THE TWELVE THAI NATIONAL CORE VALUES: THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN THAI IDENTITIES AND THAI CULTURAL COMPETENCES

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Abstract

On 11 July 2014, Thai Government launched the Twelve Thai national core values communication campaign to share some common conceptions about creating and re-creating understanding in Thai society (Royal Thai Government website, 2014). Based on communication paradigm the Twelve Thai national core values communication campaign is considered as "The Intersection between Thai identities and Thai Cultural competences". As the Thai Government expected to construct new values and reinforce unity through this Twelve Thai national core values therefore this study reviewed literature relating to identity and cultural competence in Thai context in order to study how this national core values reinforce the Thai cultural values. For communication scholars, the understanding of the Thais' identity and cultural competences is also important as way to develop communication strategies to create notions of national harmony and unity in Thailand (Chulapimpan, 1999; Gordon & Miller, 2005; Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego, 2000; Kondo, 1990; Silraungwilai, 2014)

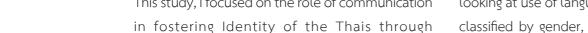**Keywords:** Thai national core values, Thai identities, Thai cultural competence.

Introduction

People who are from different cultures and places usually interpret the same situation in different ways based on their religion, culture, history, education, social status, language and politics. As, Cheng & Schweitzer (1996) stated that national cultural values are "shared among a group of people sharing the same symbolic communication system" (p.96), therefore, the Twelve Thai national core values communication campaign -- 1. Upholding of the three main pillars: the Nation, the Religion, and the Monarchy; 2. Honesty, sacrifice, and patience with positive attitude for the interest of the public; 3. Filial piety towards parents, guardians and teachers; 4. Seeking of direct and indirect knowledge and education; 5. Preservation of Thai traditions and cultures; 6. Morality, integrity, considerateness, generosity, and sharing; 7. Understanding and learning of true democratic ideals with His Majesty the King as Head of State; 8. Maintaining of discipline, respectfulness of laws and the elderly; 9. Being conscious and mindful of action in line with His Majesty's the King's royal statements; 10. Applying His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy, saving money for time of need, being moderate with surplus for sharing or expansion of business while having good immunity; 11. Keeping physical and mental strength, unyielding to the evil power or desires, having sense of shame over guilt and sins in accordance with the religious principles; 12. Putting the public and national interest before one's own (Royal Thai Government website, 2014) -- has conveyed various unique Thai cultural values that different from other countries around the world. This study, I focused on the role of communication in fostering Identity of the Thais through government's communication campaign. As the construction of identity embraces interactions between group members and outsiders, therefore, I was interested in how the Twelve Thai national core values were crafted. I tried to identify those collective identities and remain mindful of the differences, and the inevitable exclusions on which they are based. The purpose to focusing on Crafting Identity that Thai government intended to communicate to the Thais by addressing big questions such as "How selves in the plural are constructed variously in the Twelve Thai national core values communication campaign, how those constructions can be complicated by multiplicity and ambiguity, and how they shaped, and are shaped by intersection between Thai identities and Thai cultural competences?" Based on Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego (2000)'s, and Kondo (1990)'s works, understanding the link between culture and identities is vital to developing appropriate, effective approaches to promote the Twelve Thai national core values. Interestingly, Kondo (1990) proposed that there is an inherent linkage between identification, alienation, and symbolization. What should be the core concept of the Identity? "Where are you from?" is a question which so far is valid in determining the identity. "The concept of self" is a notion which based on an earlier memory. To study how the interplay to meaning was crafted individuals' identities, thus, the work of Phenomenological Communication Tradition (Craig & Muller, 2007; Deetz, 1994) and Kondo (1990)'s work were used as a methodology framework for this study. Kondo (1990) encoded selves to the whole subject by looking at use of language and body language that classified by gender, class and region. Moreover,

Kondo focused on the phethora to exploring the ways people present themselves and their identities in particular situations. Kondo also included cases study of Backnike (1982), Welzel (1984) which focused on the 'I' to define self reference. As Japanese America, Kondo (1990) created a concept of dilemma for the Japanese that she encountered, then, inquired "How could someone who is racially Japanese lack cultural competence?" (p. 11). Somehow, her western idea about the relationship between the self and social work was demanding concerning the social relations. Furthermore, Kondo emphasized that experience reflexively create and recreate their sense in self and social group to which they belong in context of social change, the values they hold, as well as their identities. Kondo believed that the self meaning was problematizing and thematizing across the poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminist theory, and practice theory. All these aspects are relevant for a better comprehension of construct self but also for better understand the relationship between power, hierarchy, discipline which people struggle over meaning of company and family, as well as social role. Through analyzing peoples' discourses, Kondo combined interpretative approach of Suassure semiotic with notion of a triadic structure of Peirce to find out referential meaning in Japanese life. Hence, her research questions are: "Are the terms 'self' and 'person' the creations of linguistic and cultural conventions?" and "How is the inner/outer itself established as the terms with in which we inevitability speak and act?" Sense of group identity, then, is the boundaries between personal and political, or self and society played a crucial role in the formation of personal and group identity in society. Today, however, we can no longer afford to ignore that cultural, historical, and political/economic engaging with group identity. The dynamics of formation and fragmentation of personal and group identity have been propagated into public consciousness. To explore how individuals defined sense of group identity, Folger & Poole (1984) also inquired "Does the group have a definite identity? Do members feel ownership of group accomplishments? How great is member commitment to the group? Do members share responsibility for decision?" From other countries' -- so called outsiders -- stand point, it is difficult to interpret the Twelve Thai national core values experiences, and to understand the Thais' lives as the Thais' – so called insiders -- themselves understand them. In my attempt to understand how government defined the meanings of the Twelve Thai national core values, I investigated the communication messages relating Thai Identities and Thai cultural competences by questioning "How Thai Identities and Thai cultural competences are defined?". As Geertz (1983) posited that "Confinement to experience near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies as well as entangled in vernacular" (p. 61), thus, the way the Thais (insider) think, feel and perceive the Twelve Thai national core values defined as experience-near concept. Interestingly, through observation and discourse analysis, Kondo (1990) found that the specific idea which people crafted their identity according to the symbolic signified people who belonged to the same group (p. 121). For experience-distant concept, symbolic is called an abstraction hierarchy, as Kondo pointed out that symbolic structure is constituted through a chain

of hierarchy command (p. 209). Therefore, symbolic (the Twelve Thai national core values) provides an internally differentiated structure of cultural competence, and it serves as a circle of emotional attachment and a nodal point of identity (Kondo, 1990, p. 175). In addition, Kondo (1990)'s analysis of power differentials (the power of concentration) related to theories of selfhood (p. 104). Through Kondo (1990)'s post-structural lens, therefore, this experience-distant concept operated as symbolic struggle or identity struggle in human society. How the study on Identity of political communication in Thailand relevant to communication studied? Because Identity constructed through language, history, and discourse, therefore, this study leads me to think about effective communication to create shared meanings, cultures, and identities within social group. Kondo (1990) pointed out to the reification of the culture that is constructed in the arena of group identity. Moreover, her discourse analyzing helps to explain the interplay of identity and difference in authentic human relationships and cultivates communication practices that enable and sustain authentic relationships. Therefore, necessarily, I-as a communication scholar-should study deeply to investigate group identities to communicate more effectively and successfully. However, such discourses of identity can also force shaping the national identity and culture based on the concept of self that describing the crafting of selves among the individuals in the group (Kondo, 1990, p. 161). Focusing in this idea, the 'dialogue' seems to be a valuable source of information to share experience of self and others that might be described as a phenomenology tradition. In con-clusion, identity is based on level of experience,

context of self, cultural context and interpretative approach. Accordingly, the Twelve Thai national core values communication campaign helps promote the Thais' unity with discourses relating Thai cultural frameworks. This means that developing culturally appropriate information may also help promote better understanding of the complex mix of cultural factors with several ethnic groups in Thailand. More interestingly, Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego (2000) referred to the Cultural Competence as "the complex and dynamic features of communication. To understand the concept of cultural competence, especially independent and interdependent self-construal, and beliefs, they proposed an integrative framework of motivation, a culture model of Patients' verbal communication to investigate the relational differences and similarities between cultures (Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego, 2000). Additionally, they viewed culture as complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits by man as a member of society. Therefore, they were used the cultural competence model as a means for discovering the complex and dynamic features of communication (Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego, 2000, p. 264). Importantly, Cultural Competence concerns the study of social interaction between personal communication to illuminate how individuals use verbal discourse and nonverbal actions, as well as written discourse, to achieve a variety of instrumental and communication goals such as informing, persuading and providing emotional support to others. Cultural Competence has been conceived of as a symbolic process that produces and reproduces shared sociocultural patterns.

In this way, cultures affect how and why people make certain health decisions, health-related behaviors, and the receptivity of health information or messages. In conclusion, the cultural competence frames communication as a symbolic process that produces and reproduces social order. For this paradigm, the important aspect of communication is the role of the social world and how people work together to create meaning. Moreover, the cultural competence helps to define a paradigm of shared understandings that constitute society itself. This means that developing culturally appropriate information may also increase the effectiveness of the communication with several ethnic groups in Thailand.

Conclusion

I focus on the role of communication in fostering the Unity in Thailand. According to Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego (2000)'s view, the cultural competence is a really suitable perspective to see how groups are organizing themselves and how they are creating their own social reality which is therefore affecting the individual again. In addition, I believe that the link between identities and cultures sets the stage for a discussion of the Twelve Thai national core values. As a result, cultural competence in Thai context is defined as the traditional Thai cultural values that have been communicated from generation to generation (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). Interestingly, Chulapimpan (1999) posited that the discourse of Thai value, the constructive discourse of the nation, king, and religion is necessary in order to renew the message of the national "union" (p. 6). Based on Chulapimpan's (1999) rhetorical study, Women in Thai politics: A rhetorical analysis of

Khunying Supatra Masdit and Sudarat Keyuraphan, the consolidation of the Thai identity through the discourses "Upholding of the three main pillars: the Nation, the Religion, and the Monarchy (the first Thai core value)" -- served as the living expression of the soul relating to the national unity (p. 29). However, it must be noted that the social and cultural conditions in which the Thais live are factors affecting the ideal of Thai core value such as Honesty, sacrifice, and patience with positive attitude for the interest of the public; filial piety towards parents, guardians and teachers; seeking of direct and indirect knowledge and education; and preservation of Thai traditions and cultures. Thus, in order to achieve the desired end of communication in crisis situation, the communication practitioner must make his/her language comprehensive for his/her audience. The content of Thai value must be effectively integrated into the national communication campaign in order to achieve peaceful ends, thereby gaining reward for those participating in the crisis. As Chulapimpan (1999)'s rhetorical study presented the use of national unity in the discourses of Thai value is the effective tool for the consolidation of the ideology of national unity, therefore the Twelve Thai national core values communication campaign served as a driving agent that would be enjoyed in its fullest measure as the living expression of the soul (p. 29). It can be argued that the discourse of Thai value, the constructive discourse of the nation, king, and religion must be effectively integrated into the national consolidation campaign (Chulapimpan, 1999, p. 6). This integration is necessary in order to renew the message of the "understanding" in Thai society, as mentioned by Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha on 11 July 2014 (Royal Thai

Government website, 2014). Based on Chulapim-pan (1999)'s study, Thai values were involved in assessing what outcomes seemed to have a positive (reward) or negative (cost) impact (Blau, 1964, p. 89; Chulapimpan, 1999, p. 32). Rewarding (positive impacts) Thai values with an emphasis on nation, religion, and king can serve as support for the national unity (Chulapimpan, 1999, p. 34). Supported by Kim, Klingle, Sharkey, Park, Smith, & Yuego (2000)'s work, I suggested that Cultural Competence has great potential to see how groups are organizing themselves and how they are creating their own social reality which is therefore affecting the individual again. Therefore, to promote better understanding of the Twelve Thai national core values that is the intersection between Thai identities and Thai Cultural competences communicators should underserved communities to develop more significant and insightful communication strategies.

Recommendation

However, it must be noted that the social and cultural conditions in which they live are factors affecting the ideal of "understanding." Thus, in order to achieve the desired end of communication in crisis situation, the communi-cation practitioner must make his/her language comprehensive for his/her audience. The content of Thai value must be effectively integrated into the national communication campaign in order to achieve peaceful ends, thereby gaining reward

for those participating in the crisis related blog. Therefore, the power of language plays a major role in sustaining the community as evident in the common characteristics marking them out as an inalienable social and political group. On the other hand, the current wave of political conflict discussion in Thailand portrays the political culture of the people in Thai social context. I daresay that the national communication campaign is able to formulate a message that will resonate with an authentic community in Thailand. Meanwhile, I do believe that if stakeholders; such as political groups' top leaders, supporter groups' top leader, protester groups' top leader, middle-level leaders, grass-roots leaders and government apply the content of Thai value to solve the political conflict situations in Thailand, peace will come back to my homeland. Moreover, I think that language is a conventional sign whereby human beings agree to show to one another how to convey ideas and feelings. This means that we must see and realize that the Twelve Thai national core values are coded in conventional signs that will demand decoding when we show one another how to convey the ideas and feelings buried within that domain. In conclusion, the social and cultural conditions in Thailand are significant factors that impacted perception and interpretation of Thai people. Thus, in order to play our roles in the community of believers and society under a crisis situation, we should find out the best way to manage any conflicts across all barriers.

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