

## Advisory Report on MA thesis

### Briana Michelle Roberts: *Mapping Bisexuality in the Czech Asylum System*

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In her thesis, Briana seeks to „ to ‘map’ the construction of bisexuality in the asylum system of the Czech Republic through the analysis of relevant governmental, legislative and court documents in conjunction with expert interviews.“ It is important to stress here, that Briana’s thesis is a first pioneering academic work in the field of bisexuality in asylum administration processes in the Czech Republic. She is comprehensively researching here not only how bisexuality is present in the asylum procedures, but also to name what is missing in their agenda.

She is using and an analytical perspectives of a critical migration theory which helps her to understand the mezzo structure (state/EU/UN administration) of asylum processes and its impact on those who are involved in it. The state (and its asylum administrators) determines what kind of suffering constitutes persecution and which kinds of narratives (asylum life stories) qualify for the international protection. It is the state that disciplines the „evidence“ and on a „ set of recognizable, readable categories into which they can separate asylum seekers“ (Picozza 2017, 24).

Briana’s work on her thesis (particulary her planned field research) was deeply influenced by COVID19 pandemic measures and regulations and it limited her access to her empirical data. She reflects her specific situation nad personal positionality (and risks of so-called „methodological nationalism“) in details in her thesis ( page 27-28 ). She has found her own way out and she effectively combined „desk research“ with experts interviews in the field of asylum procedures. She has done a qualitative content analysis of selected policy, governmental and court documents and open-ended interviews with four legal/ policy oriented experts. Her research was also limited by a lack of transparency by the relevant governmental bodies regarding their practices and publicly accessible statistical data-a typical struggle for all migration scholars in the Czech Czech Republic. After our long-term discussion

about feminist ethics of planned research agenda related to protecting anonymity of asylum seekers (her potential informants), we have eliminated (otherwise important) voices of bisexual refugees themselves.

She built her empirical part of her thesis on topics which come from her coding process, more precisely on the interpretative codes (based on theories/concepts introduced in the theoretical part of her thesis). As a result of her analytical research, she has found out that in the Czech asylum system, „bisexuality is constructed as a concept which is superficially acknowledged, but positioned as suspect because it evades easy categorization and destabilizes administrative procedures of proving ‘credibility’ by while also being absent from consideration in some parts of the procedure due to wider patterns of erasure and invisibility.”(page 4)

Briana’s research shows that Czech asylum agenda is based on an „obsessive search and digging“ in personal lives of asylum seekers. She argues „that bisexuality cannot be proven‘ through medical or other documentary evidence‘ does not mean that bisexuality, and bisexual asylum seekers, do not exist. If they cannot be encompassed, how many others are absent as well, and how many such people are denied dignified treatment and the granting of asylum due to the system’s failure to recognize them (page 84).“

Briana has worked with me systematically, she follows my slight navigation in the field (and literature), but also she was able to work as independent and a critical researcher by herself. Therefore, I think she has all expected academic and personal skills to continue with her study even in the advanced PhD level.

I also strongly believe, that parts of Briana’s parts thesis should be published in a form of academic paper and thus to be more open (as a socially relevant phenomena) at least for professional migration scholars and practitioners here in the Czech Republic.

**I recommend a final grading: (1)-EXCELLENT.**

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