cultural sociological analysis of the ways in which immigration control and immigration reform social movement organizations (SMO) mobilize symbols and values to support and defend their particular policy positions. Jaworsky finds that, even though these SMO's positions are diametrically opposed and the movements do not seem to be in direct dialogue with opposing SMOs, SMOs calling for immigration reform and those calling for immigration restrictions and control appeal to the same core values – family, faith, freedom, opportunity, and fair play. Jaworsky claims, the central contribution of the work is that it has achieved the Strong Program goal of “reconstruction of the structures of meaning they put forth, the ‘pure cultural text’” (p. 208).

This thesis is a strong and original piece of scholarship that will be relevant to specialists - cultural sociologist, social movement scholars, and those who study the immigration debates. It's broad grounding in the literature and innovative use of SMOs online words and images make it a valuable text, also, for the growing literature on collecting and analyzing “big data.” This work is original as it brings together sociological subdisciplines that are rarely in dialogue – immigration activism and social movements research with the Strong Program.

Although I think this is a high quality text that demonstrates the authors expertise in the field of immigration studies and cultural sociology, *The Boundaries of Belonging* is not perfect.

First, Jaworsky moves very quickly into substantial fine-grained detail on immigration statistics and the history of immigration activism (p.7). I found that section a lot of detail to digest. Especially since it was not preceded by a clear statement of how Jaworsky's project was going to relate to that detail. Jaworsky has read widely and is, thus, clearly an expert on the literature. However, the empirical research must take center stage.

I find that I would like more information on the target audience for each group as it is very possibly relevant to Jaworsky's data. For example, in terms of early differences between IR and IC SMOs, is it possible that there were fewer IC SMOs online because average higher age of conservatives/ supporters? Or was it possible that immigration was primarily treated as an issue that appeared on umbrella conservatism sites? It would be helpful to have the author's thoughts on this as well as on the reason why there were such big differences between IC and

IR SMOs in the uses of images.

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

1. The book presents a wealth of empirical detail and a broad engagement with the existing scholarship, but it is a bit short on its own meta-narrative – its own story arc. As such, Jaworsky should answer that most persistent of questions, “So what?” If both sides of the immigration debate appeal to largely the same values, what is the larger value or significance of those themes? How can Jaworsky’s findings shape future research or future social change efforts? How do these conclusions prompt a revision or addendum to the existing scholarship – either in cultural sociology or in immigration studies

2. I would like to hear more about Jaworsky’s methods. What does it mean (practically in terms of what one does with their data) to inductively reconstruct culture structures?

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** the requirements applicable to habilitation theses in the field of Sociology.

In New York on
March 31, 2016
(signature)

Andrea M. Voyer