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The Formation of Friendships in Thailand

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The Formation of Friendships in Thailand

Kevin Irwin '22 – (Sponsor: Dr. Michael Bamberg)



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Guiding Principles

Relative Freedom (Blatterer, 2015)

- Friendships are understood to be more generative than other forms of relationships – ‘Relative Freedom’
- Our capacity to find friendships are dependent on the cultural and social infrastructures we interact with

Homelessness (Blatterer, 2015)

- The development of modern subjectivities is interconnected with the displacement of religious authority through science, the challenge of absolutism, and the struggle for representative politics
- Modernity causes uncertainty as social institutions replace traditional ways of thinking → a need for clarity
- We are constantly striving to find a coherent self – friendship brings our authentic self to the surface
- We can be who we truly are with our friends because of the lack of ties to social institutions

Time and Context (Blatterer, 2015)

- Friendships “depend on context and on place, as well as time” (Blatterer, 2015, p.10)
- Blatterer approaches friendships from a Western, European context
- Aim to decolonize the qualitative methodology and take it out of its Western origins and into a new context, Thailand



Figure 1: Map of Thailand and flag

Findings

‘Nothing’

- Friends do not problematize their relationship with one another, unlike familial or romantic relationships
- Because the relationship is situated in the mundane, it is almost boring; not discuss worthy – they just feel good
- ‘Nothing is happening’ so why talk about it

Longevity

- Someone you grew up with or someone you have known for a long time
- Build certain nuances and nonverbal communication because they have been engaged in doing friendships longer
- Trust has been built through time – is expected to be reciprocated back

Friends > Family

- The rapid changes in Thailand’s social institutions caused a need for individualism in a collectivist society
- The Confucian values that dominated traditional Thai thought are actively challenged by young adults
- Young adults are becoming more political, anti-monarchy, and anti-establishment, all under the guise of modernity

Qualitative Inquiry

- To see participants ‘do friendships’
- We have identities and narratives that are processual – continuously negotiating and navigating who we are in relation to one another
- Use Thai language to get participants to talk about their friendship experiences

Narrative Analysis

Three Dimensions of Identity:

- Agency/Passivity
- Sameness/Difference
- Constancy/Change

Levels of Analysis:

- Macro-thematic
- Micro-syntactic
- Interactive/performance based

Interviews

1. Andrew
2. Evan
3. Justin
4. Sean
5. Trevor

Andrew

“We met each other when we went to a summer camp during eighth grade”

“I think our first conversation together was about none of us wanted to be there and we both would rather be at home and eating”

“...it hurt because I really thought I lost a brother, someone I really cared about”

Justin

“We go to the same university and there was this event that we both went to...we didn’t know a lot of people there so we sorta just mingled together”

“We never really talked about what we were going to do while in lockdown...we both assumed we’d text”

“I just didn’t want to lose him...”

Trevor

“We used to play airsoft together...and he’d come over to play video games”

“I don’t remember too much about what we said but it was like along the lines of things like which girls we liked...”

“It would’ve been hard to stop being friends with him after being friends for so long”