

UNIVERZITA KARLOVA
Fakulta sociálních věd
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PROTOKOL O HODNOCENÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE
(Posudek oponenta)

Práci předložil(a) student(ka): Stephanie Shattuck

Název práce: Creating and Preserving Community: Czech Americans in Omaha, Nebraska

Oponoval (u externích oponentů uveďte též adresu a funkci v rámci instituce): Lukáš Perutka

1. OBSAH A CÍL PRÁCE (stručná informace o práci, formulace cíle): Stephanie Shattuck presents an appealing and original case study of the Czech community in Omaha, Nebraska. I value especially the contemporary dimension of the thesis which is not common in Czech US diaspora research. It had potential and could have promising benefits for the discipline. However, in its current state, probably influenced by hasty research and finishing, its results can only have a limited impact.

2. VĚCNÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (náročnost, tvůrčí přístup, argumentace, logická struktura, teoretické a metodologické ukotvení, práce s prameny a literaturou, vhodnost příloh apod.): As stated above, the main problem I see with the thesis is its research design. The theoretical part is well done, and terminology is explained using relevant (even though maybe a bit outdated - Bodnar) literature. However, I do not understand why is necessary to explain various views on the definition of diaspora. In the introduction, it was established that Czech in Nebraska were an “enclave mode“ diaspora which was confirmed in the conclusions. Furthermore, in the analytical part, there are no references to the diaspora definitions, rather (as could be observed also in the title) the term community is used.

The analytical part also has several issues. According to the introduction the archival and historical research was done. Yet, I could not identify any archive material used. There are just three and a half interviews that serve as the principal source. I find it problematic, as this is not a necessary data sample to draw any conclusions. Besides, the oral history approach dictates not to understand the interviews (and there should be two of them for each person, not just one) as facts but rather as personal testimonies and recollections. These had to be critically approached and interpreted, not just reprinted. Overall, the analytical part feels descriptive. E.g. on page 36 we can read: “According to the results [of a survey], 60% of the membership have belonged to the Club for less than 15 years and heritage and family connection were the main reason people joined (J. Cadek, personal communication, 29 March 2023).“ This is interesting information that deserves deeper analysis, especially when the author claims that community organizations lack younger/new members. Who are this 60%? What is their background?

Another problem is the random selection of topics, some are even glossed over – tourism. Why are religious communities not considered? Or the phenomenon of polka masses? Most importantly, the core issue of the Czechs in Omaha and their connection with their homeland is not well researched, both historically and contemporarily. The author claims that the Czech successful political lobbying during the World Wars was just a myth. That may be, but it does not mean the Czechs in Nebraska did not contribute to the resistance cause. However, as the archives of the Czech Foreign Ministry are omitted, I am not surprised the author does not make that connection. Yet, she should have at least visited the Černín Palace not just to research history but also present. They have programs to support compatriots abroad, support honorary consuls, etc.

The flawed research design inevitably leads to rather general, banal, already discovered, or speculative conclusions. The Czechs in Omaha should be an enclaved community with limited ties to the Czech Republic and yet there are musical connections, Zoom meetings, tourism – as their social media point out, etc. The members of the clubs are lamenting that there is no interest among the youth. I would argue that is typical for every club from football to book reading to church communities. The author also gives some thought to the rapidity of the assimilation process in rural areas and cities. However, it was already demonstrated (among Czech Americans the difference between Chicago and Texas is the usual case) that rural (isolated) areas tend to maintain the original identity (or its glimpses) longer.

3. FORMÁLNÍ A JAZYKOVÉ ZPRACOVÁNÍ (jazykový projev, správnost citace a odkazů na literaturu, grafická úprava, formální náležitosti práce apod.): I am not a native speaker; therefore, I do not feel competent to judge the language. On the other hand, some words are not fit for an academic text (e.g. hot topic – p. 10, toddlers – p. 34). The bibliography is insufficient. There are no archival sources promised in the

introduction. They are not even used in the thesis itself, for that matter. Do the organizations not have newsletters, files, or at least meeting protocols? The interviews are not mentioned either. I miss some historical accounts (Houšť, Habenicht, Šiller and Průcha) but also extensive research of current literature: David Chroust, Josef Polišenský, Clinton Machann and James Mendl, Karel Bicha (“Community or Cooperation? The Case of the Czech-Americans.“ Studies in *Ethnicity: The East European Experience in America*. Ed. Charles A. Ward, Philip Shashki and Donald E. Pienkos. New York: Columbia, 1980. 93-102.) and especially Robert J. Tomanek (*Czech Immigrants and the Sokol Movement*, Iowa City, 2020), a scholar from Omaha (now a resident of Iowa City), who, apart from being open, active, friendly, and communicative, is always ready to share his research on Sokols in Omaha.

4. STRUČNÝ KOMENTÁŘ HODNOTITELE (celkový dojem z diplomové práce, silné a slabé stránky, originalita myšlenek, naplnění cíle apod.): Stephanie Shattuck enriches Czech history and its migration studies. She also presents an interesting testimony of a fading community and not another “marble” biography that is so typical for this field. However, the somewhat flawed and insufficient research design and (probably) time pressure in its execution diminish the value of the thesis.

5. OTÁZKY A PŘIPOMÍNKY DOPORUČENÉ K BLIŽŠÍMU VYSVĚTLENÍ PŘI OBHAJOBĚ (jedna až tři):

1) The essence of case studies is to present them in a specific context. Could you compare the Czech community in Omaha with others in Nebraska or the United States?

2) The Czech government has several programs to help Czech communities abroad. Did you research them? Do the Czechs in Omaha take part in them? Why yes/no?

6. DOPORUČENÍ / NEDOPORUČENÍ K OBHAJOBĚ A NAVRHOVANÁ ZNÁMKA (A – F): I recommend the thesis for defense with grade C.

Datum: 4. 6. 2023

Podpis:

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.